ALTERNATIVE SUBJECT POSITIONS AND SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATIONS IN KEATS'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

ALTERNATIVE SUBJECT POSITIONS AND SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATIONS IN KEATS'S POETRY

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This dissertation claims that Keats's poetry is a reaction against the discourse of modernity which traumatized the human subject by creating a divide between human and nature, subject and object. It argues that by transcending this divide and acknowledging the agency of both subject and object, his poetry makes an ideological statement and offers a new site of existence or relationality to the readers. This site also implies a response to the accusations that the Romantics were not interested in the realities of their time. What Keats does is to give an aestheticized response to the hardcore facts of his time. Departing from previous studies due to its emphasis on subjectivity and relationality, this dissertation discusses Keats with regard to post-non/anthropocentric, alternative subject positions and subject-object relations in his "Ode to a Nightingale," "In drear nighted December," "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil," "Lamia," "La Belle Dame sans Mercy," and "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Drawing on Lacanian and Braidottian epistemologies, the dissertation discusses the intricacy between the imaginary and the symbolic, the irruption of the psychotic into the symbolic, and the agency of the object on subject in Keats's poetry against the background of concepts like *sinthome,* desire, *extimacy*, psychosis, *objet petit a,* Borromean knot, and Becoming and in the light of these concepts suggests

that the inner dynamics of both the subject and the object acquire agency, which shatters Oneness and totality assumed in the Cartesian self.

Keywords: John Keats, Jacques Lacan, Rosi Braidotti, subjectivity, psychosis

ÖZ

JOHN KEATS ŞİİRLERİNDEKİ ALTERNATİF ÖZNE KONUMLARI VE ÖZNE-NESNE İLİŞKİLERİ

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Bu tez Keats şiirlerinin, insan ve doğa, özne ve nesne arasında kopukluk oluşturarak insanı travmatize eden modernite diskuruna bir karşı çıkış olduğunu iddia eder. Keats'in bu kopukluğu aşarak ve hem öznenin hem de nesnenin eylemliliğine vurgu yaparak, ideolojik bir beyanda bulunduğunu ve okuyuculara yeni bir varlık ya da ilişkisellik alanı sunduğunu ileri sürer. Bu alan aynı zamanda Romantiklerin dönemlerindeki gerçekler ile ilgili olmadıklarına dair suçlamalara da yanıt içerir. Keats zamanının esas gerçeklerine estetize edilmiş bir cevap verir. Öznelliğe ve ilişkiselliğe yaptığı vurguyla daha önceki çalışmalardan ayrılan bu tez John Keats'i "Bülbüle Ağıt," "Kasvetli Aralık'ta," "Isabella ya da Fesleğen Saksısı," "Lamia," "Acımasız Güzel Kadın," ve "Grek Urn'üne Ağıt" şiirlerindeki post-non/antroposentrik alternatif özne konumları ve özne-nesne ilişkileri bağlamında analiz eder. Lacan ve Braidotti epistemolojilerinden yararlanan bu tez, imgesel ve simgesel arasındaki ilişkiyi, psikotiğin semboliğe girişini ve nesnenin özne üzerindeki etkisini, *sinthome*, arzu, *extimacy*, psikoz, *objet petit a*, Borromean düğümü ve Becoming gibi kavramları esas alarak analiz eder ve hem özne hem de nesnenin içsel dinamiklerinin Kartezyen öznenin ileri sürdüğü Birlik ya da tamlık gibi mitleri yıktığını iddia eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: John Keats, Jacques Lacan, Rosi Braidotti, öznellik, psikoz

To my violets,

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Aim of the Study

Recent scholarship on Keats takes his reaction to the mechanical conception of truth as a reaction to the Enlightenment ideals. Studied against the backdrop of such familiar concepts as negative capability[1], melancholy[2], or feminine image,[3] his move from the social to the individual has been interpreted as a departure from reason to imagination but in these discussions his post/non-anthropocentric reconfiguration of subjectivity and subject-object interaction has been left out. Drawing on Lacanian concepts of *sinthome*, Borromean knot, *objet petit a*, psychosis, and *extimacy* and Braidottian concepts of Becoming and nomadization, this dissertation responds to this epistemic gap in scholarship on Keats and claims that dislocating the classical figuration of the subject, Keats offers alternative subject positions and subject-object relations surpassing the limits of binary codes in his poetic universe. In his presentation of alternative subjectivities, Keats points out nonhuman energies' epistemic murder by the repressive mechanisms of Enlightenment thinking: through his threshold poetic figures standing somewhere between nature-human or the imaginary-symbolic, he foregrounds the overlooked but self-voicing potential of the imaginary or the nonhuman in the symbolic or in the human, hence the pointlessness of the idea of Oneness.

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[1] (See among many other works on negative capability Rejack and Theune (Eds.), *Keats's Negative Capability: New Origins and Afterlives*; Ou, *Keats and Negative Capability*; or Starr, "Negative Capability in Keats's Diction")

[2] (See White, *Keats's Anatomy of Melancholy: Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*)

[3] (See Alwes, *Imagination Transformed: The Evolution of the Female Character in Keats's Poetry*; Banerjee, *Female Voices in Keats's Poetry*; or Luczynska-Holdys, *Soft-Shed Kisses: Re-visioning the Femme Fatale in English Poetry of 19th Century*)

In his revolutionary task of revealing the nonhierarchical co-presence of subject-object, mind-body, or human-nature as in premodern times, Keats presents a crucial epistemological shift in perspective, a shift from the tyranny of Platonic tradition to pre-Platonic tradition. In this respect, how he, re-connecting with mythos, gives access to alternative poetic worlds where the illusory security of the Cartesian subject is left behind and all the binary polarities are rendered dysfunctional can be better understood if we look at the historical transition from mythical to logocentric thinking. Set in a world "with fluid boundaries, such that no absolute lines [could] be drawn among human, animal, and spirit realms" (Fisher, *Radical Ecopsychology* 139), pre-modern societies were ruled by mythos and they saw nature as none other than one of their nonhuman partners with whom they sang the same song of the earth in a Borromean frame. With mythos "*lack[ing] an explicit distinction between true or false narratives, unlike the logical (from logos) arguments emanating from rational minds (from nous) and providing good reasons and sound evidence to support the truth of their claims*" (Webel 25; emphasis in original), these ancient people also knew no categorical divide as false/true, god/human, sacred/profane, dream/reality, or life/death. Rather, due to their perception of the surrounding world through the cyclical patterns of nature, their site of being was similar to the case of the infant with its blissful unity. Immersed in the intoxicating context of this imaginary-like psychodrama surrounded by the resonances of nature, the premodern subject was not subjected to the binary subject/object divide, either.

Resembling the intrusion of the Law into the narcisstic dyad of the mother-infant in the imaginary, Western modernity has disturbed the cyclical harmony in nature-human bonding in pre-Cartesian societies in the name of civilization. With its lust for "centralization, unification, and rationalization" (Manuel 3), Western modernity has erased from written history human-nature relationality and presented instead a totalized model of the subject whose nonhuman imaginary energies were overlooked to serve the illusion of egotistical fixity. In this context, dismissing the mythical as irrational, it has taken reason as a reference point for the subject as if s/he consisted solely of rational consciousness. To Horkheimer and Adorno, behind the Enlightenment thinking's shift from the mythical thinking of preliteral societies to

logocentrism lies its fear of the unknown: thinking that "anything that does not conform to the standard of calculability and utility must be viewed with suspicion," it has aimed to reduce the world to the limits of the calculated (4). That is, feeling afraid of the extralinguistic and non-logocentric potential of nature, not fitting any taxonomic formulation or depiction, Enlightenment thinking has configured a new category of nature and the corporeal: it has discursively subordinated the corporeal or the nonhuman dimension of life to the rational, and with this subordination, established the ideal image of the subject as a self-contained being in the grip of reason.

To actualize its phantasy of creating a fixed subject that would be completely divorced from the imaginary-real nonhuman flows and energies, the logocentric discourse of modernity has traumatically refracted the subject-nature (with nature being equated with irrationality or body) blissful dyad upon which all the symbolic relations depend and to which all human desire is traced, and re-modelled it on an ideological plane as human-reason (mind) attachment that has required the subject's absolute submission to rationality and also the absolute loss of touch with the imaginary space of nature. So, the model of the unitary subject, the Cartesian *I*, assumed to be under the sole mastery of reason has been presented as the ideal subject position that would let one have the security of symbolic acknowledgement. The subject in this novel context sought for symbolic acknowledgment for the sake of which s/he felt obliged to estrange himself/herself from the corporeal and to bow before reason. To put it also in the words of Horkheimer and Adorno, "The self…after the methodological extirpation of all natural traces as mythological, was no longer supposed to be either a body or blood or a soul or even a natural ego but was sublimated into a transcendental or logical subject" (22). However, what modernity has missed out in the illusion of the One or a Godlike being assumed to be fully explained or grasped by cold reason is no wonder the fact that neither nature nor the subject's tie with nature can be eradicated. That is, despite its establishment as the owner of meaning in the Enlightenment period, rational thinking cannot explain the unruly layer of nature or the unconscious psychic material: being in a

constant transition between conscious-unconscious or human-nonhuman energies, the subject evades the grasp of rational codes.

The divide between subject (the individual) and the object (nature) is one of the traumatic markers of modernity, and Keats's poetry transcends this divide to a considerable extent by evading this distinction. What Keats does in his poetry is to poeticize the invalidity of the idea of Oneness or fixity by inviting his readers to post/non-anthropocentric, threshold poetic subjects and subject-object interactions. Despite its repression by the current epistemology, nature in Keats's poems finds a way to express itself under all conditions and shatters all the symbolic fixities to emphasize subjective in-betweenness arising from bios-zoe intersection. In the poems "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December," nature makes itself felt as the signifier revealing its irrepressible state although it is discursively treated as the repressed of culture. Catching the attention of the poetic personae on an empirical level—in the form of a brook, a tree, or a nightingale that carelessly sings of summer songs—nature in these poems awakens the human poetic personae's nonhuman potential and acting as a *sinthome,* calls them to participate in the song of the earth as selves unburdened by the symbolic codes. Nature presented through its intersection with desiring individual poetic personae within an empirical context in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December" penetrates into the grand narrative of *the* Human in "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil," "Lamia," and "La Belle Dame sans Mercy" within a psychotic frame in which the social and even patriarchal markers, though invaded by the imaginary, appear to be more visibly felt. In the last poem of discussion, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," nature makes its appearance on a more fleeting ground, in the form of a solid(!) urn, and acting as an *extimate objet petit a,* emphasizes the subject-object co-presence in a naked context devoid of any markers. Not totalizing the urn or the poetic persona, the poem stages a sublime portrait of subject-object interaction within which all the mathematical formulas are negated.

As it is seen in Keats's selected poems, nature resists all the attempts for its repression. Moving from an empirical ground to a more social context and then reappearing in the form of an object, nature bends to neither its own restriction nor

the subject's totalization. The negation of the unitary subject is portrayed in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December" through human poetic personae's encounter with empirical nonhuman nature. Forgetting all the teachings of binary discourse in the cyclical patterns of nature, these poems' poetic personae move to fullness in their interaction with the nonhuman realm. Although a subject modelled on the idea of a self-contained One would not be expected to have a lack or a hole as the very term of Oneness denies the presence of any hole in being with its assumed perfection, in their dissolution into the continuum with nature, these poetic personae are motivated by the need to find the lost thing (*objet petit a*). Dissolving into nature by their desire to make up for the sense of lack, they shift the focus from the idea of Oneness to re-becoming one with nature in a non-unitary manner.

The non-unitary nature-culture or human-nonhuman intersection is portrayed in "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil," "Lamia," and "La Belle Dame sans Mercy" within a psychotic frame. As the foreclosed signifiers, Lorenzo, Lamia, and La Belle Dame sans Mercy intrude into the logic of the binary discourse with their threshold position, belonging neither to the human nor to the nonhuman but to the human-nonhuman. Also, different from the desiring poetic personae in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December" who point to the fluidity of the subject by their psychic transposition, these unfathomable figures resurfacing in the real and entering the symbolic as the sublime emphasize the non-closed position of subjectivity on a material level. That is, becoming a basil-man (Lorenzo), a snake-woman (Lamia), and a nonhuman fairy/monster-human (La Belle Dame sans Mercy), they cross the boundaries of the binary logic standing materially at the human-nonhuman intersection.

Withdrawing from an empirical frame, nature makes itself heard in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" in the form of an art object. Reflecting how "[t]he metropolitan space of the museum or gallery…replaced mountains, lakes, and ruins as a place where the [Romantic] poet could experience these encounters with the 'other,' a place where the antique confronts the modern—where inspiration is primed to strike" (Groom 47), the poetic persona's confrontation with the urn in the poem reactivates his/her

Moebius strip and working upon his/her psyche, underpins the subject-object relationality.

1.2. The Significance of the Study

The significance of this dissertation lies in its being the first study in Keats scholarship discussing his poetry against the backdrop of human-nonhuman relation and in its renegotiation of the theory of ecopsychology along the axis of Lacanian and Braidottian theories. As it is a new interdisciplinary field, there are still epistemological gaps in the theory of ecopsychology. I suggest a revisionary reading for the ecopsychological theory locating it along the axis of Lacanian and Braidottian epistemologies. In this respect, I also open a novel hermeneutical path by bringing together Lacan and Braidotti in the discussion of subjectivity. As I underline in my theoretical chapter, although both Lacan and Braidotti address constantly alternating and fluid subject positions, they adopt a different angle in their configuration of subjective fluidity. Despite emphasizing the non-unitary position of the subject on the psychic level, for instance, Lacan does not say much about nature-culture relation on the material level. On the other hand, Braidotti addresses subjective experiences on the material level but does not say much as to how a subject can cross the boundaries of the humanist discourse on the psychic level. Reading Braidotti and Lacan in parallel with each other in my discussion of the subject of ecopsychology, I both compensate for the gaps in their notion of subjectivity and elucidate what is implied by ecopsychology. Within this context, I take the subjects in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December" as standing somewhere between the Lacanian subject of desire and the Braidottian nomadic subject.

The ecopsychological discussion of the alternative subject positions in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December," I think, becomes crucial also due to its problematization of the classical idea of sublimity. As I reflect in the following pages where I discuss the Keatsian sublimity, though studied with regard to the concept of the material sublime, Keats has not been explored as to how he presents

material sublimity in his empirically-grounded nature poems or in the poems where the Moebius strip still remains intact (as seen in “Ode on a Grecian Urn”). Rather, his treatment of the sublime has been limited to the deviant bodies of such psychotic figures as Lorenzo or Lamia who evoke sublimity by their amorphous or liminal states. Discussion of this underinvestigated dimension in his selected poems, I think, can also spark further literary debates as to how the sublime is portrayed differently in each Romantic poet and hence might problematize the generalizing attitudes to the Romantics.

1.3. John Keats the Poet

1.3.1. Rethinking the Sublime with Keats

With their interest in penetrating into what lies beyond the grasp of rational(izing) thinking, Romantic works offer rich material for the studies of sublimity. By virtue of the fact that Romanticism presents readers with intense experience of the sublime, one is automatically tempted to think that having a certain understanding of the sublime can offer deeper insight into the Romantic sentiment. Yet coupled with the difficulty of making a totalizing definition of Romanticism, defining a certain kind of the sublime becomes hardly possible. Taking a different shape in each Romantic writer who reflects the meaning in his/her own novel way, the idea of sublimity eludes the capture of a single frame to initiate instead an unruly range of multiple implications. In Keats’s poetry, as well, the sublime moment manifests itself in a unique veil, unmatched by any other sublimity. So, it would be better to talk of different sublimes instead of one definite sublime experience.

Let me take a glance at the most familiar depictions of the sublime in literary history before discussing the Keatsian sublime in detail. The notion of the sublime is generally associated with stunning experiences in the face of which the stillness of the world is shaken and the subject is left with an unusual feeling that defies any linguistic description. To Longinus who interprets the term as a kind of rhetorical elevation, “sublimity consists in a certain excellence and distinction in expression” (100). For Edmund Burke, central to the experience of the sublime, which he thinks

as "productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling," is the sense of awe: "[w]hatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger…whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime" (20). Addressing the sublime as "the name given to what is *absolutely great*," Kant also links sublimity to the overwhelming nature of the things—being astounding in terms of their size (the mathematically sublime) or strength (the dynamically sublime)—and thinks that the sublime "awaken[s]…a feeling of a supersensible faculty within us:" "*The sublime is that, the mere capacity of thinking which evidences a faculty of mind transcending every standard of the senses*" (78; 81). Kant's theorization of the sublime resonates with the Aristotelian cathartic effect imbued with a sense of pleasurable pain:

> The feeling of the sublime is…at once a feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation by reason, and a simultaneously awakened pleasure, arising from this very judgement of the inadequacy of the greatest faculty of sense being in accord with ideas of reason. (ibid. 88)

Emphasizing "the inadequacy of the greatest faculty of sense," Kant points toward the presence of a "supersensible faculty" to be acknowledged through the sublime moment.

Reading Keats's poetry with an emphasis on the sublime, I would propose that his sublime fits neither the Burkean nor the Kantian sublime. Burke assigns the sense of terror a vital role in the evocation of sublimity and traces the initiation of sublimity in nature to its menacing force: "in nature, dark, confused, uncertain images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions, than those have which are more clear and determinate" (45). Keats also takes nature as a text of the sublime but in his poetry, nature does not need to arouse a sense of fear in the poetic subject or the reader to spark states of sublimity.[4] Similarly, contrary to Kant, according to

[4] In Keats's poem entitled "Where's the Poet?", the Muses state that to a poet, "the Tiger's yell/ Comes articulate and presseth/ On his ear like mother-tongue" (13-15). Similarly, the poetic personae in his "Ode to a Nightingale," "In drear nighted December," and "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill" do

whom the steps to the supersensible are taken along the path of what is the most enormous or the most powerful, Keats does not necessarily link the sublime to the vastness of the things as he can find the same grandeur even in what seems to be the most ordinary or the smallest on the surface level. As Tontiplaphol accordingly argues, Keats "associate[s] pleasure with cozy spaces, with environments distinguished by smallness instead of grandeur" and in his "use of the word 'sublime' stem[ming] from its affective links to excess and extremity," "his wish is for *sensory* surfeit, not the grand immateriality of night's 'dark void'" (41; 46). By this way of getting overwhelmed even with what appears to be the most familiar or the smallest, Keats opens new horizons in the configuration of sublimity. It is worth looking at also what Turley says in addition to Tontiplaphol's observation to have a better understanding of Keats's contestation of the traditional sublime. Based on a close examination of his travel narratives, Turley states that Keats subverts the established tone of the classical sublime through "puerilizing the descriptive conventions of travel literature," "dash[ing] off smutty and pointedly juvenile doggerel inspired by irksome gadflies and lascivious mountains" "instead of composing mature verse about craggy rocks or fathomless lochs," or unsettling "sublime subjectivity by infantilizing the viewing subject itself—the meditator of grand experience to readers awaiting vicarious immersion in 'wonders'"[5] (74). As he further states, although his subversive aesthetics was taken by the literary disciplines of his age as a sign of his poor quality, "in refusing to take the sublime seriously" and hence "play[ing] the 'naughty boy,'" he did not simply aim at creating a "bathetic effect" but reflected "a specific form of resistance"—that is, a kind of rebellion against "rigid aesthetic" and "political dogmas" hidden beneath the *G*rand style:

> Keats started to realize—to have proved on his pulses—that ways of seeing landscape drew equally on an élite theory of the picturesque and a profoundly undemocratic model of political governance.

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not feel afraid of their nonhuman partners but rather take them as a triggering force to reconnect with their *lalangue*.

[5] Here Turley refers to Keats's poem, "A Poem about Myself," where the subject who is expected to evoke or to go through a sublime experience is "a naughty boy" (315).

> Traditional travel literature shaped the world in a harmonious manner by removing disturbing human elements such as impoverished labourers and ragged children from scenes of natural wonder. Keats's own record of travel, by contrast, which reaches towards an ethical critique of the sublime, endeavoured to make newly visible the distresses of working people— the 'rags, the dirt and misery'…In the journal of his tour, Keats repeatedly unsettles grand discourses by recording inappropriately juvenile japes in one splendid location after another. Immaturity is a frequently disregarded and misunderstood feature of Keats's challenge to authority. Yet boyish pranks and infantile responses, which I argue function as a system of interruption, prove a powerfully strategic means of disturbing the 'adult' focus of eighteenth-century aestheticians such as Edmund Burke, Thomas West, and William Gilpin. There is a deeply subversive purpose in Keats's politically freighted portrayal of himself as a 'naughty boy' who 'could not quiet be.' (ibid. 74; 75)

As Turley details, "troubled by the poor reception of *Endymion*," Keats looked for "a grand style, of which sublime rhetoric was a key component," that would help for his acceptance by literary authorities;[6] however, he later decided to contest the grand rhetoric of eighteenth century aesthetics, seeing behind traditional linguistic transposition of landscape "a profoundly undemocratic model of political governance" working insidiously to present a perfect portrait of nature divorced from "disturbing human elements" (73; 74). To begin with, Turley is right in his observation as to how Keats reduces the Burkean sublime given that in his empirically-grounded nature poems, which testify to his shift of focus from material extremity to modesty in size, steep cliffs or mountains of enormous height leave their place to a plain nature where the summer song of a nightingale or the chirping sound of a grasshopper jumping from hedge to hedge is echoed, embracing the poetic persona or the reader without arousing a sense of menace in him/her. Evidenced by the intensity of sublimity evoked through this seemingly-ordinary transposition of nature, it surely comes as no surprise also that Keats hides beneath his lighter tone of voice—which, I would propose, reflects his departure from the Longinian sublime, as well—a strong defiance against the neoclassic decorum or opens what Milnes similarly terms "a site of resistance:" "Keats estranges his reader not from meaning

[6] Keats was dissatisfied with the "bad reputation…continually rising against [him]:" "My name with the literary fashionables is vulgar. I am a weaver boy to them" (*The Complete Poetical Works* 394).

as presence, but from language as mediation" and his "language is so rich and inviting that it becomes a site of resistance," "it repels" (88). Talking about Keats's sensitivity for bringing the "disturbing human elements" to the fore, Turley also addresses the humanitarian turn taken by the Romantics on the path of railing against the reductive ideals of the rational discourse. I cannot help agreeing with Turley on the issue of Keats's reintegration of the "disturbing" into the scenery considering the fact that though not locating them in the context of empirical nature, he displaces the classical periphery/centre distinction and opens a way in his poetry for such non-symbolized and hence otherized figures as Lorenzo, Lamia, or La Belle Dame sans Mercy—the threshold figures cracking the smooth layer of the Grand narratives by their entry into the symbolic as the sublimation of the imaginary. Besides, the fact that of these sublime figures, Lamia and La Belle Dame sans Mercy are sexually ambivalent complicates the matter further again when read with regard to Burke, who genders the notion of sublimity, equating it with the taken-for-granted male qualities such as strength or higher wisdom: establishing a binary opposition between ideas of the sublime and the beautiful, Burke associates the sublime, to which he ascribes a greater meaning, with the masculine and regards women as belonging to the space of the beautiful.[7]

Another important point that needs to be underlined with regard to the Keatsian sublime is its deviation from the Coleridgean notion of sublimity according to which "obscure ideas"—"feelings…for objects, which their very sublimity renders indefinite, no less than their indefiniteness renders them sublime"—"are necessary to the moral perfection of the human being, notwithstanding…even in consequence, of their obscurity," "namely, to the ideas of being, form, life, the reason, the law of conscience, freedom, immortality, God!" (Coleridge, *The Friend* 87). Rather than reflecting a kind of accession from the sensory to a more dignified realm of the One or aiming in Coleridge's words "the moral perfection of the human being," the

[7] Burke bases his gendered account of the sublime on the false supposition that women are weaker than men in terms of their physical and mental capacity: "The beauty of women is considerably owing to their weakness or delicacy, and is even enhanced by their timidity, a quality of mind analogous to it" (102).

Keatsian sublime, not being modelled on a binary representation, cherishes the material or the corporeal in a non-unitary manner. Also, its non-dualistic infatuation with the corporeal, the bodily dimension of meaning, calls into question the established sovereignty of the Saussurean sign within the context of which the mental is put above the bodily. So, the sublime moment in Keats does not elevate the contemplating self to an ideal realm which is dominated by the illusionary supremacy of the divine One but it awakens the subject to his/her very material surroundings, to what has been repressed under the veil of civilization or the fantasy of One: to nature, body, or the imaginary self.

It is worth underlining that Keats's emphasis on the bodily does not mean getting completely stuck in the space of the material. The Keatsian sublime involves a transposition from the physical into the psychic with his poetic personae's constant move from one site of ontology to another through their intersection with nature; however, within the context of Keats's sublime, what is reached or rather what is brought to the poetic persona's notice already resides in the sensible world, having nothing to do with an omnipotent God who is assumed to be gazing down the worldly from the sky or the idea of a transcendental Mind but rather echoing the repressed of culture—that is, the blissful nature reminding the human subject of the imaginary realm of alienating identifications and poetic wholeness. Drawing on Keats's letter to George and Georgiana Keats in 1919, Rohrbach and Sun also argue:

> The soul which Keats terms '*the Child able to read*,' attains its transcendence not in a world-beyond-the-world but resolutely within the immanent frame of this world…it never attains the perfection of a 'master who reads' but is engaged in reading as a dynamic and ongoing process of becoming. (233)

Calling "the *world* a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read" and "the *human heart* the horn Book used at that School," "the Minds Bible," or "the Minds experience,"[8] Keats implies that "[i]t is through the Mind's encounter with the human, with experiences of feeling and suffering, that it undergoes

[8] (*Complete Poems and Selected Letters* 505-506)

individuation and becomes a 'soul,'" suggest Rohrbach and Sun (233). In this respect, as reflected in his/her experience of the sublime "within the immanent frame of this world," the Keatsian subject strays away from linearity and instead steps into the imaginary realm from which s/he is expected to estrange himself/herself to be acknowledged as a civilized being within the discourse of modernity. For instance, speaking to the unconscious of the poetic persona with its intoxicating images and prelinguistic melodies, the empirical nature in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December" metamorphoses into an imaginary space in which each nonhuman animal or plant agent takes on the role of a phallic substitute to cherish the narcissistic omnipotence of the human subjects. Besides, nature's smooth move from a physical into a psychic space does not involve a complete withdrawal from the material or a complete immersion in the psychic. Rather, the sublime moment arises out of the human poetic personae's topological experience of the imaginary within the very context of the material or the sensible.

Locating the sensible and the psychic on one and the same surface of the Moebius strip in his poetic personae's exploration of the in-between ontologies of the human-nonhuman in the sublime moment in his empirically-grounded nature poems, I would argue, Keats problematizes the classical idea of transcendence, bridges up the assumed gap between the corporeal and the incorporeal, and presents in this way an alternative to the Euclidian model of space or the notion of metaphysical unity. In other words, by this way of making his poetic personae topologically stretch into the imaginary from the very realm of the sensible and acknowledging the signifier-like agency of the bodily to open endless flows of meaning resisting the closure of one final destination, Keats points to the inside-outside or the symbolic-imaginary simultaneity.[9] In this context, it could be further argued that in his move from a classical to a revisionist, non-unitary idea of the sublime that arises out of the human-nonhuman intersection and involves the physical-psychic interpenetration, Keats contests also the Cartesian notion of the subject, which I discuss throughout my dissertation. Depicting Keats's treatment of the sublime with clear-cut

[9] In my argument that Keats's poetic personae stretch from the symbolic into the imaginary at the sublime moment, I imply his desiring poetic personae in "Ode to a Nightingale," "In drear nighted December," and "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

boundaries would conflict with the very spirit of the sublime moment which is evanescent. Yet, considering his counter-Platonic approach to the idea of the sublime in his nature poems, I cannot help calling Keats's sublime non-egotistical and material.

As a second-generation Romantic poet of multiple possibilities, Keats is marked by a non-egotistical tendency towards the experience of the sublime. Looking at what he means when addressing the Wordsworthian sublime as egotistical to set himself apart from him with regard to his sublimity can help us have a better understanding of the Keatsian non-egotistical sublime. As a sensuous "poet of fragrant bodices, crushed grapes, slippery kisses, and embalmed darkness" (Tontiplaphol 41), Keats reflects a paradigm shift in his challenge to the Platonization of meaning—that is, against the hierarchical bipartition of the signifier and the signified. Felt most deeply in his concept of negative capability, this non-unitary configuration of meaning is heard in the selfless, topologically dissolved, or fluid poetic personae of his "Ode to a Nightingale," "In drear nighted December," and "Ode on a Grecian Urn." To Keats, contrary to his selfless poetic voice, Wordsworth's poetic voice stands self-absorbed or "egotist." At this point, one needs to touch upon what the egotistical sublime means. According to Moores, within the context of the egotistical sublime, "the poet does not merely describe objects of nature but projects his own subjective state onto natural objects and then describes not the object itself but his own inner state" (58). Given from the vantage point of a human subject's self-projections, thus, nature is condemned to an anthropocentric view which denies it a unique voice as an agent with a self-voicing space of dynamic energies that do not actually need a human articulation to express themselves. Besides, in the words of Garber:

> Such sublimity is an imposition of the poet's self upon the reader; or, in another perspective, an interposition of the self between the reader and the material. Egotistical sublimity is so fascinated with the content and contours of the mind that it presents the reader with more of the consciousness that works on nature than it does of nature itself. This kind of poet knows too much and displays all of his knowledge, filling his poems with all manner of dazzling private speculation about matters which he ought to treat with more objectivity and modesty. (199-200)

Making his presence felt in the poem as an all-knowing gaze, the poet of egotistical sublimity tends to be concerned with more "dazzling private speculation" than "nature itself," as Garber states. In this respect, "not the natural world or some transcendent realm" but "the poet's ego-self is…celebrated" (Moores 58). Accordingly, Keats blames Wordsworth for being trapped within ego boundaries due to the lyric *I* in his poems that eventually reverberates his own self, after expressing admiration for the physical natural world. As he states in his letter to J. H. Reynolds, written on the 3rd of February, 1818:

> It may be said that we ought to read our Contemporaries…but for the sake of a few fine imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain Philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist—Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage and deceives himself—Many a man can travel to the very bourne of Heaven, and yet want confidence to put down his halfseeing.[10]

Though shifting the focus from the objective to the subjective in his retiring into solitude in nature, Wordsworth falls into the trap of solipsism, thinks Keats. Based on Wordsworth's self-contained withdrawal from the external into the internal to contemplate his own world rather than nature, Keats refers to his sublime as egotistical. Behind Keats's use of the term 'egotistical' for Wordsworth's sublime lies a further implication about its totalizing form and how the celebration of "the poet's ego-self" that manifests itself in the lyric Wordsworthian *I* runs counter to the Romantic quest for responding to the containment by the Enlightenment discourse. As Weiskel argues:

> The problem is that the lyric 'I' so often seems to escape from its contained, dramatic determination and become itself a container. It is as if the 'I' were aware of its own presentation in the poem; its progress becomes the successive assimilation or rejection of its former states, so that in the end only a purely theoretical line, not any differential of consciousness, separates it from the present of the maker. Poet, speaker, and reader are merged into one adventure of

[10] (*Complete Poems and Selected Letters* 493)

> progressive consciousness…Wordsworth himself read his own poems in this way. (55-56)

Although the lyric *I* suggests the Romantic shift from the social to the individual voice, it still sustains the container/contained divide in the sense that it takes the place of what it wants to displace (the container) and its fusion of "poet, speaker, and reader" seems to be limited to the processes of a single consciousness, suggests Weiskel. Deviating from this Wordsworthian tendency, Keats explores multifarious potentialities with his selfless poetic personae, or in J. Barnard's words, reflects a "persistent effort to make the self reach out to otherness through poetry" (15). What he says about "the poetical Character" in a letter to Richard Woodhouse, written on the 27th of October, 1818, can shed further light on his negatively capable self:

> As to the poetical Character itself, (I mean that sort of which, if I am anything, I am a Member; that sort distinguished from the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime[11]; which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosop[h]er, delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. 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—The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's Creatures.[12]

Stating that "the poetical Character" should have no "character" or "identity," Keats emphasizes the importance of being disinterested—that is, adopting an objective stance in the perception of the world. Critical of the Wordsworthian lyric *I* reducing everything in the material world to the limits of the poetical character's own

[11] As Burwick states, in his criticism, "Keats had in mind Wordsworth's persistent centering of his own memory and sensibility in 'Ode to Duty,' 'Resolution and Independence,' and 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality'" (*Romanticism* 194).

[12] (*Complete Poems and Selected Letters* 500-501)

subjective perception and overlooking the actual potentiality of nature by reflecting it not as it is but as how it is perceived by a single consciousness, Keats offers this negation of identity to contest the maintenance of the rupture between self and other in the egotistical sublime. In other words, he aims to erase the hierarchical gap between the contemplating human self and the contemplated other (nonhuman object or nature) and does not try to fit the contemplated into his subjective ideals. As Bate accordingly notes, by doing so, he aims to mean:

> [W]hat the human mind itself contributes to what it assumes are direct perceptions of the material world—supplementing, channeling, even helping to create them—is not, as the subjective idealist argues, something imposed completely *ab extra*, something invented or read into nature that is not really there. (*John Keats* 238)

In a similar line of thinking to Bate's, Levine states that "negative capability enables the individual to enter a state of mind whose purpose is not to criticize objects outside, but to alter the configuration of the objects within:" enabling us to "suspend what is known" and "enter a state of not knowing," it "allow[s] the possibility that we will know differently" (38). In the same vein, Keats's poetic personae relate to a nightingale, a tree, a brook, or an urn by suspending all what is known about them within the frame of the binary discourse and hence, get to know what they do not know about them with their entry into "a state of not knowing:" they come to realize that these nonhuman figures are not the natural or the objective inferior of the human species but self-voicing agents with whom they live the same life in non-hierarchical terms and to whom they are attached to nourish their desire. When he says "I lay awake last night listening to the Rain with a sense of being drowned and rotted like a grain of wheat" and "I feel more and more everyday as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand worlds"[13] (*The Complete Poetical Works* 299; 335), Keats himself also points to how he identifies with multiple consciousnesses, paying attention to "the [whole] data of experience,

[13] I am aware of the logical fallacy of supporting analytical discussions with quotations from the poet as poetry is composed of imaginary material while conscious reflection comes from consciousness and the symbolic. However, in Keats, we can make an exception as even in his prose, he employs the logic of the imaginary and its codes.

whether in the organic or inorganic world" (Starr 60). As seen in his selfless empathy towards the world, thus, his configuration of the sublime stands a far cry from the idea of an egotistical sublime.

The solipsistic reputation of the Wordsworthian lyric *I* leads also to the common argument that the Romantic poets are no more than daydreamers who try to sterilize themselves from the harsh realities of their present surroundings by taking shelter in nature. However, as evidenced in "Ode to a Nightingale," "In drear nighted December," or "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats's reconnecting with nature comes to mean not an escape from realities but a kind of confrontation with the reality itself, with that unvalued reality lying at the core of human subjectivity and unleashing desire: the nonhuman energy of life. So, contrary to the common perception which takes the delving of these poems' poetic personae into nature as a kind of escape, the foregrounding of nature in these poems testifies to the presence of a desiring subject position, not entrapped in the imaginary but shaped by the dynamic flows of the imaginary-symbolic or the human-nonhuman. It may be worth recalling at this point that although Keats initially emphasizes "a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!" he then changes his mind not to overthrow the "Thoughts" altogether, as he asserts later: "a complex Mind—one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits" "exist[s] partly on sensation partly on thought" (*Complete Poems and Selected Letters* 489; 490).[14] Similarly, he states: "Men who live together have a silent moulding and influencing power over each other. They interassimilate" (*The Complete Poetical Works* 402). To Fermanis, these lines in which he calls where individuals "interassimilate" an ideal society suggest Keats's "ongoing orientation towards 'Cockney' sociability rather than 'Romantic' isolation" (49). The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that Keats goes beyond the ideas of Romantic detachment and transcendental meaning. To return to our previous argument, thus, we can safely state that Keats's emphatic identification with agencies both human and other-than-human on the path of portraying human-nature relationality in his empirically-grounded nature poems gives an important insight into his non-egotistical sublime or decentralized *I* behind which lie multiple *I*s or more precisely

[14] (From his letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November, 1817)

an interdependent *we* (bios-zoe), not sterilized from but in close touch with what is the innermost reality.

Besides taking a non-egotistical turn with its departure from the egotistical sublime of the Wordsworthian lyric *I*, the Keatsian sublime is also marked by its emphasis on the material. At this point, we need to reflect on the difference between the material and the immaterial sublime to have a better insight into the Keatsian material sublime. Drawing on the analogy of Petrarch's ascent to Mount Ventoux, Porter states that while the immaterial sublime involves a withdrawal from "the physical realm into some higher, often more spiritual realm," the material sublime does not give the promise of elevating the subject into a more dignified, sacred realm:

> We might compare the way Petrarch describes his ascent of Mount Ventoux as a progressive detachment from the physical world, as he 'rose on the wings of thought *from corporeal things to incorporeal things*'—a classic flight of the mind scenario in its immaterialist variant. Its contrast is another kind of sublimity, one that does not shun matter but actually seeks it out and revels in what it finds there, for instance when the eye plunges into seemingly endless surfaces of matter, be these heights or depths or broad expanses running as far as the eye can see. That is what I will be calling *the material sublime*. (391)

With its "progressive detachment" or linear disengagement from the corporeal "toward the light and airy realm of immaterial things (ideals, objects of thought, abstractions of all kinds) and a more ethereal kind of speculation, for instance, reflection on the divine" (ibid. 538), the immaterial sublime seems to be charged with the Saussurean implications which assume the inevitable destination of each signifier to a transcendental signified. Accordingly, Porter further notes that although both the material and the immaterial sublime "originate in a harsh confrontation with matter," "they…diverge in the responses of a beholding subject, whose choice is either to recoil from the experience, as Plato and others do, or to dwell more deeply upon it" (391). Discussing the material sublime with regard to Keats's nature poems, I would like to add to what Porter states that the transposition experienced within the material sublime from the physical into the psychic diverts from a Platonic transition in the sense that it repositions the subject somewhere between the human-

nonhuman.[15] Besides, denying the myth of an ultimate signified to be arrived at, the psychic space into which the subject epiphanically extends through writing an imaginary story with the empirical nature is marked by the dynamic slippage of the signifier, each time forming new connections with other signifiers on the path of opening fresh layers of meaning. Though missing out his portrayal of human-nonhuman intersection,[16] Abrams similarly locates Keats's sublimity in a non-Platonic context, referring to Keats's mention of "the gradations of happiness, even like a pleasure thermometer."[17] As he argues, although the lines from "Endymion" where he says that happiness lies "in that which becks/ Our ready minds to fellowship divine,/A fellowship with essence" (I. 777-779) point at a Platonic mind, "Keats's gradations are entirely opposed to the dematerializing process of philosophical meditation that Plato describes in the *Symposium*:"

> In that dialogue, one climbs 'as by a stair' from the beauty of a single material body up 'to all fair forms,' and then to 'the beauty of the mind,' in order to reach the goal of ultimate desire, the idea of 'beauty, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting.' Keats's 'Pleasure Thermometer,' on the other hand (as the word 'thermometer' implies) measures what he calls the 'intensity' (the degree of heat applied to a retort in a chemical experiment) in an imaginative ascent that is metaphorically equated with the stages of refinement in a process of evaporation and distillation. The ascent begins with the pleasurable sensations of physical things; these pleasures are successively refined and purified from all self-concern, until one achieves the selfless stage of 'love and friendship.' At the application of a final ('chief') degree

[15] To Furniss, this state of in-betweenness is already inherent in the term 'sublime:' "although the sublime gestures towards the infinite, its prefix—from the Latin sub, meaning 'under, close to, up to, towards'—suggests that its effect depends upon a relation to the limen, the threshold or limit" (23).

[16] In his discussion of Keats's sublimity, Abrams continuously stresses his material stance to underline his departure from Platonic tradition; however, it seems that he does not see a world apart from the material in Keats: "Keats's one world is the material world of this earth, this life, and this body, this sexual body with all its avidities and its full complement of the senses, internal as well as external, and what traditionally are called the 'lower' no less than the 'higher' senses" (44). Although I also emphasize Keats's non-Platonic stance in his handling of the sublime and his infatuation with the material as a sensuous poet, I suggest, different from Abrams, that being located in the material, Keats's poetic persona can be transformed into the immaterial in a non-unitary manner. Surely, I address not a metaphysical truth but the conceivable or the fleeting with the expression of 'the immaterial.'

[17] (From his letter to John Taylor, Hampstead, January 30, 1818, *The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats* 284-285)

> of 'intensity,' the grosser (the 'more ponderous and bulky') element of friendship is in turn separated out, leaving only 'full alchemiz'd,' the purified 'essence' that is love. (43-44)

What Abrams says in the lines given above is traceable to Keats's statement: "I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty."[18] Abrams is right in his argument that "to Platonize Keats—just as to intellectualize or to textualize him—is to disembody him and thereby eliminate what is most Keatsian in his poems" (44). While Plato associates the ultimate step to be taken with the immaterial world of absolute truth or the God-like ultimate signified, Keats regards the idea of having "Passions" or accessing "Love" as inevitable steps that will take us to the "essential Beauty," with this notion of "essential Beauty" having nothing to do with the Platonic signified. By this way of dethroning the Platonic notion of the ultimate signified from its spiritual grandeur, Keats unsettles the established binary discourse, as well.

As I have stated in the earlier paragraphs, Keats's non-unitary simultaneity of the physical-psychic or the human-nonhuman triggered by the energy inherent in nature becomes tantamount to dislocating the binary discourse to point to the imaginary-symbolic copresence. Thus, we can argue that subverting the unitary notion of the sublime that underpins the fantasy of body/mind dialectics with its configuration of what is within the reach of sensory perception as a reflection of the One and replacing the One with the multiplicity of floating signifiers, Keats presents a material idea of the sublime based on a non-dualistic human-nonhuman harmony in his poems where nature is given on an empirical level. As he uses the term "material sublime" himself in the epistle to J. H. Reynolds:

> O that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake,
> Would all their colours from the sunset take:
> From something of material sublime,
> Rather than shadow our soul's day-time
> In the dark void of night. For in the world
> We jostle, —but my flag is not unfurl'd

[18] (From his letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817, *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of John Keats* 489).

> On the admiral-staff, — and so philosophize
> I dare not yet! Oh, never will the prize,
> High reason, and the love of good and ill,
> Be my award! Things cannot to the will
> Be settled, but they tease us out of thought;
> Or is it that imagination brought
> Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd,
> Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
> Cannot refer to any standard law
> Of either earth or heaven? It is a flaw
> In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,—
> It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
> It spoils the singing of the Nightingale. (67-85)[19]

As the lines given above reflect, within the context of the material sublime, the prize becomes not an accession to "High reason" or a transcendental Mind but "the love of good and ill" (75). Besides, as "our dreamings all, of sleep or wake" take their color from "the sunset" rather than from a spiritual realm, Keats considers it meaningless "to see beyond our bourn" (67-68; 83). What needs to be underlined with regard to these lines is Keats's bringing together the good and the ill in the experience of the material sublime, which is surely no coincidence. As I contend, presenting a simultaneous celebration of the good and the ill in his idea of the material sublime, Keats implies the blurring of the boundaries and hence a non-dualistic harmony of the epistemic divides instead of a "High reason" expected to be lying behind the veil of the sensible as the most ultimate bearer of all meaning. In a similar vein, Smith states that in his idea of the material sublime, Keats suggests not a withdrawal from "the jostling world" but an affirmation of "beauty and truth in that world:"

> Keats is not so clumsy as to write 'material' merely as an unmeaning filler or to create unintentional syntactic ambiguity. 'Material sublime' should be read both as noun-adjective and as adjective-noun; the meanings are complementary, not mutually exclusive…Dreaming is not an escape from the jostling world, but an intense perception of beauty and truth in that world. (302; 303)

Embedded in the double-layered meaning of the material sublime (involving both the sublimity of the matter and the materiality of the sublime) is also the idea of bringing

[19] All quotations from Keats's poetry are taken from *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of John Keats*. (New York: The Modern Library, 2001).

together what Smith terms as "beauty and truth"—that is, the fusion of the epistemically conflicting terms: the idea of materiality (concrete, hard) and sublimity (evanescent, fleeting, inexpressible). Accordingly, Sperry explicates the material sublime as "the desire of the imagination to possess at once the best of both worlds, the ethereal and the concrete" (126). In this respect, we can return to our previous argument that emphasizing embodiedness in the experience of the sublime and embracing both the corporeal and the incorporeal, Keats reverses the Platonic logic regarding whatever is accessible to human senses in the material world as emanating from the One and valuing the spiritual over the physical or the bodily.

How Keats objectifies the sublime has surely been the topic of previous studies; however, these studies have focused on his poems "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil" and "Lamia" and left out his treatment of the sublime in his empirically-grounded nature poems. For instance, regarding the material sublime as "a form of aesthetics empowered by human suffering, especially in a somatic sense," Chen argues that "Isabella's final creation of the pot of basil that contains Lorenzo's head…actualizes the 'material sublime' by indicating that both erotic love and poetic creation are Keatsian experiences of self-annihilation" (37).[20] As for Tontiplaphol, he thinks that it is Lamia who represents "Keats's original incarnation of material sublimity:" "Lamia's body is not balanced, proportionate, or decorous; in her inability to evoke the 'living air' of the open Wordsworthian prospect or the 'reeling air' of the raucous Huntian procession, Lamia embodies the congestion intrinsic to Keats's material sublime" (57; 50). Arguing along similar lines to these critics, I also find the re-composed head of Lorenzo and the disproportionate body of Lamia as sublime. However, with the aim of bringing to the fore what has escaped the attention of the earlier critics, in my discussion of the Keatsian material sublime, I shift the focus of emphasis from these figures, whom I regard as the foreclosed signifiers of the Name-

[20] Chen places the 'material sublime' within the context of the 19th century according to which the word 'material' implies "unhealthy corporeality" and hence regards the Keatsian material sublime "as a form of aesthetics that is empowered by the human body, particularly the abnormal and pathological body afflicted by disease or violence" (40).

of-the-Father incarnate, to the poems where the twisted Moebius strip still remains intact with the dynamic interplay between the imaginary and the symbolic.

In "Ode to a Nightingale," "In drear nighted December," and "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill" in which the intersection of human poetic personae with empirical nature and its nonhuman agents is poeticized and in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" where nature is sculpted on an art object, one can find an answer to the question of why Keats's treatment of the sublime is addressed as non-egotistical (negatively capable) and material. To begin with, in the poem "Ode to a Nightingale," we are presented with a human poetic persona who dissolves into the continuum with nature through his/her affective encounter with a nightingale. Voicing the blissful context of the imaginary with its song, the nightingale shatters all the monotony of the poetic persona's humanist assumptions and evokes a sense of affective response in him/her. "Defined most broadly as a sense of absolute structural impossibility and of total deadlock, the sublime produces profound mental or spiritual disruption, be this momentary or lasting—it is like a shock of the Real," argues Porter (5).[21] So, as if shocked by the Real, the poetic persona no longer stays the same person after encountering the nightingale that evokes in him/her what Porter terms as "a sense of structural impossibility and of total deadlock" but goes through a transformation regarding both his/her configuration of nature and how s/he is positioned in relation to nature. For instance, after his/her imaginary captivation by the nightingale's song, s/he steps outside the binary discourse and begins listening to what nature tells him/her in the absence of the written codes. Though having told its stories for ages in its pre-extra linguistic way, nature is heard for the first time by the poetic persona outside the dialectics of otherness at this moment of sublime intoxication. Even though s/he cannot see anything in the forest due to the "embalmèd darkness," s/he feels "[t]he grass," "the thicket," "the fruit-tree wild," "[w]hite hawthorn," "the pastoral eglantine," or the "fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves" (43; 45-47). Based on

[21] As he further argues, "[u]nlike beauty, grace, charm, and other of the more domesticated aesthetic virtues, the sublime, which has a bit of the rogue and, dysfunctional family member to it, seems to speak more directly to one's experience"—that is, different from the beautiful, "it betokens an overpowering immediacy and a bruising contact with some Real; it knows no canons or calipers" (5-6).

this, we can argue that it becomes the unlocatable or the indefinable state of the nightingale that acting as a flying signifier, ignites the sublime moment. That is, together with the darkness of the forest, the invisibility of the nightingale lays the ground for a more intense sublimity as it destabilizes the Saussurean relation between the concept and the sound image. As Barakonska and Nitka state:

> The moment of putting together, the moment of accord, of identity never arrives as in the aesthetic of the sublime there is no relation of analogy or resemblance between the image and the concept. The sublime, which is not contained in a finite form nor in the infinite idea, is brought about at the moment of rupture, at the moment of incommensurability, which to borrow an architectural metaphor used by Freud to describe a style of writing, is 'colossal and pyramidal.'(26)

"[T]he moment of incommensurability" mentioned by Barakonska and Nitka as marking the outbreak of the sublime moment "contained not in a finite form nor in the infinite idea" is experienced by the poetic persona when the nightingale breaks the assumed symmetrical relation between the concept and the image by being heard but not being seen. This is what Porter means when he says that "[s]ublimity results whenever the distinctness of sensory realms or the intactness of meaning are threatened" (402). With the nightingale that breaks the dualities and awakens all his/her auditory, tactile, or olfactory perceptions to a non-dualistic realm where "the intactness of meaning [is] threatened," the desire of the poetic persona is unchained to merge with nature. If we look at the words s/he chooses to express his/her wish to taste the dionysian ecstasy of the nightingale, we can see why Keats's sublime differs from the classical, unitary idea of the immaterial sublime: after having a bodily dialogue with the nightingale that manifests itself through arousing an affective response in him/her, the poetic persona says that s/he wants to "drink and leave the world unseen" and "fade away into the forest dim" with the nightingale (19-20). As evidenced in these lines, although the poetic persona wants to withdraw from his/her material surroundings, where s/he wants to go is not a spiritual realm beyond the sensible world but a "forest dim," or what has been already present to his/her senses though not attracting his/her notice until this moment. That is, it is again the matter which s/he wishes to delve to step into what s/he reformulates as the grand (the

imaginary or nature). What Bornstein notes with regard to Keats's use of the term 'the ethereal' sheds light on his subversion of the classical idea of sublimity: "In his letters and poetry Keats often used the word 'ethereal' metaphorically to describe the state of a natural or artistic object after it had been transformed by the imagination" (97).[22] Implicit in Bornstein's statement is the idea that the ethereal in the Keatsian context does not address a metaphysical or a Grand truth, and it can be anything that imagination perceives as sublime: "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth."[23] In a similar line of thinking to Bornstein's, Sperry states that the classical boundary between the "elementary and ethereal matter" does not hold true for Keats:

> Keats imagines a distinction but not a complete separation between the two domains, for the ethereal or poetic elements are in some way compounded out of the material phenomena that provide their basis for existence. In his use of 'ethereal' it is far more likely that Keats was drawing on a general awareness of various theories, derived in England primarily from Newton, concerning certain imponderable or subtle fluids diffused throughout the atmosphere, theories that were becoming ever more common in the science of his day as a means of explaining the transmission and of operation of light, heat, and other chemical forces throughout the universe. (35)

Interestingly enough, Sperry links the way that Keats uses such terms as "'abstract' and abstraction,' 'spirit' and 'spiritual,' 'essence and essential,' 'intense' and 'intensity,' 'distill' and 'distillation,' 'empyreal,' 'ethereal,' 'sublime'" to the chemistry courses he took during his medical training at Guy's Hospital: as he states, with these words having "more or less exact meanings in the chemistry of his day,"

[22] Keats identifies three forms of ethereal reality:

> Ethereal things may at least be thus real, divided under three heads—Things real—things semireal—and nothings. Things real, such as existences of Sun moon and stars—and passages of Shakespeare. —Things semireal, such as love, the clouds, etc., which require a greeting of the Spirit to make them wholly exist—and Nothings, which are made great and dignified by an ardent pursuit. (*The Complete Poetical Works* 291)

[23] (From his letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817, *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of John Keats* 489)

Keats refers to the poetic process[24]—"the process by which the poet…can refine the stuff of common experience into the fabric of an interior world of harmony and delight analogous to the spiritual"—with the poetic creation standing spiritual not "in any transcendental sense" but in terms of its intensity or in the sense of its opening "a world like that of dreams where the flow of suggestions and associations can elaborate itself freely and endlessly" (37; 54). Unsettling the linear frame of the unitary idea of sublimity which involves the subordination of the bodily or the sensible to the mental or the supersensible, the poetic persona in Keats similarly regards his/her penetration into nature not as a kind of descent but as a kind of accession to a vital part of his/her bios—to the nonhuman potential (*zoe*) inherent in him/her. At the moment when the sublime reaches its culmination, affecting the poetic persona from head to foot, for instance, also the words "Away! away! …I will fly *to you*" (emphasis added) pour out of his/her mouth and s/he wishes to "fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget/ What [the nightingale] among the leaves has never known,/The weariness, the fever, and the fret" (31; 21-23). As reflected in these lines, the nightingale evokes in him/her not the desire of ascending to the divine One but rather the desire of holding on to its wings and taking part in its joyous dance with flying signifiers in the sky. In this way, the poetic persona translocates himself/herself from the ontology of the human into the ontology of the nonhuman in a topological flow. Considering the poetic persona's psychic transposition from Being to Becoming with his/her repositioning himself/herself in the in-between ontology of the human-nightingale, we cannot underestimate her/her going from the sensible to the conceivable; however, s/he reaches or establishes the conceivable within the sensible, not looking for it in the realm of a transcendental Mind but rather realizing it in his/her material surroundings. That is, what lays the ground of an imaginary realm for the poetic persona becomes not a superior force of the Divine

[24] Sharing Sperry's argument, Abrams also notes that the terminology of chemistry provided Keats with "unprecedented metaphors" "to represent what he called the 'silent Working' (*L*1:185) of the poet's imagination as a process of refining, etherealizing, spiritualizing, and essentializing the actual into the ideal without transcending the limits and conditions of the material world" (43). Expanding on Sperry's thought, he further underlines the non-Platonic connotations of his use of such terms as 'essence' or 'ethereal' by stating that "the products at the end of [the chemical-like poetic process] remain, no less than the substance at its beginning, entirely material things, except that they have been refined into what Keats called the 'material sublime'" (ibid. 43).

but the sensible or empirical nature with all its bodily-speaking images. Locating the lost phallus in nature, in bodily or imaginary self, thus, Keats presents an alternative to the unitary or the immaterial notion of sublimity.

Similar to "Ode to a Nightingale," "In drear nighted December" presents an alternative to the unitary idea of sublimity with its emphasis on the bodily dimension of meaning. Besides, what initiates the sublime in the poem becomes not a steep cliff or a thunder as in the Burkean sublime but the December happiness of a tree and a brook living naïvely unaware of the Law. Thus, stepping into nature with a mind unchained from the teachings of the humanist discourse, the poetic persona gets fascinated by what his/her nonhuman partners, the tree and the brook, tell him: the illusoriness of the idea of linearity. While the tree never gives up "budding at the prime" despite the freezing coldness, the brook also resumes flowing, never feeling discouraged by the winter season (8; 16). Although the metaphysical notion of the sublime advocates the idea of linearity with its adherence to Platonic metaphors, the idea of sublimity, in this context, is both triggered by nature's nonlinear flow and activates the nonlinear potential of the poetic persona. So, instead of taking a spiritual flight destined to an omnipotent God through his/her infatuation with nature, the poetic persona turns his/her face towards his/her innermost reality which is his/her imaginary self and repositions himself/herself at the human-nature intersection.

Keats's poetic personae's move into the in-between space of the human-nonhuman through the sublime experience they go through with the empirical nature is also heard in "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill." Standing upon a little hill "tip-toe," the persona in the poem gets impressed by the images of nature. As s/he expresses his/her feelings looking down from the heights of the hill:

> There was wide wand'ring for the greediest eye,
> To peer upon variety;
> Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,
> And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim;
> To picture out the quaint, and curious bending
> Of the fresh woodland alley never ending;
> Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves,

Guess where the jaunty streams themselves.
I gazed a while, and felt as light and free
As though the fanning wings of Mercury
Had play'd upon my heels: I was light-hearted,
And many pleasures to my vision started;
So I straightaway began to pluck a posey
Of luxuries bright, milky, soft, and rosy. (16-28)

In these lines where the demarcating line between the sky and the earth "gets thinner and thinner until it disappears and they fuse 'never ending'" (Norris 47), one can find the traces of the metamorphosis the poetic persona experiences by his/her sublime interaction with nature. Implying his/her stepping outside the dualistic logic into a third space of in-betweenness, the sky-earth intertwinement stated in the lines runs counter to the metaphysical idea of sublimity within the context of which the subject is elevated from the visible earth into a sky-like ethereal realm. Instead of acknowledging the One behind what s/he sees in empirical nature, the poetic persona "watches intently Nature's gentle doings" that s/he finds as "softer than ring-dove's cooings" (63-64) and awakens to the blurring of boundaries through nature. In this respect, his/her coming to realize the absence of any line of bipartition between the sky and the earth, I would argue, reflects his/her human self's merging with the nonhuman nature on a metaphorical level. Thus, positioned somewhere between the "pure and white" clouds above and "the clear brook" below with his/her affective dance with nature, s/he feels "as light and free/ As though the fanning wings of Mercury/ Had play'd upon [his/her] heels" and begins "to pluck a posey/ Of luxuries bright, milky, soft, and rosy" (8-9;23-24; 28).

Of all Keats's poems, the one where the sublime is experienced most intensely is no wonder "Ode on a Grecian Urn," where the Lacanian object of desire is flawlessly concretized. Different from "Ode to a Nightingale," "In drear nighted December," and "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill" whose poetic personae taste the sublime through their intersection with empirical nature, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" presents the eruption of sublime feelings in its poetic persona through confronting him/her with a silent urn. Though having no magnitude in size or value in the Kantian sense, the ordinary-looking urn causes a stir in the poetic persona for reasons unknown. However, when we go deeper into the poem, we see that behind the very ordinariness

of the urn lies a greater imaginary realm, and hence the object *a* to which we can relate the triggering of the sublime. Standing still as a "[s]ylvian historian" telling stories sweeter than "our rhyme" (3-4), the urn opens the door of an imaginary realm for the poetic persona with the premodern life of the images sculpted on it. As the poetic persona contemplates, in this world of speaking images, there exists no linearity. Interestingly, the petrification of the linear flow on the urn paves the ground for an ever-lively notion of desire, hence unleashing a sublime response in the poetic persona. With its unnamable state, the urn, both stands as a sublime object and leads to the outpouring of the sublime, of what addressed by Lyotard as the "unpresentable:"

> The sublime is a different sentiment. It takes place…when the imagination fails to present an object which might, if only in principle, come to match a concept. We have the Idea of the world (the totality of what is), but we do not have the capacity to show an example of it. We have the Idea of the simple (that which cannot be broken down, decomposed), but we cannot illustrate it with a sensible object which would be a 'case' of it. We can conceive the infinitely great, the infinitely powerful, but every presentation of an object destined to 'make visible' this absolute greatness or power appears to us painfully inadequate. Those are Ideas of which no presentation is possible. Therefore, they impart no knowledge about reality (experience); they also prevent the free union of the faculties which gives rise to the sentiment of the beautiful; and they prevent the formation and the stabilization of taste. They can be said to be unpresentable. (78)

Considering that the sublime is sparked by the nonlinear flow of nature also in the poems "Ode to a Nightingale," "In drear nighted December," and "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill," one can come up with the question of why "Ode on a Grecian Urn" stands unmatched by any other Keatsian poem with regard to the intensity of the sublime it poeticizes. Although the notion of nature that leads to the experiences of the sublime in the previously discussed poems is empirical, nature in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is presented by the frieze-figures sculpted on the solid ground of an urn. Thus, though conflicting with the very idea of the sublime, what gives birth to the sublime in the poem becomes this art object that has a solid, frozen surface on the material level. The semantic complexity regarding how a thing of "brute sensation"

having features as "the diametrical opposite of a sublime object" can generate the sublime is mentioned also by Porter, who asks:

> [H]ow could a bit of matter—a stone, a body of water, a stretch of ground, a piece of marble, the surface of a vase, a glint of azure—provide any impetus to higher reflection? How does brute sensation produce something sensational? (390-391)

Different from the poetic personae who hear the song of the nightingale, see the ever-green branches of happy trees, or "linger a while upon some bending planks/ That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks"[25] (61), the poetic persona in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" cannot touch, smell, or hear nature on the material level. However, s/he also achieves to transpose himself/herself into the imaginary realm of nature and feels what nature tells him/her more intensely than the other poetic personae. Moving from the visual into the imaginary realm of the urn, for instance, s/he begins to hear the melodies of the pipers or even attends the sacrifice of a heifer on a psychic plane. With the sublime reaching its peak to unsettle all the established binaries built upon the phantasy of an omnipotent One, thus, the words "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" (49) are heard.

1.3.2. Negative Capability

Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;
The reading of an ever-changing tale.[26]

"I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for truth by consequitive reasoning."[27] Spoken by the sensuous poet Keats, who left his mark on the Romantic quest for the liberation of the repressed with his unique experimentation in language, these words draw the contours of the notion of negative capability, the much-discussed idea but still one of the most intriguing concepts of

[25] (From "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill")

[26] ("Sleep and Poetry" 90-91)

[27] (Taken from his letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November, 1817, *Complete Poems and Selected Letters* 489).

the Romantic age. As a term that arose to express Keats's dissatisfaction with the 'egotistical sublime' of Wordsworth and Coleridge, negative capability mainly refers to the state of being non-egotistical or disinterested, the artistic quality regarded as vital for a creative process. Behind the idea of the ego's annulment, however, is hidden a richer suggestion as to the non-closure of meaning that cannot be chained by any mathematical formula or "consequitive reasoning." As Keats states in his letter dated December 21, 1817, to George and Tom Keats:

> [S]everal things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature& which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact& reason. Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge…with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.[28]

Putting "the sense of Beauty" above everything in an art work, the idea of negative capability pinpoints neutrality or objectivity in the poetic voice—that is, it calls for a shift from a fixed identity marked by a singularity of voice to an empathetic selflessness containing in itself a dynamic desire not only to hear other voices but also to be heard by them, hence erasing the active gazer/passive gazed divide set between the self and the other. As Ou accordingly argues, being negatively capable is "to be open to the actual vastness and complexity of experience, and one cannot possess this openness unless one can abandon the comfortable enclosure of doctrinaire knowledge, safely guarding the self's identity, for a more truthful view of the world" (2-3). Relevant here is what Keats states in his letter to J. H. Reynolds:

> Why with Wordsworths 'Matthew with a bough of wilding in his hand' when we have Jacques 'under an oak &c'…I don't mean to deny Wordsworth's grandeur & Hunt's merit, but I mean to say we need not be teased with grandeur& merit—when we can have them uncontaminated& unobtrusive. Let us have the old Poets, & robin

[28] (*Complete Poems and Selected Letters* 492)

> Hood your letter and its sonnets gave me more pleasure than will the 4th Book of Childe Harold & the whole of any body's life & opinions….[29]

Different from such writers as Wordsworth and Hunt, who talk about their own "life" or "opinions," Keats leaves aside his identity and opens himself to what is addressed by Ou as "the actual vastness and complexity of experience:" reflecting that "a poet is a sage;/A humanist, physician to all men" ("The Fall of Hyperion: a Vision" I. 189-190), he resists the governing *I* contemplating the external world with preconceived truths and embraces every unique experience objectively without making his presence felt as Keats the man. At this point, looking at the dynamics of Shakespeare's style can offer a richer insight into Keats's negatively capable self, given that it is modelled on Shakespeare[30]:

> The striking peculiarity of Shakespeare's mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds, so that it contained a universe of thought and feeling within itself, and had no one peculiar bias or exclusive excellence more than another. He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become…His genius shone equally on the evil and on the good, on the wise and the foolish, the monarch and the beggar. (Hazlitt 113)

As "the least of an egotist," Shakespeare touched objectively on both Iago and Othello or on Beatrice and Desdemona, which no wonder explains the reason why he drags any attempt to be exposed to a certain label about his way of thinking into a deadlock. That is, with Shakespeare, one cannot help but think how Ophelia and Katherina, two contrasting female figures, are presented with the same objective voice, without implying any "peculiar bias" or appropriation. Similar to Shakespeare, Keats reflects an objective tendency in his works and establishes an emphatic identification with each figure he poeticizes without aiming to morally tame his audience. In his objective portrayal of not only the lovesick decapitator Isabella or

[29] (From his letter dated 3 February 1818, *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of John Keats* 493-494)

[30] To express his admiration for Keats, Walter Savage Landor states: "What a poet would poor Keats have been, if he had lived! He had something of Shakespeare in him, and what (nobody else ever had) much, very much of Chaucer" (304-305).

the repulsively beautiful Lorenzo but also Apollonius the scholar with a piercing but no longer functioning gaze, for instance, one can find an answer to the question of how Keats becomes negatively capable in a Shakespearean way. What is more important, as evidenced in his figures like Isabella, Lorenzo, or Apollonius, in a way that would sound more interesting to a Victorian mind, Keats blurs the good/evil, beautiful/disgusting, or potent/impotent boundaries and open-mindedly emphasizing the intertwining of the binary opposites in a single character, implies the futility of categorical distinctions. In this way of voicing threshold subject positions, thus, he triggers in his readers feelings of simultaneous fascination and abhorrence, resulting not in a cathartic resolution, as seen in Shakespearean tragedies, but leading to further impasses of meaning denying to be resolved. To put it also in the words of Perkins, with his approach being "essentially dramatic rather than didactic,"

> Keats does not come forward in his person in any direct way; he merely presents or narrates. Even in the lyrics, a form in which by definition and convention the author directly expresses his own feelings and reactions, Keats often remains in the background. He establishes symbols, their latent significance is unfolded, and the poet seems to be largely passive to the implications of the symbol adopted. That is, he allows his attitudes to take on the tincture or bent of the symbol. Where this is not the case, the poet often appears in the poem not as a manipulator directing his symbols, or as a direct commentator, but in a dynamic and changing relation to the controlling symbols, reacting differently to them through the course of the poem as their fuller potential significance is gradually disclosed. In this way as in so many others Keats, as compared with Wordsworth and Shelley, is concrete rather than abstract, and, in this sense, oblique rather than direct. Consequently, one does not find in him a clear-cut or obvious moral interpretation which can be pinned down in the language of abstraction. (196)

Different from Coleridge, who thinks that "the greatest possible Evil is Moral Evil" (*Coleridge's Writings: On Religion and Psychology* 14) and adopts a moralistic tone of voice in his works, Keats abounds in the amoral with his chameleon poetic stance. Interestingly, what Keats means by his negatively capable self has been discussed also within different contexts, being interpreted either as symptomatic of his configuration of women or his Cockney origins. Arguing against Jong's argument that '"feminism means empathy. And empathy is akin to the quality Keats called

‘negative quality’—that unique gift for projecting oneself into other states of consciousness,”’ for instance, Wolfson suggests that “Keats coined Negative Capability to define a ‘Man of Achievement’ and his attitude towards women of genius, and views, and achievement…was patently hostile” (94). It is my contention that while Jong can be right for seeing in the negatively capable style of Keats a feminist overtone, Wolfson is wrong in interpreting the term through the ideas of Keats the man because in his notion of negative capability, Keats takes the idea of selflessness as a reference point. Discussing the term within a different context, Lau links Keats’s idea of chameleon selflessness to his desire to hide his state as “a Cockney apothecary’s apprentice” that led to his stigmatization as a writer of low social origins (“Jane Austen and John Keats” 108). At this point, we can recall Lockhart’s harsh criticism of Keats: “It is a better and wiser thing,” Lockhart said “to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet” and advised him against writing poetry, saying that “so back to the shop Mr. John, back to ‘plasters, pills and ointment boxes,’ &c. But for Heaven’s sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry” (524). In the face of these insulting remarks, Lau states, Keats had no other option but to take shelter behind his figures to pursue his artistic career: both Austen and Keats “cultivated a selfless anonymity in their writing in part because of their inferior social status” and “[l]osing themselves in their characters, either by entering wholly into the identities of their characters or by speaking through the voices of other writers, allowed both to acquire an authority they lacked as marginalized individuals in Regency British society” (“Jane Austen and John Keats” 109). As McFarland similarly argues, “[t]he whole point of the Keatsian masks was to convert a felt inadequacy in the author into a visage that could be readily accepted by the reading public of his time” (3). I certainly agree with Lau and McFarland for Keats’s taking the form of constantly shapeshifting voices; however, I think that in hiding beneath what McFarland addresses as “the Mask of Camelot” and “the Mask of Hellas” (59) or in “losing [himself] in [his] characters,” Keats’s purpose was more to break his way with established views and emphasize openness or disinterestedness in the creative process than to be acknowledged by “the reading public of his time.” That is, though resisting the critical bias against his work by his dissolution into his

poems, in his divorce from Keats the man, what he intended to do was actually to cross the boundaries of the governing *I* in general. So, it is safe to say that although he was suffering from his Cockney state, Keats managed to turn it into an advantage: "for Hunt and his group, this apparent marginalization was a guarantee of their resistance to established power" and "they participated in both the isolation and the liberation that marks an avant-garde" (Cox 12). However, the idea of selflessness he advocated worked not only to hide his Cockney origins but also to avoid the controlling tone of voice clashing with the very spirit of Romanticism built upon the idea of liberating the repressed from the repressing *I*.

Apart from its resistance to the preaching or the instructive *I*, what needs to be stressed with regard to Keats's negatively capable self is its emphasis on the post-dualistic subject-object interaction. Leaving with his negatively capable self the controlling tone of voice behind to hear multiple possible voices manifesting themselves on an affective plane, Keats breaks down the assumed subject/object epistemic divide or he reflects, in Viswanathan's words, "the utmost sensitising of the total sensibility and the senses, in and through which a complete empathetic losing of the self in the other is achieved:"

> The idea for one thing postulates an ideal of egolessness, for another recommends a sensuously oriented, total absorption of the 'one' in the 'other', and for yet another, suggests the uncanny 'moment' of the merger of the perceiving or creating mind with the perceived or created object. Amidst the major factors in the background of the concept are, first, the crucial idea of an essential 'disinterestedness' of the human being, second, the shift of sensibility and of consciousness in Romantic age which led to an engaged attempt at a radical reordering of the subject-object, that is, the self and the world relationship and third, the sociopolitical extension of sympathy in a fellow-feeling for the poor and the suffering. (108; 109)

Involving the "total absorption of the 'one' in the 'other,'" the idea of being negatively capable brings to the fore, I would propose, subject-object or culture-nature simultaneity. That is, contemplating the nonhuman nature or object not with modernity's taken-for-granted assumptions about them (as the inferiors of culture and subject) but rather with a sensuous self which is ready to conceive the other as its

playmate in the drama of desire, Keats slides from the human into the human-nonhuman realm, as seen in his empirically-grounded nature poems. So, stepping outside the subject/object, human/nature, or self/other divide, the negatively capable self achieves seeing the object as it is—that is, as an agent not waiting to be fitted into the schematic assumptions of the contemplating self but rather ready to invite him/her into a dynamic process of recreation on the same surface as subject-object, which I have discussed in detail in the earlier part with respect to Keats's treatment of the sublime in his poems where nature is presented empirically. Bearing this in mind, I will discuss in this section in what ways Keats exercises negative capability other than by taking a non-egotistical turn in his portrayal of sublimity.

In addition to involving disinterestedness and mind-body co-presence, the notion of negative capability implies departure from the closure of symbolic codes based on dualistic thinking and cherishes, in Keats's words, "uncertainties, Mysteries, or doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact& reason."[31] In this respect, it reasserts the Romantic conviction that as the analytic and logical reasonings "violate the organic process of nature," by "abstract[ing] from the full concreteness, reduc[ing] the living process to static concepts, and substitut[ing] an artificial order," "an imaginative openness of mind" is needed for creative thinking (Bate, *John Keats* 239; 449). Keats's critique of Dilke, for instance, sheds light on his dissatisfaction with the idea of a transcendental signified, hinting at his call for the suspension of linearity in his idea of negative capability. Although "[t]he only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing—to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts, not a select party," "Dilke was a man who cannot feel he has a personal identity unless he has made up his mind about everything…Dilke will never come at a truth as long as he lives, because he is always trying at it," thinks Keats (*The Complete Poetical Works* 405). Different from Dilke, who quests for an ultimate truth as the origin of all meaning, Keats shatters the unquestioned certitude of the sign and dethroning the Signified from its formerly superior position, points to the fluidity of meaning unbounded by any symmetrical formulation. Accordingly, he portrays his negatively capable self also when he,

[31] (*Complete Poems and Selected Letters* 492).

travestying the certainty of the sign, paints or more precisely brings to the fore limbos where either/or divide gives its place to indeterminacies spatial, characterial, semantic, and sensorial.

Not confined to a single frame, Keats features a constant oscillation between realms which are termed opposite within the context of the binary discourse. As Stillinger states, "the visionary and down-to-earth tendencies frequently exist simultaneously, in an ongoing of tug-of-war" in Keats and his characters "shuttl[e] back and forth" between "earth and heaven, mortality and immortality, time and eternity, materiality and spirituality, the known and the unknown, the finite and the infinite, realism and romance, the natural and the supernatural" ("Introduction" xv). In Endymion, Lamia, or Madeline taking a flight into lands unknown in quest for their love, in the poet-narrator of "The Fall of Hyperion: a Vision" who stands at the edge of dream-reality, and in the poetic personae of "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December," for instance, we can hear Keats's continuous fluctuation between different realms. Opening in the isle of Latmos, "Endymion" features a mortal's search for an immortal maiden, the moon-goddess Cynthia, with whom he falls in love in his sleep under Peona's "favourite bower's quiet shade/ On her couch, new made of flower leaves" (437-438). Embarking on a quest for the lady who enthralls him as the "completed form of all completeness" and the "high perfection of all sweetness" (606-608), the lovesick Endymion delves into the depths of the underground where he meets mythical characters and re-enters the earthly realm where the worldly Indian maid he encounters there turns out to be none other than the heavenly Cynthia. To Bornstein, the way that Endymion finds the heavenly in the worldly gives insight into his "gradual rebirth, or self-transformation:" following his flights into the foreign lands for the sake of Cynthia, he ascends to a different perceptive level and achieves "transform[ing] natural materials into ethereal ones" (105). Endymion's real "self-transformation," I would add, lies in his locating the longed-for not in a transcendental realm but in a material world, hence pointing to the illusoriness of meaning's hierarchization. Similar to Endymion, the serpent-woman Lamia, left spellbound by Lycius, is dragged from the fairyland Crete into Corinth, where social markers are felt more deeply and she is implied to return to

Crete to re-emerge in Corinth one more time. Similar to Endymion and Lamia, Madeline in "The Eve St. Agnes" makes an entry into a dreamland to reach Porphyro and mistakes the external reality for the image melting into her dreams. As for the poet-narrator in "The Fall of Hyperion: a Vision," awakening from his sleep, he inexplicably finds himself before an altar with an ambivalent figure, the goddess of memory named Moneta, asking him to ascend its steps and telling him there that '"[t]he poet and the dreamer are distinct,/ Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes:" "The one pours out a balm upon the world,/The other vexes it"' (199- 202). Perplexing readers with their indeterminacy about where they end reality or the earthly and begin fantasy or the heavenly, these processes which are seen in the constant flights of Endymion, Lamia, Madeline, or the poet-narrator of "The Fall of Hyperion: a Vision" are portrayed in "Ode to a Nightingale" by the half-awake and half-asleep state of its poetic persona: "Was it a vision or waking dream/ Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?" (79-80). A similar in-between state of wakefulness-sleepiness is portrayed in "In drear nighted December" where the poetic persona stands somewhere between the imaginary-symbolic or nature-culture. The result that can be drawn from all these in-between states denying any systematic explanation is no wonder that in the Keatsian world where nothing can be known for sure, there is a constant intrusion of the repressed and the foreclosed into the symbolic, hence asserting that no energy is erased or restrained: not losing its potential force, what has been otherized under the illusion of the One or even excluded from language manifests itself in any case, as I reflect throughout the dissertation.

As part of his negatively capable style, Keats also reflects a unique touch in his use of language and cherishes what remains uninvaded by the symbolic codes: while the poetic voice in "Sleep and Poetry" asks "What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing/In a green island, far from all men's knowing?" "What, but thee, Sleep?" (5-6; 11), what is indeterminate reaches its culmination in the expression of "the hid scent in an unbudded rose" ("Lamia" 54). Apart from emphasizing the unnamable or the fleeting, Keats also creates semantic limbos with oxymoronic expressions that he forms by bringing together conflicting terms. For instance, he locates the "richest

juice" in "poison-flowers,"[32] hears "on the blue fields of heaven" "a little noiseless noise among the leaves,/ born of the very sigh that silence heaves,"[33] addresses the "aged roots" with their "quaint mossiness,"[34] and depicts the "daisies" as "rose-scented."[35] By doing so, he opens the door of a realm unrestrained by consequitive certainties. Surprisingly, due to his revision of language, Keats could not be understood in his own time, which resulted in his exposure to harsh criticisms about the low quality of his writing, as I have mentioned earlier: while Shelley thought that he had a "bad sort of style" (838), in his letter to Shelley, Byron similarly referred to his work as belonging to a "*second-hand* school of poetry" (204). However, far from being a failed attempt at poetry, the way Keats uses such semantically deviated terms reflects his success in speaking at the symbolic level by the logic of the imaginary which knows neither the splitting nor the totalizing force of any mathematical formulation. That is, bringing together the semantically opposite terms in a single expression, Keats seems to open an alternative space in language beyond the signifier/signified divide. Accordingly, drawing on the irony in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" involving a "'forever warm'" love and a "'Cold Pastoral'" and in "Ode to a Nightingale" portraying a "Janus-like value of 'forlorn'" and "multivalences of death, dark, [and] light," Wasserman argues that with his oxymorons, Keats "strive[s] to reconcile the mortal with the immortal without cancelling either" (226-227). To Levinson who similarly regards what is addressed by Shelley as "'the bad sort of style'" not as a sign of Keats's failure in language but as a sign of his "truly negative capability," embedded in Keats's incongruous expressions is his aim to critique the decorum of the eighteenth century Literature: "[b]y the stylistic contradictions of his verse, Keats produces a writing which is aggressively literary and therefore not just 'not Literature' but, in effect, *anti*-Literature: a parody" (6; 5). Based on the capitalization of Literature, it is safe to argue that through his negatively capable style of contradictions, Keats parodies the neoclassical literature,

[32] ("Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil" 104)

[33] ("I stood tip-toe upon a little hill" 10-12)

[34] ("I stood tip-toe upon a little hill" 40)

[35] ("Ode" 14)

with the capital letter presenting an ironic account of its unquestioned but prized conventional rhetoric. So, giving insight into his "Catullan and Cockney delight in toying with what others consider serious" (Cox 162), the simultaneity of the contraries in Keats's poetry, I contend, dislocates the referential language to emphasize what lies behind the linguistically foregrounded: an alternative dimension of evocative meaning surpassing the neat narratives of the symbolic.

Keats, who finds a pathway for romantic expression with his oxymorons, also employs synesthesia—to the intertwinement of sensory perceptions—in his negatively capable style. Being one of the most famous trends of symbolism, "'synesthesia' designates both a faculty, a technique, and a phenomenon focused on the combination of two or more different sensory perceptions triggered by specific stimuli:" it involves the intermingling of different modes of perception such as "hearing colors," "seeing sounds, colors of sounds," or "tasting colors or sounds" (Balla 75; 81; 82). Keats's poetry is resonant with rich synesthesia presenting one feeling by another ('"fragrant and enwreathèd light,"'[36] '"pale and silver silence,"'[37] "scarlet pain,"[38] '"the touch of scent,"[39]) but

> the really distinctive quality in Keats—and a quality his Victorian imitators rarely attained—is less the *substitution* than it is the *substantiation* of one sense by another, in order to give, as it were, additional dimension and depth, as in 'the *moist scent* of flowers,' 'embalmed darkness,' or in making incense tangibly 'soft' and visible. (Bate, "Keats's Style" 416)

Considering his "*substantiation* of one sense by another," we can argue that Keats poses a challenge to the closed system of the sign that fails to voice the uncontainable or the uncaptured in its own terms. That is, using such expressions as the "moist scent of flowers" or the "fragnant and enwreathed light" that, speaking bodily, address the affective dimension of meaning, Keats points to what lies beyond

[36] ("Hyperion" I. 219)

[37] (Hyperion II. 355)

[38] ("Lamia" I. 154)

[39] ("The Fall of Hyperion: a Vision" I. 23-24)

the full grasp of the symbolic codes in a post-dualistic manner: "the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty& Truth."[40] As Balla similarly states, "synesthesia has nurtured a new epistemological break" by revealing the "intra-cosmic unity"—the idea that "most elements of the universe are interconnected at a microcosmic and macrocosmic level" (201-202). The idea of non-binarized interconnectedness inherent in the notion of synesthesia, thus, gives insight into Keats's urge to open the closure of binary hierarchies. This is what J. Barnard means when he says that "Keats imagine[s] in sensory terms:" "the imaginative experience…start[s] from direct experience, but its meaning [goes] beyond mere day-dreaming. It [is] in fact a kind of thinking through images" (53). If we look at more instances of synasthesia in his poem, we can better see his challenge to the referential language. In "Endymion," for instance, while expressing "eglantine" as "rain-scented," he combines tactile sensory perception (velvet) with auditory sensory perception (song): "Yet with as sweet a softness as might be/ Remember'd from its velvet summer song" (IV 100; 296-297). Thus, while saving the bodily dimension of meaning from its assigned peripheral position, he simultaneously shatters the closed notion of the sign, pointing to the instability of meaning due to the very presence of the affect.

1.4. The Methodology and the Trajectory of the Study

The chapter entitled "Theoretical Background" discusses the ecopsychological notion of subjectivity and the Lacanian concepts of psychosis, feminine sexuality, and *extimacy*. To renegotiate the ecopsychological notion of the subject, I draw on the concepts of *sinthome*, the unconscious, Becoming nomadic, the inextricable knotting of the real-imaginary-symbolic, positivity of difference, desire, *objet petit a*, and the signifier. With its emphasis on reconnecting with nature, ecopsychological theory points to the human-nonhuman relationality and promotes a constantly evolving subject that stands at the imaginary-symbolic intersection. Taking this

[40] (From his letter to George and Tom Keats, 21, 27(?) December 1817, 491-492)

dynamic subject position as a reference point for the poetic personae in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December," I discuss how Keats opens a new pathway for expressing the subject that defies binary identification or categorization, tied in a Borromean fashion. To discuss the alternative subject positions in "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil," "Lamia," and "La Belle Dame sans Mercy," I consult Lacan's theorization of psychosis and feminine sexuality in the second part of the theoretical chapter. In the final part, I touch upon the concept of becoming *extimate* for a discussion of the subject-object interaction portrayed in "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

The textual discussion part of the dissertation consists of three chapters: "Unchaining Desire in 'Ode to a Nightingale' and 'In drear nighted December,'" "Crossing Borders with the Resurfacing of the Psychotic Material in 'Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil,' 'Lamia,' and 'La Belle Dame sans Mercy,'" and "Becoming Topological in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn.'" Each chapter addresses the question of how Keats presents constantly changing, in-between subject positions and subject-object relations. In the chapter "Unchaining Desire in 'Ode to a Nightingale' and 'In drear nighted December," I discuss "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December" with regard to the subjective translocations on a psychic level. With nature unsettling all the teleological certainties of the Cartesian logic, the post/non-anthropocentric aim of decentring the anthropos and demythologizing the dominant idea of the subject is aestheticized in these poems. To discuss this post/non-anthropocentric subject position poeticized in a Keatsian manner, I refer to the Braidottian ideas of becoming-animal/insect/imperceptible, zoe-bios, and the Lacanian ideas of desire, *sinthome*, affect, the imaginary, voice, *imago*, *lalangue*, and object *a*. Through these concepts with which I aim to create a kind of dialogue between Braidotti, Lacan, and Keats, I argue that a dynamic subject position evolves out of a Borromean knotting of the real-imaginary-symbolic.

In the next chapter of the dissertation, I discuss the alternative subject positions in "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil," "Lamia," and "La Belle Dame sans Mercy," drawing on the Lacanian concepts of psychosis and feminine sexuality. As I contend, Lorenzo, Lamia, and La Belle Dame sans Mercy destabilize the integrity of the sign

and complicate the notion of origin, by collapsing all Platonic metaphors. Resurfacing in the real as the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father, these psychotic figures stand at the human-nonhuman, the real-fantastic, the nurturing-devouring, and the adorable-repulsive intersection. In this respect, they step out of the totalizing frame of metaphysical dualities. Another focus of this chapter is a discussion of how Keats dispels the myth of *the* Woman in his characterization of these poems' female figures, Isabella, Lamia, and La Belle Dame sans Mercy, who find a way to voice themselves despite their denial of visibility by the dialectics of recognition due to their resistance to fit into any epistemic categorical divide.

In the final discussion chapter, "Becoming Topological in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,'" I discuss "Ode on a Grecian Urn" in relation to the concept of *extimacy*. Through my discussion of the poem against the backdrop of the idea of becoming *extimate*, I argue that the poetic persona in the poem psychically translocates himself/herself from his/her physical surroundings to the imaginary space of the figures on the urn, where s/he feels intoxicated by the drunkenness of its untold stories. Breaking, in this context, the categorical subject/object divide, through his/her interaction with the silent urn, the poetic persona objectifies a Moebius strip that involves the merging of the inside-outside.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter presents a theoretical discussion of the ecopsychological notion of subjectivity and the Lacanian concepts of psychosis, feminine sexuality, and space. Adopting a critical stance in the discussion of these theoretical concepts, the chapter firstly discusses the concepts of the *sinthome*, Becoming nomadic, the inextricable knotting of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, positivity of difference, desire, *objet petit a*, and the signifier to show how the ecopsychological subject stands at the intersection of the Lacanian and the Braidottian epistemologies. Taking Lacan and Braidotti as a reference point for the elucidation of this alternative subject position, I reflect how ecopsychology deconstructs the binary logic of modernity in its own way, and promotes a constantly evolving subject position that defies identification, categorization, or differentiation. Within the frame of ecopsychology, this open-ended subject that I consider as an interface between the Lacanian desiring subject and the Braidottian subject of Becoming, is achieved through having epiphanic moments of access to nature. Similar to Lacan and Braidotti who, foregrounding the inextricability of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, bend the humanist discourse to point to the continuity and porosity of borders and affective modes of interaction between different species, ecopsychological thinking underlines the significance of reconnecting with nature which it regards as taking on the role of creating a splice between the imaginary and the symbolic. In the second part of the chapter where I discuss Lacan's theorization of psychosis, I foreground that with the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father, one loses touch with external reality and plunges into the imaginary. In the chapter titled "The Collapse of *the* Woman," I discuss Lacan's (re)configuration of feminine sexuality. Finally, I focus on the Lacanian notion of space with regard to the concept of becoming *extimate*.

2.1. Ecopsychological Vision of Subjectivity: An Interface between the Lacanian and the Braidottian Nomadic Subjects

> Where are we to situate the human? A historical succession of quasi-objects, quasi-subjects, it is impossible to define the human by an essence, as we have known for a long time. Its history and its anthropology are too diverse for it to be pinned down once and for all.[41]

As an interdisciplinary field, bringing ecology and psychology together, ecopsychology calls for a post-anthropocentric resignification of human-nature interaction. For Fisher, resignification of nature constitutes the backbone of the theory of ecopsychology as he argues, "without an extralinguistic space within our experiencing, without an opening beyond our previous symbolizations, the meanings we find in relation to nature can never be other than what our existing language-forms already say" (*Radical Ecopsychology* 64). So, he calls for opening a new space of enunciation for nature within the context of ecopsychology, terming it no longer as "distant, hard, literal, mute, static, passive" but "a constant flux of interweaving processes, lacking in any permanence or ultimate solidity," that is—a world of "fluid boundaries," "metamorphoses," and "shape-shifting transformations" as it was viewed by indigenous tribes (ibid. 100; 97; 139). Different from the anthropocentric practices of ego psychology that advocates an essentialist subject, ecopsychology presents a relational, complex vision of subjectivity, having a dynamic link with desire. In my attempt to respond to the epistemological gap in the studies of ecopsychology that leave out the nomadization of the subject in their suggestion of a multifaceted, post-Cartesian subject position, I foreground the ecopsychological subject's post-anthropocentric dimension. In this regard, I take the Lacanian and the Braidottian alternative subject positions as a backcloth to my reading of the ecopsychological subject and recontextualize it. I regard the new subject position suggested by the post-anthropocentric orientation of ecopsychology as an interface between the Lacanian subject and the Braidottian nomadic subject.

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[41] (Latour 136)

Similar to ecopsychological theory that calls for a world beyond logocentric dualism, both Braidotti and Lacan pose a challenge to the logocentric discourse and its exclusionary mode of representation, involving the human subject's divorce from nature[42] for his/her gratification in the symbolic as a civilized being. In their emphasis on voicing the unvoiced of the dominant discourse, Braidotti and Lacan open paths of access to new configurations of subjectivity, as an alternative to the fixed subject of modernity. Denying the teleological drive, their re-configured subject positions transgress the dichotomous borders of logocentrism and reconsider a prediscursive culture-nature continuum. In this sense, the Cartesian subject that has been gouged out of the pre-symbolic, imaginary-real space for his/her symbolization is reintegrated to his/her corporeality and, awakened from numbness, to his/her fluidity, experiencing a kind of psychic reterritorialization. As I argue, what ecopsychology does by repositioning the human subject in his/her relation to nature corresponds to what both Braidotti and Lacan do by their suggestion of a non-unitary notion of subjectivity. Stated in other terms, similar to ecopsychology that rewrites the human subject's relation to nature by its demythologization of the primal crime,[43] Lacan and Braidotti awaken the human to his/her non-human dimension. In their reconfiguration of the human subject—regarding him/her no longer as the colonizer of nature but as its extension—both Lacan and Braidotti address the ecopsychological subject who evades symbolic categorizations through his/her constant oscillation along spatio-temporal coordinates. So, taking the post-Cartesian dissolution into continuum with nature as a basic reference point for this new subject position, I argue that the ecopsychological subject is marked by a non-dualistic sense

[42] Metzner uses the amnesia metaphor to refer to humans' divorce from environmental reciprocity. He says, "we as a species are suffering from a kind of *collective amnesia*" because we have forgotten how our ancestors once lived—they were marked by "certain attitudes and kinds of perception, an ability to empathize and identify with nonhuman life, respect for the mysterious, and humility in relationship to the infinite complexities of natural world" ("The Psychopathology of the Human-Nature Relationship" 61).

[43] Within the context of Freudian psychoanalysis, one is required to repress his/her desire for the mother or to be separated from her to be given access to an ideal subject position in society. So, Oedipus's murder of his father and union with his mother is called the primal crime in the Freudian school. However, reversing the logic of the Oedipus myth, ecopsychological thinking argues that one commits a crime when s/he estranges himself/herself from the mother, nature, which is tantamount to saying that it is not murdering the father but repressing our ties with the mother that should actually be called a crime.

of continuity. This non-hierarchical subjective consistency is addressed by Lacan and Braidotti in their emphasis on the porosity of borders, affective interaction, and Spinozist notion of desire, all of which are evoked in the blissful context of nature. In this context, I aim to discuss the concepts of the *sinthome*, the unconscious, the notion of Becoming nomadic, the inextricable knotting of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, positivity of difference, desire, object *a*, and the notion of the signifier to reflect how the ecopsychological subject stands at the intersection of the Lacanian and Braidottian epistemologies.

2.1.1. Dispersal Along the Porosity of Borders

Resisting formulation by the binary discourse of humanism, ecopsychology suggests that the subject is marked by his/her constant fluctuation along the porosity of boundaries. Different from modern psychology that standardizes the human subject as "an independent, self-contained, separate self motivated by purely egoistic needs and drives to seek personal pleasure and avoid personal pain" (Conn 162), ecopsychology presents a fluid subject who is in touch with nature. To deconstruct the discourse of humanistic psychology that has led to the "legitimation and normalization of the separation of consciousness from nature" or from "the myriad forms of 'the other"' (Puhakka 19), ecopsychology demythologizes the Oedipus myth, that fictionalizes modernity's obsession with origin and linear temporality through Oedipus, who is castrated by the Father as a punishment for his violation of linearity by union with his mother. Problematizing the taken for granted myth of Oedipus that has been working on the unconscious of human subjects throughout history, terming union with the mother (nature) as a sin and thus calling for estrangement from the pre-linguistic space of the imaginary as a requirement to meet the conditions of an ideal subject of humanism in the symbolic, ecopsychology argues that it is not union with the mother that constitutes the primal sin but rather total separation from the motherly space. As Roszak complicates the myth, "the 'primal crime' may not have been the prehistoric betrayal of the father, but the act of breaking faith with the mother; Mother Earth" (*The Voice of the Earth* 83). By his problematization of the linear logic that denies Oedipus symbolic gratification as

long as he carries the mark of his sinful union with the mother and promises him an entrance into the symbolic only in case of his castration—that is, separation from the motherly space, which comes to mean also a kind of death into life—Roszak poses a challenge to totalizing practices of humanistic psychology that colonize the multilayered complexities of the human subject by taking Cartesian rationality as the basic reference point for his/her formulation and overlooking his/her irrational, non-human dimension. As he further argues:

> Psychology, like theology, must eventually come to terms with original sin. Both madness and sin presuppose a pre-existing state of grace. At some point, the healthy animals we were once, if only for some split second of prenatal or postnatal time, lost that primal sanity and grew up to become the bad mothers and fathers who made all the bad institutions. (ibid. 306)

Through his symptomatic reading of the original sin, Roszak also reverses the gaze in the dominant psychological discourse that equates madness with having a link with the pre-linguistic space and aims for the repression of its flows of energies as a requirement for attaining an access to ideal subject position.[44] In this context, he underlines the inevitability of the human-nature continuum.

Roszak's erasure of the rupture between the human subject and nature in his ecopsychological rewriting of the primal crime is echoed in Lacan when he points at the inextricability of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic through his notion of the *sinthome* and his subversive theorization of the unconscious. Similarly, this porosity of borders is reflected in Braidotti when she shifts the emphasis from the ontology of Being to ontology of Becoming in her notion of nomadic subjectivity. In this sense, while Lacan poses his challenge to an essentialist notion of subjectivity by referring to psychic reality, Braidotti presents her critique of subjective metaphysical unity in relation to material conditions of existence. In other words, to foreground the subject's non-unitary position, while Lacan addresses psychic processes in the constitution of subjectivity, Braidotti takes the lived experience of the marginalized

[44] Roszak regards the repression of "ecological unconscious" as "the deepest root of collusive madness in industrial society" and views accession to it as "the path to sanity" (*The Voice of the Earth* 320).

or the oppressed in the course of Enlightenment history as a reference point for her alternative subject position. In this context, the notion of nature foregrounded by the theory of ecopsychology signifies in Lacan the pre-linguistic spaces of the imaginary-real and in Braidotti the constitutive others of Eurocentric discourse, that is, the sexualized, naturalized, and racialized others. Though addressed diversely within the context of Lacan and Braidotti, nature in both epistemologies signifies the repressed space, which is denied full presence in a Lacanian sense for its incommensurability or deemed as the other of culture for its threat to the smooth operation of grand narratives. However, they object to nature's repression and underline its irrepressible and vital state for subjectivity.

2.1.1.1. *Sinthome*

Lacan shatters the classical subject of modernity—as a unitary, rational entity coinciding with his/her consciousness—by presenting a dynamic, negotiable, and an affective notion of subjectivity. Different from ego psychology that advocates psychic essentialism by requiring strengthening of the weak ego or expecting the analysand to model his/her ego on to that of the analyst to stand as an ideal subject of perfectibility in society, Lacan does not foreground the fixity of the ego in his notion of subjectivity. Instead, he proposes a constantly fluctuating subject, difficult to be trapped or frozen by the dialectics of otherness. He critiques ego psychology as he thinks that its totalizing practices lead to fixation of the human subject in its aim "to efface desire from the map" (*Écrits* 183). Instead, emphasizing the subject's dynamic link with his/her desire, Lacan opens a new space of enunciation and offers an alternative subject position. Neither pinned down by the normative categorizations of the symbolic codes nor fully immersed in the pre-oedipal spaces of the imaginary or the real, Lacan's alternative subject stands as a threshold figure, as 'a subject in transit' in Braidottian terms. Constantly oscillating along the domains of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, the Lacanian subject splits open the closure of binary polarities and gives voice to what has been silenced or blocked by the dominant discourse—that is, the dynamic vision of the subject, still in touch with his/her pre-linguistic or pre-human ties. This dynamic nature of the Lacanian subject is

concretized in the notion of the *sinthome* because it involves an interconnection of what has been fragmented by the symbolic codes and a re-achievement of a non-hierarchical understanding of unity, solidifying the fictionality of the Cartesian *I*. Based on this, I will draw on Lacan's notion of the *sinthome* in this section to unveil how he ecologically moves from fixation or blockage to dispersal and free flight of signifiers in his configuration of an open-ended subjectivity.

As I have stated in the previous section, in a similar vein to Roszak, Lacan points at the porosity of borders by his notion of the *sinthome*, reflecting that the subject, not being nailed down to the symbolic codes, takes on a continuous flight along the axis of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic in a Borromean fashion: "There is no hope of breaking, in any way whatsoever the constitutive knot of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real" (*S XXIII* 25). Thus, although he gives primacy to the internalization of the logic of the signifiers in the process of access to subjectivization, he does not entrap the subject within the frame of the symbolic. Rather, by the topological figure of the Borromean knot that involves merging of the inside with the outside, he points at the transliteration of the pre-symbolic energies into the symbolic in his emphasis on the continuity of the three spaces. For his discussion of the *sinthome*, Lacan takes James Joyce's relation with his art as a starting point. Regarding Joyce's obsession with art as the fourth ring that complements his knot of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, he underlines the role of narration in the suturation of the subject.[45] Not limited to the act of narration, however, the notion of the *sinthome* signifies in a Lacanian context anything that constitutes an anchoring point for the porous subject, as reflected in the figure given below:

[45] Tracing Joyce's symptom to "a radically failing father," Lacan argues that he could deal with this through writing as he says that "it was in wanting a name that Joyce came with a compensation for the paternal failing" and adds that "Joyce's art is something so particular that the term sinthome is really what suits it" (*S XXIII* 77).

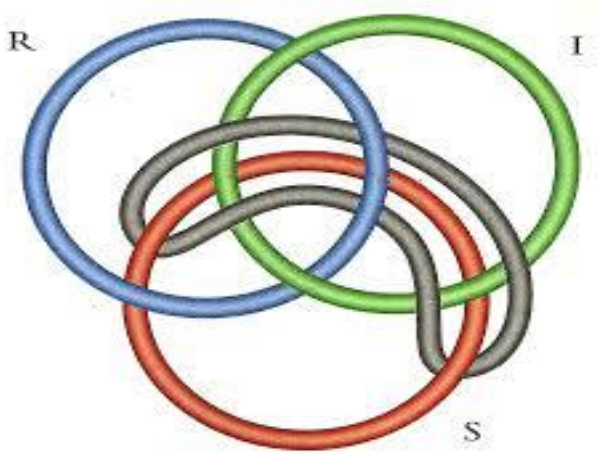

Figure 1. The Borromean Sinthome[46]

As the figure unveils, "not one of these circles, despite being enveloped by one of the two others, fails to envelope the third" (ibid. 24). This reflects that knotting together the three realms of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, the *sinthome* takes on the role of an upholstery button. So, similar to the theory of ecopsychology that dislocates the anthropos by blurring the boundaries of humanistic psychology, Lacan crosses the dualistic boundaries through the third space, that is opened by the meeting edges of these three spaces. He also points at these three spaces' affective interaction as he says that "sectioning any one of the circles" in the Borromean knot will set free the other circles (ibid. 20). Reflecting the dynamic nature of the relation among the three spaces in this sense, he collapses, by his notion of the *sinthome*, the taken-for-granted hierarchies of humanistic psychology that calls for the repression of imaginary-real energies under the symbolic.

Within the context of ecopsychology, the Lacanian notion of the *sinthome* reflects that what it means to be a human subject does not come to mean total estrangement from the imaginary or the real because it is in no way possible to be completely contained by the symbolic, and even after the internalization of the logic of signifiers, humans carve meaning through the structuring and constituting power of *imagos* that give them a sense of ontological security and wholeness. To put it in other words, though forced by mainstream psychology to cut himself/herself from

[46] (ibid. 77)

the harmonious picture of nature[47] and silence pre-oedipal archaic energies to fit into the notion of a normative subject, the subject still carries the marks of her/his former bond with the prehuman life cycle. Thus, stuck between her/his "inner calendar and the surgeries of society," the ideal subject of modernity has been shaped by the established "hostilities, fears, or fantasies" and s/he has been insidiously motivated to actualize "the collective dream of mastery" (Shepard, *Nature and Madness* 16). However, being a complex network of affinities, the human subject goes beyond the symbolic codes for his/her ineradicable bond with nature, that is, with his/her non-human dimension. For Schiller, this is why the human subjects celebrate a humble flower, a brook, a mossy rock, the chirping of birds, or the humming of bees: "They *are* what we *were*; they are what we *should become* once more"[48] (180-181). By his concept of the *sinthome*, Lacan addresses this desire, activated by the humans' encounter with pre-human life and implies their psychic bond with the imaginary space of nature even after their internalization of the logic of the signifiers.

2.1.1.2. Lacan's Theorization of the Unconscious

Obsessed with visibility and articulation, Western metaphysics reduced what was not seen to the level of the non-existent. Working through Platonic metaphors, it produced such polarities as nature/culture, woman/man, and body/mind, by entrapping what it saw as a kind of mirage for its difficulty to be defined in binary codes—nature, woman, or body—to the lower leg of the signification system. As part of these binary oppositions, a hierarchical rupture has been opened also between the conscious and the unconscious, and the unconscious has been pushed to the

[47] I read nature as an imaginary space that resists the closure of binary codes. In the same way as an infant establishes a symbiotic tie with the mother and experiences a sense of wholeness in the imaginary before the intervention of the Law into this dyad, nature presents an imaginary setting by its cyclical patterns, that evokes the same sense of complementarity experienced with union with the mother. Thus, due to knowing no symbolic laws and speaking in ways other than linguistic, it is considered as a threat to the operation of dualistic thinking. In this respect, as the potential of the nonhuman imaginary energies residing in human subjects is attempted to be repressed for the sake of having a knowable subject position in the symbolic, nature that echoes the imaginary for its denial of linearity is also attempted to be silenced for fear that it could throw into doubt all the neat narratives of humanist discourse and render impotent the idea of the centre.

[48] E. O. Wilson uses the term "biophilia" to refer to "the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms" (31).

darker recesses of the human subject, as if not existing at all. Following the steps of the Platonic tradition, ego psychology calls for repressing the unconscious energies for the sake of attaining egotistical unity. Departing from their semantic overkill, however, Lacan does not reduce the unconscious to the state of the non-existent or he does not regard it as a passive entity to be given a total closure. Instead, he addresses the unconscious as "neither being, nor non-being, but the unrealized" (*S XI* 30). That is, he points to the overlooked or undiscovered potential of the unconscious, through the continuous leakage along the continuum of the conscious-unconscious or the verbal-preverbal. Despite the logocentric tyranny of modernity that attempts to numb the unconscious, considering it as a threat to the smooth operation of the symbolic, Lacan argues that there is always a residue from the unconscious that will interfere in the conscious space. As he thinks, "the unconscious contains 'indelible knowledge' which at the same time is 'absolutely not subjectivized"' (qtd. in Fink, *The Lacanian Subject* 23). Based on this, he also states that even though the unconscious has been turned into "a censored chapter" of history, its erasure or complete annihilation could never be actualized:

> The unconscious is that chapter of my history that is marked by a blank or occupied by a falsehood: it is the censored chapter. But the truth can be rediscovered; usually it has already been written down elsewhere. Namely:
>
> > in monuments: this is my body. That is to say, the hysterical nucleus of the neurosis in which the hysterical symptom reveals the structure of a language, and is deciphered like an inscription which, once recovered, can without serious loss be destroyed;
> >
> > in archival documents: these are my childhood memories, just as impenetrable as are such documents when I do not know their provenance;
> >
> > in semantic evolution: this corresponds to the stock of words and acceptations of my own particular vocabulary, as it does to my style of life and to my character;
> >
> > in traditions, too, and even in the legends which, in a heroicized form, bear my history; – and, lastly, in the traces that are inevitably preserved by the distortions necessitated

> by the linking of the adulterated chapter to the chapters surrounding it, and whose meaning will be re-established by my exegesis. (*Écrits* 38)

Though censored by its categorization as the repressed, the dark continent of the visible history, the unconscious continues to voice itself in the space of the symbolic, as Lacan notes. The flow of the unconscious into the scene of the knowable history, which can be termed as the discourse of the Other, points to the ecopsychological porosity of the borders between the unconscious and the conscious space, and their affective, non-hierarchical unity. To emphasize the affective interaction of these psychic realms, Lacan further likens the unconscious to "a *hoop net* (*nasse*) which opens slightly at the neck and at the bottom of which the catch of fish will be found" (*S XI* 143-144). In this way, he challenges the metaphor of "the *double sack* (*besace*)," according to which the unconscious is regarded as "something kept in reserve, closed up inside, in which we have to penetrate from the outside" (ibid. 144). By the following schema, he reverses the topology of the traditional imagery:

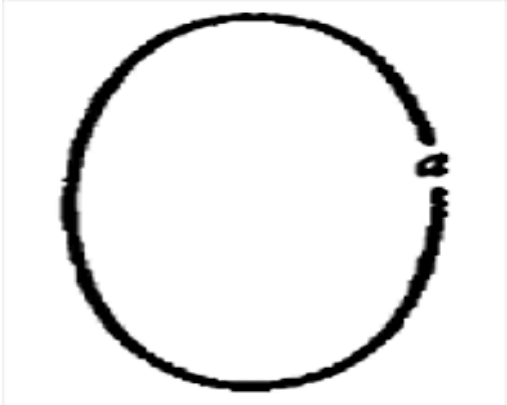

Figure 2. Hoop net

Moving from the image of 'a double sack' to 'a hoop net' in his configuration of the unconscious, Lacan points to the transgressive nature of the unconscious which denies any closure as he further points out: "in the unconscious there is a corpus of knowledge (*un savoir*), which must in no way be conceived as knowledge to be completed, to be closed" (*S XI* 134). Besides, he foregrounds the porosity of the border between the imaginary and the symbolic but he does not cherish full immersion in either domain. This gives us important implications about the elusive

nature of the Lacanian subject: s/he metamorphoses into the topological figure of the Moebius strip whose "outside continues its inside" (ibid. 156). In this vein, based on the scheme given above, Lacan notes that "we must consider the subject, in terms of the hoop net—especially in relation to its orifice, which constitutes its essential structure—as being inside" (ibid. 144). Though not allowing for the full eruption of the semiotic into the symbolic, Lacan does not give it a full closure, either. Rather, he thinks that "we can conceive of the closing of the unconscious through the effect of something that plays the role of obturator—the *objet a*, sucked, breathed, into the orifice of the net" (ibid. 144-145). That is, he implies that the subject keeps his/her touch with the imaginary or the real, though not getting stuck in their amorphous, unlocalized space but transliterating their pre-linguistic energy into the words of the symbolic. Through this psychic translocation, the subject does not stay fixated in the symbolic but returns to it with renewed energy, and s/he unties the knots in her/his desire. Thus, emphasizing the "orifice" of the unconscious, Lacan implies that the subject is connected with the pre-linguistic energies and as such s/he stands too fluid to be totalized by the codes of the symbolic.

2.1.1.3. Move from Being to Braidottian Becoming

Similar to Lacan who ecologically challenges psychic essentialism with his notion of the *sinthome* and revolutionary theorization of the unconscious, Braidotti points at the deconstruction of the dominant subject position, shifting the emphasis from the ontology of Being to ontology of Becoming in her configuration of nomadic subjectivity. By this move, she offers a constantly evolving subject who can "sustain the shifts without cracking" (*Nomadic Theory* 310). In this way, similar to Roszak, who reverses the dominant gaze by rewriting the subject's relation to nature, regarding it not as a site of madness or irrationality, but as an ontological site of extra-linguistic flows and intensities inherent in human subjects, she nomadically rewrites the relation of the human to the non-human.

Braidotti offers the concept of Becoming nomadic as an alternative to the unitary vision of the Cartesian subject. Therefore, we need to mention where she locates the Cartesian *I* to understand her notion of Becoming. As I have stated earlier, different

from Lacan who reflects on the notion of subjectivity within the context of psychic reality, Braidotti addresses the subject's material conditions of existence and traces the evolution of the Cartesian subject to the beginning of Humanism. As she states in *The Posthuman*, "as a doctrine that combines the biological, discursive and moral expansion of human capabilities into an idea of teleologically ordained, rational progress," Humanism placed Man at the centre of world history, as the measure of all things (13). Based on the illusion of unity and metaphysical presence, this civilizational ideal worked through a Cartesian dualistic logic which assumed the presence of a hierarchy between self and others. Besides, central to the logocentric tyranny of its exclusionary mode of thinking was the equation of subjectivity with "consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour," and the construction of Otherness as "its negative and specular counterpart" (ibid. 15). Accordingly, in such a context that equated difference with negativity or a kind of aberration, the ideal subject of Humanism stood for "normality, normalcy and normativity" and produced its sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others, acting as a "systematized standard of recognizability" (ibid. 26).

Through the notion of Becoming, Braidotti problematizes Humanism's 'normative' subject and foregrounds how the complexity of the subject has been frozen by its polarizations. As she implies, with the establishment of Humanism's monolithic, self-present subject as a universalizing term, the polymorphous ground of the subject as a process of transversal interconnections with other levels of being has been repressed. In Lacanian psychoanalytic terms, this repression can be regarded as silencing the subject's relation to the blissful, undifferentiated space of the presymbolic energies of nature for his/her gratification as a civilized being in the symbolic. Denied any access to the prediscursive space of the imaginary or the real, the Cartesian subject of Humanism thus has been constructed as a fixed entity, entrapped within categorical borders.

In her problematization of the Cartesian *I,* Braidotti draws on the Vitruvian ideal of Man which refers to "perfectibility in terms of autonomy and self-determination" and she shows that "this Man, far from being the canon of perfect proportions" is actually

"a historical construct and as such contingent as to values and locations" (ibid. 23; 24). Thus, taking the constructed nature of the Cartesian subject as a starting point for her configuration of nomadic Becoming, she unveils that far from being a fixed entity coinciding with rationality and consciousness, the subject is a flux of dynamic energies, oscillating at the intersection of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. According to Braidotti, the very presence of the unconscious is what prevents the coincidence of the subject with his/her consciousness as she argues that "the hypothesis of the unconscious can be seen as inflicting a terrible wound to the transcendental narcissism of the classical vision of the subject" (*Nomadic Subjects* 197). So, reflecting that the subject is too heterogenous to be given closure by the discursive practices of repression or totalization, she replaces the unitary subject of Humanism with "a more complex and relational subject framed by embodiment, sexuality, affectivity, empathy and desire as core qualities" (*The Posthuman* 26) of her nomadic theory.

The notion of Becoming emphasized by Braidotti in her nomadic subjectivity implies, thus, not self-centeredness or solipsism but interconnection and dissolution of ego boundaries. This tells us that she steps out of the dialectical oppositional thinking and challenges the dominant vision of the subject proposed by the Eurocentric tendencies of Humanism by rejecting the illusion of Oneness. Hence, she shifts the emphasis from a unitary to a non-unitary vision of the subject, blurring the boundaries of dualistic oppositions such as center/peripheral, majority/minority, or master/slave. What she notes in the following lines reflects how she intermingles the Cartesian divides into a non-dualistic coherent whole in her conception of becoming nomadic:

> Becoming nomadic means that one learns to reinvent oneself, and one desires the self as a process of transformation. It's about the desire for qualitative transformations, for flows and shifts of multiple desires. Nomadic theory rests on a nonunitary yet politically engaged and ethically accountable vision of nomadic subject. Nomadic thought stresses the need for a change of conceptual schemes altogether, an overcoming of the dialectic of Majority/Minority or Master/Slave. Both the majority and the minorities need to untie the knots of envy (negative desire) and domination (dialectics) that bind them so tightly.

> In this process they will necessarily follow asymmetrical lines of becoming, given that their starting positions are so different. For the majority, there is no possible becoming—other than in the undoing of its central position altogether. The center is void; all the action is on the margins. (*Nomadic Theory* 41-42)

As the passage given above reflects, in her reconfiguration of the subject following "asymmetrical lines of becoming," Braidotti starts from problematizing the validity of established hierarchies: regarding different forms of "devalued difference" as "positive sites for the redefinition of subjectivity," she addresses minorities such as natives, blacks, women, animals, plants, and insects (ibid. 29-30) to deconstruct the dualistic logic of humanism and its monolithic subject. In her aim for "decolonizing the thinking subject from the dualistic grip," she provides a fluctuating subject position who is in close touch with his/her desire as she further argues that "all becoming takes place in a space of affinity and in symbiosis with positive forces and dynamic relations of proximity" (ibid. 7). So, I argue that she also gives voice to the naturalized others of the dominant discourse and points to the dissolution of boundaries in subjectivity when she says that "all becomings are minoritarian" (ibid. 9).

The shift from the normative vision of Being to a continuous process of Becoming, thus, addresses the subject's dispersal along the porosity of borders. As Braidotti further argues, Becoming "includes high levels of intensity and a state of flux or oscillation between the no longer and the not yet, i.e., between a proliferation of possibilities and a degree zero of self-presence" (ibid. 119). This continuous sliding along the trajectory of the 'no longer' and the 'not yet' refers to the nonunitary, fluctuating state of the nomadic subject within spatiotemporal coordinates and foregrounds his/her dynamic link with his/her desire.

Before reflecting on the issue of affective interaction which I regard as the second marker of ecopsychological subjectivity, the point I need to mention is that in their emphasis on the porosity of borders, Lacan and Braidotti do not propose a subject who lives in complete isolation from the symbolic. As his detailed elaboration on the construction of subjectivity reflects, for instance, while underlining the crucial role

of having a link to the pre-linguistic spaces in subjective coherence, Lacan does not cherish getting stuck in either the real or the imaginary space. Rather, pointing at the inextricability of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, he argues that the subject should have a dynamic link with these pre-symbolic spaces and should transliterate them into the words of the symbolic. As he believes, the knots in desire are dissolved only by this transliteration carried out by the subject in his/her non-verbal experience of the pre-discursive spaces. What needs to be underlined at this point is also that while presenting continuation, the Borromean knot involves not one single space of homogeneity but a heterogeneity of the three spaces. Far from entrapping the subject to a single space of the imaginary or the real, thus, Lacan pays attention to his/her constant evolving along the axis of the three rings that form a kind of assemblage, without losing their unique singularity or diversity. As he argues, "analysis is about sutures and splices, but it needs to be said that we should consider the instances as really standing apart. The imaginary, the symbolic, and the real do not get muddled up" (*S XXIII* 58). In this sense, similar to Roszak who advocates the subject's psychic translocation along the three spaces, Lacan does not establish any hierarchy among his three psychic spaces, but rather calls for their non-hierarchical unity in his notion of the three-ringed Borromean knot for an active desire as he further argues: "finding a meaning entails which knot it is, and joining it together fast by means of an artifice" (ibid. 58).

Similar to Lacan, Braidotti proposes neither the annihilation of the borders nor their homogenization but their transgression as she argues in her depiction of nomadism that "nomadism…is not fluidity without borders but rather an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries. It is the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing" (*Nomadic Subjects* 36). Also, though critiquing the established centrality of bios over zoe, she does not advocate total divorce from bios, but calls for the coexistence of bios and zoe for the nomadization of the subject. As she argues, "these two competing notions of 'life' coincide on the human body," turning the "issue of embodiment into a contested space and a political arena" (*Nomadic Theory* 99). Thus, although in her notion of Becoming, she cherishes the subject's nomadic transgression of the symbolic frames to re-access the unvoiced or the inaudible, she

foregrounds not psychotic dissolution but subjective dispersal, without total immersion in either symbolic or pre-symbolic spaces. When she erases the Majority/Minority divide, as well, she points to the non-dualistic interdependence of the diversities, coexisting without losing their uniqueness.

To put it simply, Braidotti undoes the logocentric premises of modernity by her alternative subject position of the nomad. Resisting to be given closure, her nomadic subject transgresses the boundaries of dualistic thinking and gets dispersed along the porosity of borders. Saved from stasis, this subject, called the subject-in-becoming, does not depend on negation or lack, but stands in Braidotti's terms as "an interface of will with desire" (*Nomadic Subjects* 120). This implies that Braidotti puts the emphasis on the dynamic, open-ended nature of the subject. Privileging fluidity over fixity in her concept of the nomad, however, Braidotti does not intend to create a kind of utopia. In line with this, she further argues that "to be active, intensive, or nomadic does not mean that one is limitless" because "that would be the kind of delirious expression of megalomania that you find in the new master narratives of the cyberculture of today ready and willing to 'dissolve the bodily self into the matrix'" (*Nomadic Theory* 307).

2.1.2. Affective Interaction

I is an other.[49]

We are told that man is the measure of all things.
But where is his own measure? Is it to be found in
himself?[50]

Apart from presenting subjective dispersal along the porosity of borders, ecopsychology involves the subject's affective interaction with nature, drawing upon the pre-discursive practices of shamanistic communities. Similar to shamanistic

[49] Lacan alludes to Arthur Rimbaud's famous expression "*I* is another" from his letter to Paul Demeny (174) and re-contextualizes this statement in his *Écrits* (18)

[50] (Lacan, *S II* 68)

tribes who stay alien to binary dualities with their immersion in a monistic ontology,[51] it regards nature not as "a resource-filled background to the human enterprise, but rather the living matrix out of which we are born and in relation to which our self-understanding and well-being lie" (Fisher "Toward a More Radical Ecopsychology" 22). As Shepard notes:

> Even as socially intense as we are, much of the unconscious life of the individual is rooted in interaction with otherness that goes beyond our own kind, interacting with it very early in personal growth, not as an alternative to human socialization, but as an adjunct to it. The fetus is suspended in water, tuned to the mother's chemistry and the biological rhythms that are keyed to the day and seasonal cycles. The respirational interface between the newborn and the air imprints a connection between consciousness (or wisdom) and breath. (125)

From the very first moment of its creation, the non-human environment of the motherly space with its shifting rhythms and temporalities surrounds the subject, reflecting that what has been labelled as the imaginary other of culture is an integral part of his/her being. Arguing in this way that there is no ontological separation between culture and nature, it foregrounds affective processes of becoming that are vital for the very core of the relationship between the human and the non-human. As Abram accordingly notes: "the self begins as an extension of the breathing flesh of the world, and the things around us, in turn, originate as reverberations echoing the pains and pleasures of our body" (*Becoming Animal* 38). This affective process, which calls for in Beyer's words "permeability and expansiveness of self boundaries and the self's willingness or ability to relax the grip of exclusive identification with the habitual egoic self" (137) is addressed by Lacan in his emphasis on the potential manifestation of the real and the imaginary in the symbolic. It is similarly addressed by Braidotti when she brings to the fore positivity of difference and shifts the

[51] Reflected also by the traditional American Indians' philosophy of "Circle of Life," cultures of traditional societies had adopted a non-anthropocentric stance toward life: "'In the Circle of Life, every being is no more, no less, than any other. We are all Sisters and Brothers,' they said. And so their lives were shared with 'the bird, bear, insects, plants, mountains, clouds, stars, sun"' (Steiner 113). Similarly, Plotkin notes that all of life and time is experienced by oral cultures through the "endless cycles and circles of nature," with the imagery of circle being found in all their dances, their art, and the shape of their dwellings (50).

emphasis from the notion of identity to the notion of complex affinities that the subject forms with others on the path of becoming-minoritarian.

2.1.2.1. Inextricability of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic

In the same way as he resists the Cartesian *I* by emphasizing the subject's relation to the unconscious, Lacan foregrounds the subject's non-unitary, negotiable nature by pointing to his/her continuous fluctuation along the axis of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. At this point, we need to look at what Lacan means when he uses these terms. Emanating from the mirror phase, the imaginary involves a sense of self-alienation and misrecognition, considered by Lacan as the touchstones for the formation of subjectivity. In the mirror stage which covers the age of six to eighteen months, the infant gets drowned in the illusion of wholeness, identifying with his/her image in a mirror. Though dependent on his/her parents, lacking bodily coordination, and unable to walk, the infant is presented with the image of a coordinated and an independent entity by the mirror. This imaginary identification with the image of perfectibility given by the mirror results in his/her alienation from the empirical reality, marked by "motor incapacity" and "nursling dependence:"

> The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic—and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development. Thus, to break out of the circle of the *Innenwelt* into the *Umwelt* generates the inexhaustible quadrature of the ego's verifications. (Lacan, *Écrits* 2; 3)

Lacan likens the mirror stage to a kind of drama in which we act out our phantasy of attaining wholeness through our imaginary identifications. In the context of this drama, the subject is captivated by the images that present him/her with a distorted version of reality, contrary to his/her "organic insufficiency" or fragmentariness (Lacan, *Écrits* 3). Surrounding the subject with the illusion of complementarity, these images in the mirror phase metamorphose into *imagos*—that is, they go beyond

being just a specular image and turn into a kind of mental image, creating a kind of non-verbal dialogue with the subject. As a result, the subject begins to perceive the world through these constituting images. For Lacan, the *imagos* captivate the subject so much that even after his/her transformation from "the *specular I*" into "the *social I*," they exert their force by leading to the illusion of autonomy, as he notes that *imagos* stand as "the threshold of the visible world" and "establish a relation between the organism and its reality—or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*" (Lacan, *Écrits* 2; 4; 3).

The subject's captation by the *imagos* even after his entrance into the symbolic tells us that there is no linearity in the relationship between the imaginary and the symbolic registers as phases of psychic development. Instead of having linearity, they are marked by nonlinearity and a non-hierarchical understanding of unity, as reflected in the topological surface of the Moebius strip. By not demarcating the psychic realms of the imaginary and the symbolic with clear-cut boundaries, however, Lacan does not deny the fact that the symbolic, as the domain of language, plays a crucial role in the formation of the subject. So, he shifts the emphasis from imaginary identifications to language in the formation of the subject. For Fink, this is what differentiates Lacan from most poststructuralist thinkers: unlike most poststructuralists "who dislocate the very notion of the human subject, he underlines the notion of subjectivity and how the subject is constructed" (*The Lacanian Subjec*t xi). However, he does not assert the superiority of the human subject over the non-humans. Instead, he offers a vision of their non-hierarchical interdependence.

The symbiotic tie between the mother and the infant in the imaginary is intervened by the father, and this intervention requires the subject to internalize the logic of the signifiers to attain a sort of symbolic gratification. After his/her symbolization by language, the subject perceives the world no longer through images but through words. For this reason, s/he seems to be sterilized from the archaic, unlocalized energies of the imaginary. However, the pre-linguistic energies of the imaginary continue to captivate the subject even in the symbolic. This is best shown by the fact that throughout their lives, subjects search for the sense of wholeness and unity that

they had in the blissful context of the imaginary, before their mutilation by the binary dualities. As Fink notes:

> Since the time immemorial, people have expressed nostalgia for a time before the development of language, for a supposed time when *homo sapiens* lived like animals, with no language and thus nothing that could taint or complicate man's needs and wants. Rousseau's glorification and extolment of the virtues of primitive man and his life before the corrupting influence of language is one of the best known nostalgic enterprises. (*The Lacanian Subject* 4)

Though not cherishing the idea of returning to the prelapsarian universe of the imaginary, Lacan underlies the ongoing force of the residues of this pre-linguistic space on the symbolic to point out that the subject is motivated by the resonances of the imaginary—that is, s/he is motivated by the desire for recognition and love in the symbolic, as well. As he argues: "*man's desire is the desire of the Other*" (*S XI* 38). This implies that despite the unitary vision of the subject advocated by modernity, the subject is still marked by self-alienation because of mistaking himself/herself with what is offered to him/her by the other subjects in the symbolic.

Blurring the boundaries among the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic in his notion of the *sinthome*, Lacan ecologically replaces the anthropocentric view about the centrality and superiority of the human subject with the post-anthropocentric view that entails humans' affective interaction with nature. In this way, he addresses pre-modern societies who saw human life "as part of widely spreading network of connections which reached beyond the local and the national communities into the hidden depths of nature and the powers that rule nature" (Frankfort 3). For instance, when he says that "the Borromean knot consists in the relationship which means that what is *enveloped* with respect to one of the circles finds itself *enveloping* with respect to the other one" (*S XXIII* 24), he erases the activity/passivity distinction in the manifestation of the three spaces and highlights their dynamic interaction with each other. Besides, when he argues that "It is not to his consciousness, that the subject is condemned, but to his body, which in many ways resists actualizing the division of the subject" (*Television* 110), he stresses the non-verbal or the pre-rational dimension of the human subject, working behind his/her constitution. Hence,

foregrounding the illusion of metaphysical unity by voicing the presence of the imaginary-real which continuously manifests itself in the symbolic, he points to the inevitability of interdependence among different levels of being. In this way, he also echoes the pre-modern societies whose practices the theory of ecopsychology draws upon and to whom "the natural processes are affected by the acts of man no less than man's life depends on his harmonious integration with nature" (Frankfort and Frankfort 36). That is, in the same way with ecopsychology that emphasizes the human subject's active participation in the polyphonic space of nature as one of its many species, Lacan addresses the subject's inextricable bond with nature when he underlines the irreducible state of the imaginary (nature) and its constant flow into the symbolic. In his transgression of the other (nature)/Other (culture) divide, Lacan echoes Kidner who says that "there is no ontological discontinuity between self and land: self reaches out emphatically over the land, which in turn is experienced as an extension of self" ("Depression and Natural World" 128).

Similar to Kidner who takes the human subject as a network of affinities, departing from the standardizing practices of the ego psychology that gives closure to the heterogenous nature of the human subject reducing him/her to the space of rationality and overlooking his/her non-human dimension, Abram points to how "humans are tuned for relationships" by presenting a non-dualistic understanding of mind-body continuum (*The Spell of the Sensuous* 9). He argues that:

> The human mind is not some otherworldly essence that comes to house itself inside our physiology. Rather, it is instilled and provoked by the sensorial field itself, induced by the tensions and participations between the human body and the animate earth. The invisible shapes of smells, rhythms of cricketsong, and the movement of shadows all, in a sense, provide the subtle body of our thoughts. Our own reflections, we might say, are part of the play of light and *its* reflections. (ibid. 156)

Erasing the rupture between mind and body, Abram emphasizes the presence of affective processes in which all myriad forms of being participate in the constitution of each other. In an ecopsychological context, Lacan stresses these affective

processes, which I read as processes of Becoming in Braidottian terms, when he talks about the manifestation of the real on the body or the non-verbal experience of bodily *jouissance* in the form of affect, as I have mentioned earlier. So, when he locates his theory of affect on the repressed of the mind—that is, on the body—shifting its state from something that is static to "something that enjoys itself" (Lacan *S XX* 23), he portrays ecopsychological processes of interdependence based on the mind-body or the human-nature continuum. In this context, similar to ecopsychology that holds the view that "at its deepest level the psyche remains sympathetically bonded to the Earth that mothered us into existence," not as "an isolated atom of self-regarding consciousness" (Roszak, "Where Psyche Meets Gaia" 5; 10), he believes in the inseparability of the human subject from nature. Stated in different terms, in the same way as the real— "the mystery of the speaking body, the mystery of the unconscious" (Lacan *S XX* 131)—finds a space of communication through body's nonverbal language, nature, as the imaginary, finds a space of enunciation in culture in a Lacanian context. When she elaborates on the notion of the Lacanian affect, Soler also points at affect's transgressive nature as she argues that though being "all too obvious," the affect "never belongs to the realm of a graspable pregiven" and "lies as to its origin," "sliding from representation to representation" (5; 9). In this way, it is reflected that the real uses bodily language for its actualization and re-surfaces as an affect to convey what has been repressed by the dominant discourse. Soler adds:

> We cannot have any knowledge, strictly speaking, that is not linguistically structured; but that which goes beyond linguistic structure is rendered present to me by affects: by anguish when it is object *a* or the real lying outside of the symbolic that is at work, and by enigmatic affects when it is *lalangue* that is at work. (ibid. 106)

Despite attempts for its repression, the real expresses itself in the form of affects as Lacan further argues: "what I said about affect is that it isn't repressed…It's unfastened, it drifts about. It can be found displaced, maddened, inverted, or metabolized, but it isn't repressed" (*S X* 14). In this sense, railing against the repression of pre-linguistic energies under the veil of civilization, Lacan adopts a non-dualistic understanding of mind-body interaction during which all the

hierarchies are dissolved to serve the mutual dependencies of the human and the nonhuman.

2.1.2.2. Positivity of Difference

In her discussion of the nomadic subject, Braidotti presents a positive affirmation of difference. Drawing on Spinoza's monistic philosophy, she saves the notion of difference that "functions as a negative term indexed on a hierarchy of values governed by binary oppositions" (Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory* 17) within the dialectics of modernity, from its negative connotations in order to voice the ontological heterogeneity and the affective interaction of multiple others. As she argues: "nomadic theory stresses difference as the principle of not-one, so as to remind us that difference is not a concept but a process" (ibid. 172).

Embracing difference as positivity, she emphasizes "change and motion" instead of "stability" and replaces "the metaphysics of being with a process ontology bent on becoming" (ibid. 29; 7). In this context, actualized in the process of becoming nomadic, the positivity of difference points to the subject's nonlinear, affective alliances with the others:

> 'Becoming' works on a time sequence that is neither linear nor sequential because processes of becoming are not predicated upon a stable, centralized Self who supervises their unfolding. These processes rather rest on a nonunitary, multilayered, dynamic subject attached to multiple communities. Becoming woman/animal/insect is an affect that flows, like writing; it is a composition, a location that needs to be constructed together with, that is to say, in the encounter with others. They push the subject to his/her limits, in a constant encounter with external, different others. The nomadic subject as a nonunitary entity is simultaneously self-propelling and heterodefined, i.e., outward bound. (ibid. 35)

In her shift from the unitary and metaphysical to the non-unitary and pre-metaphysical vision of nomadic subjectivity, Braidotti suggests "an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism" (*The Posthuman* 49-50). The self-other continuum implies in psychoanalytic terms that the nomad escapes from

the contamination of psychic essentialism, too. To put it in other terms, instead of being trapped in the prison house of the ego, the nomad keeps in touch with the liminal, in-between spaces and goes beyond articulation.

2.1.3. Spinozist Notion of Desire

Desire is the essence of man.[52]

Beside fluctuating along the porosity of borders and having an affective interaction with the multiplicity of non-human others, the subject in ecopsychology is also marked by a Spinozist notion of desire. Holding that "there is a synergistic interplay between planetary and personal well-being" (Roszak, *The Voice of the Earth* 321), ecopsychology rethinks the notion of subjectivity as a nondualistic assemblage of forces, sharing in the creation of affective alliances. Lacan foregrounds this Spinozist notion of desire[53] by not entrapping the subject within the codes of the symbolic but letting him/her stay in a dynamic touch with the resonances of the imaginary-real. Through the concepts of the signifier and the object *a*, Lacan stresses the subject's active participation in the process of becoming, having a dynamic touch with his/her desire. Similarly, rejecting "the negative definition of desire as lack inherited from Hegelian dialectics," Braidotti's nomadic thought underlines a Spinozist "positive notion of desire as an ontological force of becoming" (*Nomadic Theory* 2).

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[52] (Lacan, *S XI* 275)

[53] As Jarrett notes, according to Spinoza, desire is one of the three fundamental emotions with which we are endowed (with the other two being "joy and sadness") and "our most fundamental desire, and indeed our essence, is the endeavour (*conatus*) or power to persist in existence" (99). Similar to Lacan, Spinoza regards the notion of desire vital for man: "desire is appetite…that appetite is the essence of man, in so far as it is determined to act in a way tending to promote its own persistence" (173). Besides, in a Spinozian context, it is only through a Braidottian move from egocentrism or identity to relationality or interdependence with other sites of being that we can exist in the full sense of the word. With desire being the driving force of man to exist, thus, stepping out of self/other hierarchy into a non-hierarchical realm of multiple becomings achieved by establishing new alliances with others props up desire, which in turn, helps us exist more. What needs to be underlined with regard to Spinoza's configuration of desire is also that he does not locate the joy in a transcendental realm but he thinks it as being immanent. Basing his theory on a monistic ontology, thus, he echoes the counter-Platonic approach of the posthumanist theory.

2.1.3.1. Subject and the Signifier

> It's impossible to represent the signifier, the signified and the subject on the same plane. This is neither mysterious nor opaque. It's demonstrable in a very simple way in the text with respect to the Cartesian cogito.[54]

In his discussion on the subject's relation to the symbolic, which we can term as the domain of language and speech, Lacan draws on Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of the sign. Seeing the linguistic sign as "a two-sided psychological entity," consisting of a "concept" (the signified) and a "sound-image" (the signifier), Saussure argues that they are "intimately united, and each other recalls the other" (66). Based on this assumed unity that is concretized in the notion of the sign, he implies that there is a happy solidarity between the signifier and the signified, and establishes a hierarchy between them, regarding the signified as superior to the signifier. He also argues:

> Language can also be compared with a sheet of paper: thought is the front and the sound the back; one cannot cut the front without cutting the back at the same time; likewise in language, one can neither divide sound from thought nor thought from sound. (113)

In this hierarchical binary system in which the signifier is expected to arrive at a transcendental signified, the sign is frozen and given closure. Modernity models its ideal vision of subjectivity based on the closed nature of this signification system, assuming that there is a concurrence between the signifier and the signified. In this context, the subject is established as a fixed, unitary, and rational entity coinciding with his/her consciousness.

Despite borrowing the terms of the signifier and the signified from Saussure, Lacan complicates the Saussurean signification system and shifts the position of the signifier from a passive to an active position, as shown in the algorithm given below:

[54] (Lacan, *S V* 9)

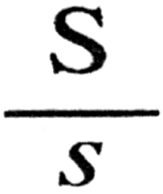

Figure 3. The signifier over the signified

Within the context of Lacanian epistemology, the signifier no longer stands beneath the signified, and it refers to other signifiers, taking on a free flight as Lacan states that "the signifier…represents a subject for another signifier" (*S XI* 157). Unlike Saussure who "promoted the study of the synchronic (the static and stable) over the diachronic (the dynamic and unstable)" (Ragland-Sullivan 209), Lacan does not believe in the unitary notion of the sign. Rather, he thinks that "the relationship between the signifier and the signified is far from being…one-to-one" and links this lack of correspondence between the signifier and the signifier to constant shifts in meaning that have been taking place over the course of history:

> It's in fact clear that in the diachronic sense, across time, shifts occurs, and that at any given moment the evolving system of human meanings is being displaced and modifies the content of the signifiers, which adopt different usages…Underneath the same signifiers there have been over the course of time these shifts which prove that no one-to-one correspondence between the two systems can be established. (*S III* 119)

Lacan contests the unitary notion of the sign thinking that meaning changes shape according to the historical conditions surrounding it. Different from Saussure, he also assigns the bar between the signifier and the signified a new status, addressing it as "a bar resisting signification" (*Écrits* 114). Besides, he points to the active state of the signifier: "the signifier is posited only insofar as it has no relation to the signified" (*S XX* 29). In a similar vein to what Derrida suggests with his notion of *differance*, he points at the continuous dispersal of meaning, only glimpses of which can be reached for its fleeting nature. For instance, referring to the Hegelian notion of *Aufhebung*, which means both "cancellation" and rising "to a higher power or situation," he underlines that "one of the fundamental dimensions of a signifier is to be able to cancel itself out" (*S V* 323). Also, although he differentiates the signifier

from Friday's footprint on the sand discovered by Robinson Crusoe on the island, he establishes a relationship between them because the signifier reflects the "evanescent character of a trace" (ibid. 322). As he argues, "the dimension of the signifier is clearly introduced," only when Robinson Crusoe "effaces this trace:"

> If the signifier is thus a hollow, it's insofar as it bears witness to a past presence. Conversely, in what is a signifier, in fully developed signifiers in speech, there is always a speech, there is always a passage, that is, something following each of the elements that are articulated together and that are, by nature, fleeting and evanescent. It's this passage from one to the next that constitutes the essential feature of what I call the signifying chain. (ibid. 322-323)

"A signifier as such is something that can be effaced, leaving nothing but its place" and "it can no longer be found" (ibid. 323). The dynamic nature of the signifier, in this sense, contests the dichotomous logic of logocentrism and what is suggested by its totalizing tyranny—that is, the idea of unitary subjectivity. To put it in other words, the dispersal of meaning by the endless chain of the signifiers unveils the fictionality of the unitary Cartesian ego and foregrounds the open-ended status of the subject, who is non-unitary and split between consciousness and unconscious. When he argues that "the signifier stuffs (*vient truffer*)[55] the signified" (*S XX* 37), Lacan points to the open-endedness of the subject, as well. This implies that the signifier "enters the signified and makes it swell or blow like a balloon:" the more it is examined, "the more its meaning inflates" (Fink, *Lacan to the Letter* 83). At this point, one can ask the question, "if each signification refers to another signification, that signification refers to another one, in an endless chain, how do we decide what words mean?" (Sarup 53). Lacan provides an explanation for this by his notion of anchoring points (*points de capiton*) to refer to the points of intersection between the subject and the signifier at some moments (*Écrits* 117): "The subject attaches significance to certain signifiers; these signifiers, like upholstery buttons, pin down the floating mass of signification" (Sarup 53-4). In this sense, "as points at which the

[55] As Fink notes, Lacan uses the term '*truffer'* within the context of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, which has phrases such as "'How bootifull and how truetowife of her:" as the "signifier 'bootiful' contains 'boot,' 'booty,' and 'full' and sounds a lot like 'beautiful,'" "the signified of such a signifier is chock-full or stuffed full of all the meanings of each of these" (*Lacan to the Letter* 83).

potential sliding of the signified under the signifier is stopped" (Fink, *Lacan to the Letter* 89), *points de capiton* take on the role of an '"anchoring point' by which the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement of signification" (Sarup 54). The subject's attachment to certain signifiers, however, does not point to a totalizing centre: "there is no 'big Other'[56] guaranteeing the consistency of the symbolic space within which we dwell: there are just contingent, punctual, and fragile points of stability" (Zizek 59). Besides, it does not erase the lack of correspondence between the signifier and the signified. Rather, it solidifies this lack by its dependence on self-alienation, which is the touchstone of the Lacanian barred subject. As Lacan argues, "it is in the chain of the signifier that meaning 'insists'" but "none of the chain's elements 'consists' in the signification it can provide at that very moment" (*Écrits* 117). The subject's relation to the signifier, in this sense, reveals the inevitability of his/her non-unitary nature as Lacan notes: "a subject, through his relations with the signifier, is a subject-with-holes (*sujet troué*)" (*S XI* 184). Accordingly, Lacan refers to the myth narrated by Aristophanes, in Plato's *Symposium*, about a four-legged creature, split in two by Zeus.[57] Since the moment of this fragmentation, the two parts of the creature struggle "to rejoin one another and to reconstitute the original spherical whole" and "each half holds fast to any object that it thinks might be its lost counterpart" (Sarup 70). Similar to this four-legged creature who attaches itself to any object to attain a sense of wholeness, subjects also attach themselves to certain signifiers as anchoring points, but the signifiers to which they attach themselves do not guarantee being their lost parts. Lacan elaborates on this lack of overlap and addresses the fictionality of a unitary subject arguing further that although "the subject depends on the signifier and that signifier is first of all in the field of the Other," this process between the subject and the Other—"from the subject called to

[56] As Lacan states, in this argument that he makes with regard to the obsessionals, he denies not the existence of the big Other but its claim to sole mastery of the symbolic (*SV* 381). As Zizek accordingly points out, with his expression '"There is no big Other,"' Lacan means that "there is no a priori formal structural scheme exempted from historical contingencies" as the constant irruption of the real gives no chance for the idealized totality of the symbolic: "the Lacanian Real is that traumatic 'bone in the throat' that contaminates every ideality of the symbolic, rendering it contingent and inconsistent (72).

[57] Lacan notes that although "Aristophanes' myth pictures the pursuit of the complement for us" "by articulating that it is the other, one's sexual other half, that the living being seeks in love," this search by the subject is "not of the sexual complement, but of the part of himself, lost forever" (*S XI* 205).

the Other, to the subject of that which he has himself seen appear in the field of the Other, from the Other coming back"—is "dissymmetrical" (*S XI* 205; 207). In this context, while we see the constitution of the subject in the field of the Other, the misleading nature of the anchoring points solidifies the cleavage between the signifier and the signified, problematizing the unitary vision of the Cartesian ego. Lacan also states that the subject stands as an effect of the signifier by stressing his/her dispersal along the endless chain of signifiers:

> The subject is nothing other than what slides in a chain of signifiers, whether he knows which signifier he is the effect of or not. That effect—the subject—is the intermediary effect between what characterizes a signifier and another signifier, namely the fact that each of them…is an element. We know of no other basis by which the One may have been introduced into the world if not by the signifier as such, that is, the signifier insofar as we learn to separate it from its meaning effects. (*S XX* 50)

To put it in a nutshell, Lacan redefines the parameters of subjectivity and presents a kind of subject that is similar to that of the pre-moderns, not frozen by binary dualities but scattered and dispersed along the chain of signifiers. In his critique of the Cartesian cogito, Lacan points to the difficulty of attaining an overlap between being and thinking as he states: "this limits me to being there in my being only in so far as I think that I am in my thought" (*Écrits* 125). So, he problematizes the Cartesian logic: "what one ought to say is: I am not wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think" (ibid. 126). By this way, he points to the fictionality of unified subjectivity, advocated by Western modernity's logocentric tyranny, arguing further that "the *I* of the enunciation is not the same as the *I* of the statement" (*S XI* 139). Accordingly, in his elaboration of the non-unitary, fluid subject, he reconfigures the subject's relation to the unconscious, the imaginary, and language. In contradistinction to the ego psychologists who require the subject to reduce the unconscious to the state of non-existence as the dark continent of consciousness, he points to the transgressive nature of the unconscious, that resists erasure, lying beyond closure or totalization. Besides, he regards the sense of self-alienation and misrecognition that the infant experiences through the imaginary identifications in the mirror phase as the touchstone for the foundation of

subjectivity. Then, he shifts the emphasis from mirror-images to language and regards the child's submission to the Other, to the network of signifiers, as a necessary step for his/her constitution as a subject. As he notes, the subject arises in relation to the Other and with his/her attachment to certain signifiers, that act like upholstery buttons; however, the relation of the subject to the Other is never linear but 'dissymmetrical'—that is, it is based on misrecognition. The open-ended nature of the Lacanian subject is solidified most crucially by the fact that not setting a clear-cut boundary among the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, Lacan addresses the constant fluctuation of the subject along the porosity of borders. Within the context of this psychic deterritorialization, the subject does not get stuck in either psychic domain but transliterates the real and the imaginary into the symbolic, different from the dominant vision of the unitary subject, frozen by the binary signification system.

2.1.3.2. *Objet petit a*

As the notion of *objet petit a* is linked to desire, reflecting firstly on what Lacan means by desire will lead to a better grasp of it. Lacan assigns the concept of desire a vital role in the constitution of subjectivity. Drawing on the work of Spinoza, who believes in the potential of the subject to subvert the dialectics of negativity/positivity by taking an active position in life, he presents a dynamic subject position, not passively yielding to his/her inscription by the discourse of the Other, but active enough to voice himself/herself through an ever-renewing encounter with his/her desire. With his emphasis on desire in the advent of the subject's being, Lacan undoes the classical definition of subjectivity as he implies a subject of *jouissance*, going through continuous shifts and metamorphoses. When he argues that desire "cannot be grasped or understood except in the tightest knot by which the real, the imaginary, and its symbolic meaning are tied together for man" (*S VI* 112), he refers to this dynamic nature of the subject who can oscillate smoothly along the prelinguistic and the linguistic spaces without falling into the trap of Cartesian fixity.

In his theorization of desire, the point that is continuously emphasized by Lacan is its insatiable nature. While needs can be met and demands can be answered, desire

always lies beyond fulfilment as he says, “desire is situated in what is beyond what is nameable, in what is beyond the subject” (ibid. 438). When he re-reads Zeno’s paradox of motion, the paradox of Achilles and the tortoise, in his seminar on feminine sexuality, for instance, he underlines the constant postponement of desire which plays a vital role in subjective dynamism. As he argues, although Achilles can pass the tortoise with his speed, he cannot have a full grasp of it: “It is quite clear that Achilles can only pass the tortoise—he cannot catch up with it. He only catches up with it at infinity *(infinitude)*” (*S XX* 8).

According to Lacan, desire comes into being with the intrusion of the Law into the symbiotic relationship between the infant and the mother in the imaginary. The Law’s intervention into the imaginary space of wholeness established through the alienating identifications with the mother creates a fundamental loss in the subject, splitting him/her into two. “As a radical loss that no satisfaction can plug up,” this loss, which Lacan terms as “the loss of phallus” (*S VI* 347), refers to the subject’s deprivation of the sense of complementarity. From this moment on, the subject sets out for finding the lost phallus that remains always beyond his/her grasp and though never attaining the lost counterpart, s/he does not give up his/her thirst for reaching phallic equivalences for what s/he lost. The activation of the subject to find what was taken from him/her reflects that though appearing as a delimiting and a traumatic experience for the subject, this lack which marks the subject as barred S is not to be confused with negativity: far from signifying negation, the lack takes on the role of constituting and structuring the subject at the symbolic level, incorporating him/her into the play of the signifiers in quest for the signifier that remains always lost—that is, the phallus. As Lacan argues, “the subject cannot situate himself in desire without castrating himself—in other words, without losing what is most essential about his life” (ibid. 372). Accordingly, pointing to the paradoxical nature of this entrance into the signifier, he further states that “it is fundamentally language that introduces the dimension of being for the subject and at the same time robs him of it” (ibid. 140). Stated otherwise, although the subject’s entrance into language results in a kind of lack, robbing him of his being, this lack also paves the way for his/her recognition by

the Other. For Lacan, the backbone of the subject's desire is defined as follows: "man's desire is the desire of the Other" (*S XI* 235).

To stress the subject's symbolic constitution in relation to lack, Lacan also likens the intrusion of language into the imaginary to a cut, and thinks that this act of cutting lies behind the being as he notes: "Being lies nowhere else…than in gaps, where it is the least signifying of signifiers—namely, the cut [*la coupure*]. Being is the same thing as cutting [*la coupure*]. Cutting renders being present in the symbolic" (*S VI* 408). Thus, desire comes into the scene at this moment when the subject, having been cut, feels the need to suture the cuts in his/her being. As I argue, *objet petit a* incarnates into a kind of patch to be put on these cuts, taking on the role of restoring the subject's broken unity. In this sense, the fact that it does not go beyond being a substitute for the original loss does not reduce its vital role for the subject, but rather intensifies his/her energy, given that each time a different patch is stitched on these cuts, the subject experiences the *jouissance* of entering into a play of signifiers, not accepting to be totalized into a linear flow as in the essentialist model of subjectivity, but actively participating in the dance of the patches' diverse colors, creating a nonlinear flow of energies.

As "the essential object around which the dialectic of desire revolves" (ibid. 312), *objet petit a* addresses the structuring of desire and it is linked to the fantasy of narcissistic omnipotence experienced through the mother before the intrusion of language into the imaginary space. When he notes that man's first desire is to be the object of the mother's desire, for instance, Lacan underlines how *objet petit a* acts as a substitute for the lost phallus. In this sense, we can argue that object *a* sustains the link with the pre-linguistic space (the imaginary-real) or the non-human dimension of life (zoe), undoing the humanistic model of subjectivity entrapped within rationality. Arguing that this object not only compensates for what the subject has lost—that is, the sense of complementarity—but also bolsters his/her position as a subject "as the prop that the subject gives himself…*inasmuch as he falters in his designation as a subject*" (ibid. 367), Lacan also points out that the traces of the irrational, pre-linguistic space spills over the symbolic through *objet petit a*. In this

sense, Lacan reflects that although the subject is constituted in his/her relation with the Other, there always remains something beyond the grasp of language. The fantasy for re-attaining this thing that cannot be articulated linguistically is actualized through the non-verbal communication of *objet petit a* that

> comes into play in a complex that we will call fantasy. The subject manages to prop himself up with this object at the moment at which he vanishes when faced with the signifier's failure [or: inability, *carence*] to answer for his place as a subject at the level of the Other. (ibid. 377)

Coming into the scene in the face of language's inadequacy to contain the real or the imaginary, *objet petit a* foregrounds the non-unitary, porous notion of Lacanian subjectivity, who can, not limited to speaking through symbolic codes, speak through his/her body with the non-verbal logic of pre-linguistic space. With this flow of the imaginary-real into the symbolic through *objet petit a*, all the categorical divides are blurred, and the inside is merged with the outside as Sarup also notes, *objet petit a* is found "wherever there is a passage-way on the body linking the interior to the exterior" (69).

"All of desire's objects are fetishistic in character" (*S VI* 312), notes Lacan. As the object that props up desire, *objet petit a* can be anything that triggers "the ecstatic sense of unity which preceded an infant's knowledge of separation from the mother, a metaphorical Garden of Eden before the dividing third term—the serpent—brings knowledge of sin" (Ragland-Sullivan 75). Ranging in Mellard's words from "the anal and the oral through the scopic and the aural" (153), *objet petit a* can manifest itself in diverse forms. Accordingly, arguing that "it is essentially in the guise of a cut that *a* shows us its form" (*S VI* 382), Lacan mentions "the void, the voice, the gaze, the Phallus" as "the four causes of Desire" (Ragland-Sullivan 75). So, regardless of the form it takes, *objet petit a* is linked to the desire of re-capturing the sense of "the primal, maternal *jouissance*" (Mellard 153).

The point that needs to be emphasized about *objet petit a* is that far from addressing "an object that satisfies a need," it is "an already-relativized object"—that is, "an object that has some relation to the subject, and especially the subject who is present

in fantasy" (Lacan, *S VI* 312). Lacan alludes to "the pound of flesh" desired by Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*[58] to reflect that *objet petit a* is "part of something else from which it cannot be separated, an inaccessible part of a larger whole" (Sarup 69). By this allusion, Lacan not only stresses that *objet petit a* is an object that is inherent in the subject, but also implies that man has to pay a price for entry into language:

> This moment of cut is haunted by the form of a bloody scrap—the pound of flesh that life pays in order to turn it into the signifier of the signifiers, which it is impossible to restore, as such, to the imaginary body; it is the lost phallus of the embalmed Osiris. (*Écrits* 201)

Likening "the pound of flesh" desired by Shylock to "the lost phallus of the embalmed Osiris," Lacan foregrounds the vital role played by the sense of lack in the constitution of the subject's desire. Drawing on the Egyptian myth of Osiris who, having been dismembered into fourteen pieces by his jealous brother Set, is restored to unity with the only exception of his lost phallus, he sheds light on the subject's desire for imaginary wholeness: that is, he reflects that though marked by a fundamental lack, the subject does not give up his/her thirst for unity and s/her transliterates the pain of the loss to creative energy. This is solidified by the fact that in the face of Osiris's lost phallus that she cannot find, Isis fashions an artificial phallus for him[59] to compensate for both his and her own cuts.

2.1.3.3. Nomadic Vision of Desire

In a similar vein to the ecopsychological theory that saves the notion of desire from the binary mode of thinking, Braidotti presents a postanthropocentric view of desire. Departing from the illusionary divide of the imaginary other/symbolic Other that grounds desire on an Oedipal drama of total separation from prelinguistic intensities and the nomadic flows of the imaginary space for the sake of being acknowledged in the symbolic, she calls for "a more joyful and empowering concept of desire and for a political economy that foregrounds positivity, not gloom" (*Metamorphoses* 57).

[58] (*S X* 124)

[59] (Remler 110)

Stressing "the transformation of the negative into positive passions" (*Nomadic Theory*, 154) in her nomadization of desire, Braidotti underlines the active state of subjectivity that undergoes possible forms of becoming with multiplicity of forces, all sharing in its continuous recreation:

> Desire is for me a material and socially enacted arrangement of conditions that allow for the actualization (that is, the immanent realization) of the affirmative mode of becoming. Desire is active in that it has to do with encounters between multiple forces and the creation of new possibilities of empowerment. (*Metamorphoses* 99)

As a complementary thought to Lacan, Braidotti does not set clear-cut boundaries between the imaginary and the symbolic in the enactment of desire, but rather relates its activation to the formation of affective alliances by the nondualistic copresence of the human-nonhuman forces. In this context, she moves from a notion of desire based on fixity and estrangement from the prehuman energies of the imaginary to a notion of desire, marked by unpredictable shifts and transitions.

To conclude, as a theory having its roots in the practices of uncharted oral cultures, ecopsychology aims at recapturing primitive cultures' sense of complementarity, by transliterating the repressed unconscious psychic material into the symbolic. I argue that this transliteration liquefies modernity's frozen subject, giving him/her an epiphanic access to the Lacanian domain of the imaginary marked by wholeness. Thus, in its search for the restoration of the epistemic holes created through modernity's reconfiguration of what it means to be a human subject, ecopsychology calls for participation in the repetitive cycle of nature. Different from those who read ecopsychology through the lens of the archetypal psychology of Jung or from a Freudian angle, I read the theory of ecopsychology against the background of Lacanian and Braidottian epistemologies and emphasize its post-anthropocentric orientation. In Lacanian and Braidottian terms, the subject of ecopsychology nomadically transgresses the symbolic boundaries and constantly leaks into the imaginary-real to re-appear in the symbolic with renewed energy. With this nomadic shift along the axis of the real-imaginary-symbolic, the ecopsychological subject reaches subjective consistency as in the topological figure of the Borromean knot.

For this fluid subject who remains far beyond symbolic limits, nature stands as a reservoir of bliss, uncontaminated by Cartesian dichotomy: nature turns into a playground of intoxicating *imagos* for the affective mode of interaction among species. In its call for transliterating and integrating once more our motherly space to our symbolic selves, thus, the theory of ecopsychology implies an alternative concept of subjectivity.

2.2. Psychosis

According to Lacanian psychoanalytical theory, the structuring of desire, which comes to mean symbolic recognition of/by the Other as the locus of speech, requires the subject's integration into a particular play of signifiers. While the infant builds a blissful narrative with his/her imaginary relation to the mother on the imaginary plane, drowned in the mirage of intoxicating images and alienating idealizations, s/he needs to internalize the logic of the signifiers and to construct some reference points for himself/herself in his/her access to subjectivization as a constantly evolving, desiring subject of Becoming. As Lacan argues: "in order for the human being to be able to establish the most natural of relations…a third party has to intervene, one that is the image of something successful, the model of some harmony" (*S III* 96). Depicted by Lacan as "a law, a chain, a symbolic order, the intervention of the order of speech, that is, of the father" (ibid. 96), this third force the instalment of which lies at the core of subjective consistency is enacted by the primordial signifier of the Name-of-the-Father[60] which plays a pivotal role in the subject's attainment of a coherent relation with all the other signifiers in the signifying chain.

Lacan emphasizes the subject's attachment to the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father in his/her accession to a dynamic subject position on the ground that it gives the subject a fastening point and enables him/her to fluctuate along the three spaces of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic in a Borromean fashion. As he argues, "the

[60] As noted by Fink, in its original French equivalence 'Nom-du-Père,' Lacan plays off the fact that "in French, nom is pronounced like non, meaning 'no,' evoking the father's 'No!'—that is, the father's prohibition" (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 81).

Oedipus complex is, as such, a symptom. Everything is sustained in so far as the Name-of-the-Father is also the Father of the Name, which doesn't make the symptom any the less necessary" (Lacan, *S XXIII* 13).[61] Based on Lacan's observation, Grigg points to how the Name-of-the-Father acts as a "certain form of the *sinthome*" (20). Why this signifier is thought by Lacan as fundamental for a fluid subject position and why it takes on the role of a *sinthome* can be better unveiled if we go back to the construction of desire on which I talked in the previous section. As mentioned earlier, by the very notion of the fundamental cut opened through the intervention of language into the imaginary, desire comes to the scene, which opens the path for the subject's fluid translocation along the porosity of the three psychic realms that all intersect though keeping their unique singularity. Moved by the desire to fill the holes in his/her being, the subject searches for phallic equivalences to attain an anchoring point. The basic signifiers considered by Lacan as constitutive of fluid, negotiable, non-unitary subjectivity come to the fore at this point to serve the function of creating for the subject certain, epiphanic points of convergence in the signifying chain. Thus, if the subject rejects the Name-of-the-Father that, as "the signifier of culture and taboo," acts in the incorporation of maternal desire into the symbolic and in its subjection to the law (Vanheule, *The Subject of Psychosis* 60), a hole opens in the chain of the signifiers in the symbolic and this gap manifests itself in the dissolution of the knotting of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, resulting in psychotic disintegration. In such a context where "the imaginary continues to predominate" and "the symbolic, to the extent to which it is assimilated, is 'imaginarized,'" (Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 89), the subject suffers from lack of lack: no desire comes to the scene to suture the subject and to hinder him/her from plunging into psychosis because all of the three intersecting psychic territories melt into each other, losing their distinctive quality. When he argues in his unpublished "Short Speech for psychiatrist of Sainte-Anne" that a psychotic subject "has his cause [*objet a*] in his pocket,"[62] Lacan addresses this

[61] In distinguishing psychotic invasion from neurotic invasion, Lacan argues that while "a neurosis without Oedipus doesn't exist," "in psychosis something hasn't functioned, is essentially incomplete, in the Oedipus complex" (*S III* 201).

[62] http://www.psychasoc.com/Textes/Petit-discours-aux-psychiatres-de-Sainte-Anne#sdfootnote2anc

lack of lack experienced in case of psychotic disintegration. Besides, he elaborates on the link between the psychotic experience and the lack of the signifier in these words: "what is perceptible in the phenomenon of everything that takes place in psychosis is that it is a question of the subject's access to a signifier as such and of the impossibility of that access" (*S III* 321). Thus, in a Lacanian context, psychosis results from the foreclosure (*Verwerfung*)[63] of the Name-of-the-Father—that is, from the exclusion of the Other in the symbolic.

Reflecting on the structural difference Lacan draws between the concepts of psychosis and neurosis will enable us to shed better light on what is meant by psychotic dissolution from a Lacanian angle. As he discusses in his seminar *The Psychoses*, while a neurotic subject experiences "a certain rupture with reality" for the difficulty of coming to terms with a traumatic loss, for a psychotic subject "reality itself initially contains a hole that the world of fantasy will subsequently fill" (ibid. 44; 45).That is, different from the neurotic who "always remains inside the symbolic order" (ibid. 104), though experiencing some sort of repression resurfacing in the form of symptoms on the level of the symbolic, the psychotic already stands unfamiliar to the functioning of the paternal metaphor in symbolic regulation and alternative to the reality of the symbolic, s/he re-creates his/her own version of reality through his/her imaginary absorption. Different from a neurotic subject who holds on to repression as a defense mechanism, the psychotic subject resorts to this way of re-constructing an alternative version of reality on the imaginary plane for the reason that the void opened by the foreclosed signifier does not let him/her establish a meaningful link to his/her symbolic surroundings or to move smoothly along the triangular dialectic of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. When Redmond states that "the psychotic subject's encounter with the hole in the symbolic affects the structure of language and capacity to produce meaning" (63), he underlines the psychotics' failure to have a meaningful touch with the signifying chain—that is,

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[63] While using the terms rejection and foreclosure/*non-Bejahung* alternatively in his earlier works, towards the end of his seminar on psychosis, Lacan avoids using the term rejection to explain the psychodynamics of a psychotic subject position, for the very reason that the term rejection implies the existence of something once acknowledged (Vanheule, *The Subject of Psychosis* 67).

their inability to establish a serious touch with reality in the lack of the master signifier of the Name-of-the-Father. To put it otherwise, "the lack of one signifier necessarily brings the subject to the point of calling the set of signifiers into question" (Lacan, *S III* 203): being nonsymbolized, the Name-of-the-Father is rendered dysfunctional or turns into an empty signifier on the symbolic level for the psychotic subject. This comes to mean that no meaningful transliteration can be accomplished from the imaginary into the symbolic as the words at the disposal of the psychotic subject do not help him/her to make sense of the symbolic. Accordingly, Vanheule argues that in case of psychosis, "the concatenation of signifiers comes to a sudden halt, which in terms of the knot implies that the Symbolic loses its connection with the Imaginary: meaning is lost and the Real abruptly occupies the place opened up in the Symbolic" (*The Subject of Psychosis* 165). In the absence of a regulating principle that would serve as a quilting point[64] for him/her at the symbolic level, the psychotic subject cannot connect the real and the imaginary to the symbolic as in the topological figure of a Borromean knot and takes shelter in an imaginary world. Implicit in this relapse into the imaginary is also a lack of success in language as Fink notes that psychotics stand alien to "the metaphorical use of language" due to "the failure of *the essential metaphor: the paternal metaphor*" (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 91).

At this point, reflecting on the case of President Schreber will let us more closely deal with the question of 'What happens to the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father?,' in addition to proving why psychosis signifies "freedom from subjectivity rather than the freedom of the subject" despite the common thought followed by the school of Deleuze and Guattari (McGowan 49). As Lacan argues, far from being completely annihilated for its foreclosure by the psychotic subject, "what is refused in the symbolic order re-emerges in the real" (*S III* 13) in the form of delusions and hallucinations. Thus, "not purely and simply abolished," "it returns, but, unlike the return of the repressed, it returns from outside the subject, as emanating from the real" (Grigg 10). While signifying the distortion of the subject's

[64] According to Lacan, "the quilting point is essential in human experience" (*S III* 268).

meaningful experience of the symbolic, this resurfacing of the foreclosed signifier in the real from without also points to the subject's invasion by the imaginary material of specular images, leaving him/her unable to translate the pre-verbal codes of the imaginary-real into the codes of the symbolic. Lacan elaborates on the psychotic failure to translate the pre-verbal remainders into the verbal codes, arguing that the subject can fail to master the implications of the terms *moi* (imaginary self) and *je* (symbolic self), though keeping contact with them in case of psychosis (Lacan, *S III* 165). When read with reference to the case of Schreber, this inadequacy of mastering the terms of *moi* and *je* is reflected by the fact that despite his taken-for-granted omnipotence, "God, for Schreber, is just another other who wrongly imposes the law on a humanity that he doesn't understand. God is guilty because Schreber conceives him acting like a fellow being rather than like a signifier"[65]—that is, instead of taking God as an ultimate bearer of the Word or the almighty, Schreber assigns God the status of an imaginary other (McGowan 53). This stems from the exclusion of the Other from the symbolic as Lacan likewise observes:

> The Other being truly excluded, what concerns the subject is actually said by the little other, by shadows of others, or, as Schreber will express himself to designate all human beings he encounters, by *fabricated*, or *improvised* men. The small other effectively presents an unreal character, tending towards the unreal. (*S III* 53)

Schreber's perception of God as "ridiculous or even childish" (289) exposes, in this context, how his failure to move smoothly between *moi* and *je* or between the imaginary and the symbolic results in the distortion of meaning in his universe, "tending towards the unreal." When he says, with regard to Schreber, that psychosis is marked by "the subject's regression—a topographical…regression—to the mirror stage" (*Écrits* 159), Lacan addresses this discontinuity among the psychic spaces in Schreber's universe, given that the term "topographical" implies not continuity, interdependence, or porosity of the borders but fixity and discontinuation. At this

[65] It can help us better understand how Schreber positions himself in his relation to God if we lend an ear to his highly judgmental tone of voice in these words: "I wish to add another point in connection with God's inability to understand the living human being as an organism and to judge his thinking correctly, which has in many ways become important to me" (Schreber 233).

moment, we need to look at Lacan's valuable observation on the construction of meaning to see more clearly why Schreber cannot attach himself to a shared reality, and instead gets stuck in the territory of his own fabulations. As Lacan argues, "meaning emanates from a field that lies between the imaginary and the symbolic" (*S XXIII* 57). This observation lays bare that behind the void in the symbolic within the chains of which Schreber finds himself as entrapped lies his failure to oscillate smoothly between these two psychic spaces of the imaginary and the symbolic in a moebius strip-like fashion and his inability to achieve psychic dynamism.

Having resolved the question about what happens to the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father, we can move on to dealing with the question 'What leads to a psychotic outbreak?' As Lacan puts forward, it is the encounter with the hole in the symbolic (confrontation with the foreclosed signifier) that triggers psychotic dissolution although psychosis goes on pervading the subject all along his/her lifetime before its onset. That is, when the psychotic subject finds himself/herself within the context of the Name-of-the-Father, s/he cannot establish a meaningful relation to this essential signifier for its foreclosure renders it as not different from a void, an absence, or a black hole, lying beyond his/her grasp. In Lacan's words, psychosis makes itself heard in the subject at "the moment at which from the Other," "from the field of the Other, there comes the interpellation of an essential signifier that is unable to be received" (*S III* 306). If we look at the case of Schreber, for instance, we see that though leading a usual way of life, like everyone else around him, as a successful attorney in his prepsychotic phase, he goes through a psychotic outbreak with his appointment to the position of Presiding Judge to the Court of Appeal, the most prestigious position among administrative hierarchic circles. As Lacan argues, upon his interpellation by the ministers, Schreber is called for utilizing the Name-of-the-Father; however, being absent from his universe, what he encounters becomes a void in the symbolic, which triggers his psychotic disintegration. As Redmond accordingly notes, "when the psychotic subject attempts to use the Name-of-the-Father, the confrontation with the hole in the symbolic entails that the substitutive unfolding of the *signifying chain* is disturbed" (62-63). Thus, what provokes his psychosis becomes his encounter with the primordial signifier he

has never symbolized. From this moment on, the absence of this signifier that makes itself visible to the psychotic Schreber is compensated in his universe by hallucinations and delusions. As part of these imaginary invasions, he is taken in the grip of ideas he cannot master such as the delusion of emasculation: he gradually accepts that "the only means of escape, of preserving a certain stability in his relations with the invasive, desiring entities that for him are the supports of the unleashed language of his internal uproar, is to accept his transformation into a woman" (*S III* 256). For instance, as stated in his *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, he comes up with the idea that "it really must be rather pleasant to be a woman succumbing to intercourse" (Schreber 46) and reconstructs himself on the imaginary level as the wife of god, beginning no longer with a capital but a small letter, transformed into a figure of copulation.

2.3. The Collapse of *the* Woman

In his seminar *On Feminine Sexuality*, Lacan contests the phantasy of Oneness or totality which operates through the discursive construction of women as the passive, complementary part of the universal ideal of Man. To shed light on the categorization of the female subject, he mentions how the idea of the One has been established in history and continued to implicitly manifest itself in different veils. As he notes, though unsettling the Ptolemaic idea of the earth as the centre of the universe in its shift of emphasis from a geocentric to a heliocentric notion of the universe, the Copernican revolution presented another center position, the sun, as a substitute for the earth. Accordingly, far from being displaced, the idea of Man as the center of the universe or a transcendental category continued in the guise of a new discourse:

> The Copernican revolution is by no means a revolution. If the center of a sphere is assumed, in a discourse that is merely analogical, to constitute the pivotal point (*point-maître*), the fact of changing this pivotal point, of having it be occupied by the earth or the sun, involves nothing that in itself subverts what the signifier 'center' intrinsically (*de lui-même*) preserves. Man—what is designated by this term, which is nothing but that which makes (things) signify—was far from ever

> having been shaken by the discovery that the earth is not at the center. (*S XX* 42)

Lacan does not regard the Copernican Revolution as revolutionary in the true sense of the term because it does not renounce the idea of the center in its replacement of the pivotal point of the earth with the sun, and preserves the dualistic divides of majority/minority, center/periphery, or men/women embedded in the phallogocentric discourse. Besides, he implies that the circular shape of the earth revolving around the sun in Copernicus' model of the solar system still assumes the presence of a symmetrical relationship, overlooking both the slippage of the signifier and its invitation to new, contingent flows of meaning. Based on this, he suggests, what is more important than the Copernican Revolution is Kepler's work as "in his work it [the earth] does not turn in the same way—it turns in an ellipse, and that already throws into question the function of the center" (*S XX* 43). In other words, as the turning of the earth in an elliptical shape gives no possibility for a symmetrical unity, the classical idea of the center as an all-omnipotent, dominating force is refuted, as well. What is essential about Lacan's emphasis on Kepler's formula is that it hints at his subversive move from topography to topology in his destabilization of the phantasy of totality. So, leaving aside "the age-old Western conception of the world as a series of concentric circles or spheres" and taking topological surfaces such as Moebius strip or Borromean knot as a reference point for his formula of sexuation, Lacan erases the epistemic boundary between the feminine and the masculine structure (Fink, *The Lacanian Subject* 123). Reading the universalistic idea of unity symptomatically, Lacan points to the illusoriness of the hierarchical man/woman binary upon which the phantasy of Oneness is founded also when he addresses the One as what "encloses but a hole"[66] (*S XX* 127). Directing attention to the hole or the void in the One, he both dethrones *the* Man from his position of perfectibility and puts an end to his delusions of grandeur as an almighty force, having the category of *the* Woman at his disposal. As he further implies, the idea of the One as a totalized/totalizing whole can be in no way possible because a hole is opened in the

[66] Lacan makes a similar claim when he complicates the notion of totality embedded in the figure of a circle. As he notes, "the circle is in no respect what people believe it to be—something that symbolizes the idea of the all:" while "the idea of the *all* implies closure," "in a circle there is a hole" (*S XXIII* 91).

real with the subject's entry into language as a desiring subject, and the pre-linguistic energies of the imaginary-real constantly flow into the symbolic through this hole in the real, in the form of *objet petit a*.

As Lacan argues, notwithstanding the heterogenous nature of the human subject through whom diverse forms of jouissance flow as a vital, ontological force of desiring, ideology presents a standardized model of subjectivity as a fixed totality. To this end, reproductive and familial form of sexuality is encouraged to act out the collective phantasy of Oneness or complementarity in the sexual intercourse of the male and the female subjects. As Sarup accordingly notes:

> The sexual relation hangs on a phantasy of oneness which women have come to support. We must 'make one' out of two separate beings (the married couple), 'make one' in the form of a child, 'make one' out of all the potential meanings of a term, 'make one' out of all diversity of human groups. And so the pleasure in being together becomes duty. The imperative of marriage is: 'two become one.'(127)

In this binary mode of thinking where the female is regarded as a looking glass (a mirror image) to prop up the narcissistic omnipotence of the male as an all-nourishing substitute mother, marriage or sexual union stages a drama of normativity. Lacan critiques the familial or heteronormative sexuality that serves the ends of ideology in its aim to (re)produce One out of two diverse parties when he makes one of his most thought-provoking claims: "there's no such thing as a sexual relationship" (*S XX* 57). With this highly complex argument, Lacan breaks the illusion of one-to-one correspondence or happy solidarity between the two sexes—a phantasy that is "based on what is thought to be a teleological perspective in Freud's work, a teleology that supposedly grows out of the 'progression' of libidinal stages known as the oral, anal, and genital stages" (Fink, "Knowledge and Jouissance" 28). In other words, arguing that there is no sexual relationship, Lacan does not reject the idea of having sexual rapport but rather points to the impossibility of an unmediated relationship between the male and the female for the inevitable intrusion of the Other into their relationship. As he maintains, "there is no chance for a man to have jouissance of a woman's body, otherwise stated, for him to make love, without castration (*à moins de castration*), in other words, without something that says no to

the phallic function" (*S XX* 71-72). Thus, saving the notion of sexual identity from biology or any innate mechanism, Lacan links it instead to "the dynamics of identification and language" (Ragland-Sullivan 267). In this way, he also stresses that there are extra-linguistic, unconscious motivating forces behind the love of the subjects: "All love is based on a certain relationship between two unconscious knowledges" (*S XX* 144). As such, what the subjects pursue in the guise of sexual relationship is shown to be actually their insatiable desire to regain the lost phallus through *objet petit a* which can be addressed as "*a*-sexual:"

> object *a* can be said to be, as its name indicates, *a*-sexual *(a-sexué)*. The Other presents itself to the subject only in an *a*-sexual form. Everything that has been the prop, substitute-prop, or substitute for the Other in the form of the object of desire is *a*-sexual. (ibid. 127)

For Lacan, regardless of their sex, "all subjects suffer the *méconnaissance* of consciousness, and are riven by a desiring unconscious" (Campbell 60). Emphasizing the unconscious dynamics of the subjects and their barred state further with his argument that "There's no such thing as a knowing subject…There are subjects who give themselves correlates in object *a*" (*S XX* 126), Lacan problematizes the idea of unity embedded in the notion of sexual relationship with the word "*a*-sexual." Salecl stresses this asymmetry between the two sexes when he argues that "the major problem of the male and the female subjects is that they do not relate to what their partner relates to in them" (304). As Lacan accordingly notes, with the Other presenting itself to the subject "only in an *a*-sexual form"—that is, in the form of *objet petit a* (as a residue of presymbolic psychic energies)—the idea of Oneness built upon the notion of sexual union is eviscerated to be just an ideological phantasy. Besides, "one's jouissance of the Other taken as a body is always inadequate—perverse, on the one hand, insofar as the Other is reduced to object *a*, and crazy and enigmatic, on the other" (*S XX* 144). In his suggestion of different forms of female jouissance—phallic jouissance and the Other jouissance—Lacan refers to the confrontation of the subject with that inarticulate, unconscious pleasure lying beyond the jouissance that is derived from the union of the genital organs. As Fink underlines, with this capitalized O in the expression of the Other jouissance, Lacan addresses not the symbolic Other as the primordial signifier of the Name-of-

the-Father but rather its relation with "the unary signifier, the signifier that remains radically Other, radically different from all other signifiers" (*The Lacanian Subject* 107). As such, he critiques the reduction of that inarticulate jouissance to the jouissance of the bodily union: addressing the sexual relationship "as that which 'doesn't stop not being written,'" he underlines the impossibility of having a full grasp on it in linguistic terms: "There is an impossibility therein. It is also that nothing can speak it" (*S XX* 144). Given the positioning of the jouissance in the following figure, the reason why there is always something lying beyond the full grasp of language with respect to sexual relationships and all other subjective experiences becomes obvious:

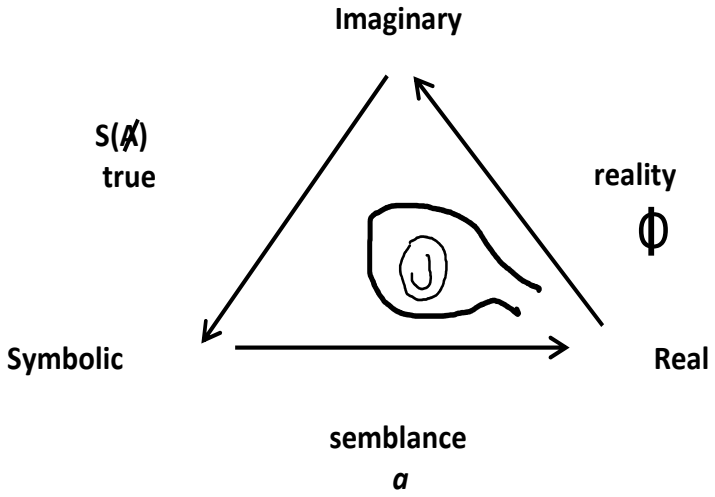

Figure 4. Graph of Jouissance[67]

As the figure given above reflects, located in the dynamic interplay of the three psychic realms, jouissance both depends on the phallic function (phallic jouissance) and eludes the full grasp of language (the Other jouissance) as most commonly evidenced in female mystics. Lacan pays utmost attention to call this Other jouissance "supplementary" rather than "complementary" (*S XX* 73). Underlining the two sexes' different ways of relating to language or experiencing jouissance, this figure also sheds light on that what is embedded in the sexual relationship is "*a*-

[67] (*S XX* 90)

sexual," with *a* addressing the surplus jouissance arising out of the encounter of the "two unconscious knowledges." As he further notes through the metaphor of a lantern,

> sexual relation amounts to taking a bladder for a lantern, that is to say, the best one can utter to express a mix-up. A bladder can become a lantern on the condition you put a flame inside, but so long as there is no flame, it's not a lantern. Where does this flame come from? The flame is the real. The real sets fire to everything. (*S XXIII* 102)

Likening the flame inside a lantern to the real, Lacan underlines the idea that what is involved in a sexual relationship is not merely the union of two bodily selves but rather the intersection of two unconscious selves which are marked by a sense of lack or void that waits to be compensated through phallic equivalences. In this respect, it could be argued that reconfiguring the idea of sexual relationship in the form of the encounter of not two heterosexual selves but of "two unconscious knowledges," Lacan poses a challenge to a wider ideological practice—the practice of preserving the primordial phantasy of Oneness on both individual and collective levels through the familial form of sexuality and reducing the female subject to the complementary position of a phallic substitute to prop up the self-contained, egocentric, or unified image of *the* Man as the universal ideal of Humanism.

Lacan makes his other much-debated argument when he assigns the phallus the position of a master signifier and states that "*woman* does not exist" (*S XX* 7). Though criticized harshly and even accused of being a phallocrat by some feminist thinkers on the grounds of erasing women from the symbolic and denying them authentic voice, Lacan actually addresses the categorized, standardized notion of the female subject with this argument. Further, in his epistemology, the phallic signifier neither "denote[s] any sexual gender of superiority" nor "place[s] sameness above difference in any order of preference" but "establishes substitutive Desire" (Ragland-Sullivan 271). In other words, the phallus takes on a vital role in the structuration of a psychically consistent subject position. Thus, far from placing women in a relation of hierarchy, Lacan unsettles the myth of *the* Woman through crossing out this essentialist category with a bar as ~~Woman~~:

> Woman cannot be said (*se dire*). Nothing can be said of woman. Woman has a relation with S(Ⱥ), and it is already in that respect that she is doubled, that she is not-whole, since she can also have a relation with Φ. (*S XX* 81)

Stressing the "not-whole" nature of women, Lacan demythologizes the idea of unity which operates through women's categorical representation as the repressed, irrational, or dark(ened) side of *the* Man. He further expresses his dissatisfaction with the mythical construction of women when he states, "the woman is introduced into the symbolic pact of marriage as the object of exchange between…lineages, fundamentally androcentric lineages…the woman…is bound up in an order of exchange in which she is object…the symbolic order literally subdues her, transcends her" (*S II* 262). Looking at Lacan's view of myths in general might help us to get a better grasp of what he means when he argues that "nothing can be said of woman." Lacan regards the myth as "the attempt to give an epic form to what is operative through the structure" (*Television* 30), and underlines the way it speaks to collective unconscious when he states that "myth is always captivating" (*S XXIII* 105). That is, myths attempt to shape the way we think, dictating us unconsciously to perceive the world as how they present it. The reason why Lacan regards the myths as veiling a wider ideological "structure" operating below the surface level is unveiled when he also reflects on how the Oedipus myth manifests itself in our unconscious as a collective fear or phantasy: "Whether he [Oedipus] existed or not is of little importance to us, since he exists in each of us, in a palely reflected form, he is ubiquitous, and he exists far more than if he really had existed" (*S II* 229). As he states, Oedipus "exists in each of us" and one does not feel the need to question whether he really existed or not. Similar to the taken-for-granted myth of Oedipus that injects the phantasy of linearity or metaphysical unity into unconscious of the human subjects, the myth of *the* Woman aims to veil the multilayered nature of woman with the female image it imposes on our psyche as a fixed, frozen totality. To this end, the nomadic nature of the female subject, arising out of contingent, relational encounters with diverse forms of jouissance is silenced under the mythical figure of this essentialist category, created in a way that will cherish the narcissistic omnipotence of Man. In his complication of *the* Woman myth, Lacan firstly stresses

that women cannot be generalized because their jouissance is multiple. As he argues, women and men differ in terms of their relation to the symbolic, to the locus of the Other: "while man is coupled to the Other via object *a*, woman is 'twice' related to the Other—coupled via the phallus and 'tripled' via S(Ⱥ), the signifier of the lack in the Other" (S. Barnard 172). Stated differently, while "it is through the phallic function that man as whole acquires his inscription" (*S XX* 79), woman's jouissance cannot be limited to phallic jouissance because there is some exceptional part in her that resists the phallic function—the Other jouissance that remains inarticulate. At this point, it is essential to note that "while denying the *existence* of this 'realm beyond the phallus,'" Lacan's formula of sexuation does not "in any way deny its *ex-sistence*[68]" (Fink, *The Lacanian Subject* 113). In this context, arguing that behind woman's "not-whole" position lies the sense of jouissance she experiences apart from the phallic jouissance, that kind of ineffable jouissance difficult to be contained in linguistic terms, Lacan points to the difficulty of giving any familiar frame to women.

2.4. *Extimacy* (*Extimité*)

In the same way as he revisions the subject as an open-ended and a dynamic self that emanates from unpredictable encounters with diverse forms of energies, Lacan opens up a new way of approaching space. Different from the Euclidian notion of space as a fixed, frozen, and mapped entity at the disposal of the Anthropos, he offers a fluid space that resists any attempt for mathematical depiction or colonization by the totalizing practices of the logocentric discourse. In this respect, we can argue that central to Lacan's theorization of space is the unruly nature of psychic reality that lies beyond the capture of binary logic. Lacan underlines this psychic nonfinality that he takes as a reference point for his notion of space by bending, stretching, or twisting the metaphysics of presence through such topological surfaces as the Moebius strip, the torus, the Klein bottle, and the cross-cap, and the Borromean topological knot. Alternative to Freud's topographical model of the psyche, Lacan

[68] As Fink further notes, Lacan uses the word "ex-sistence" to refer to "'an existence which stands apart from,'" which stands as it were from the outside; something not included on the inside, something which, rather than being intimate, is 'extimate'" (*The Lacanian Subject* 122).

proposes a nonunitary subject position who is in a constant state of transition between the pre-non/human and human, irrational and rational flows of energies. That is, rather than fragmentation, discontinuity, blockage, or closure, he stresses a non-hierarchical sense of wholeness, continuity, fluidity, and dynamic deferral of the subject. By this way of reflecting the threshold position of the subject fluctuating along the knotted rings of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic as a dynamic figure of self-postponement, he dispels the myth of egotistical unity embedded in the discourse of modernity.

At this point, let me further explicate how Lacan revisions space topologically in line with his alternative model of subjectivity. As Greenshields notes, with his topological constructions, Lacan created a "counterattack" against the established egopsychological practices that aimed at taming and civilizing the unconscious: "Where once the ego had bested and civilised the unconscious, [Lacan's] topological knots were now ranged against the geometry of the localisable centre and the ideal form of the sphere" (38). The ego psychologists perceive the subject within the confines of the id, the ego, and the superego that are separated from each other with clear-cut boundaries and aim to strengthen the ego through silencing and even overlooking the potential of the unconscious. Taking the ego as a controlling centre for the psychic reality, they treat the subject as a symmetrical construction. However, Lacan does not totalize the subject as a pure rational entity. Rather, stating that "The idea of the unifying unity of the human condition has always had on me the effect of a scandalous lie" ("Of Structure as an Inmixing" 190), he points to the instability of psychic reality. Besides, he underlines the vitality of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic's non-hierarchical interdependence, thinking that it is only through the heterogenous alliance of these three rings that the desire of the subject is stimulated on the way of becoming an active participant of the world. However, his denial of clear-cut boundaries does not mean the nullification of the boundaries, as I have argued earlier in the chapter regarding Lacanian subjectivity. Far from the total annihilation of the borders among the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, what he cherishes is their affective interaction through the pores between them. Moreover, while he thinks that the subject's loss of phallus, his/her being split by the third party

intruding into his/her symbiotic dyad with the mother constitutes the backbone of subjectivization, he does not give an end to the subject by this cut. Instead, attaching the two sides together with a twist, he complicates the notion of origin or the categorical inside/outside divide. As such, he underlines how following the internalization of the logic of the signifiers, the subject makes his/her entry into language with the residues of the imaginary-real that both back up his/her topological consistency and pose a challenge to the sole mastery of the symbolic.

As Lacan states, "The subject, like the Moebius strip, is *what* disappears in the cut. It is the function of the cut in language, it is this shadow of privation which ensures that he is in the cancelling-out that the cut represents" (*S XII* 147). What needs to be stressed here is that there should be a twist in this continuity embodied in the topological surface of the Moebius strip to resist the total eruption of the pre-symbolic *moi* fictions into the symbolic—that is, not to plunge into psychosis. As Ragland and Milovanovic accordingly state: "Desire (the subject as S) has the structuration of a Mobius strip, both wanting and lacking appearing at the surface of language, with the alienated lost parts hidden in the folds of the twist" (xvii). When Lacan mentions the traumatic influence of encountering the real (when surfacing with no filter as in the case of psychosis, its sudden and unfiltered appearance evokes a sense of threat in the subject), he points to the vitality of these twists or curves that play a vital role in our subjective consistency as subjects of desire. In other words, he underlines by these curves a subject position that is, far from being engulfed by the imaginary with the psychotic dissolution of the boundaries, interdependent with all the three psychic realms: as he reflects through the curves of the Moebius strip, the subject should have a dynamic touch with the pre-symbolic *moi* that constantly emits off its constitutive and desire-unchaining odor to the symbolic *je*. The following topological surface of the Moebius strip can shed light on the constitutive role of these curves that enable the subject to have fleeting moments of access into the pre-symbolic flows and energies of the imaginary-real on the path of reaching harmonization:

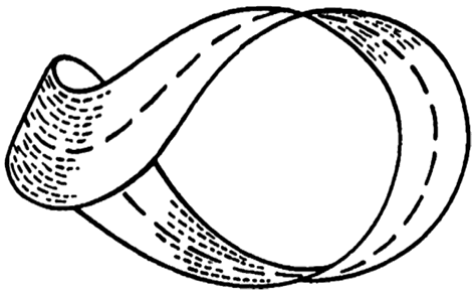

Figure 5. Moebius strip[69]

If we liken the pre-humanized position of the subject in the imaginary to a child riding a carrousel, as dissolved into a homogenous circle accompanied with the intoxicating lullabies of the mother, then the intrusion of the father into this psychotic-like homogenous whole creates a rupture in the continuity of the circle. From this moment on, the barred subject is marked by a fundamental sense of lack. What needs to be done to make up for this primordial loss and to re-experience that sense of continuity in the prelapsarian world of the imaginary is to stop the endings by stitching the two sides of the band, not in the form of one flat, closed circle but in the form of a continuing Moebius strip with a curve, as reflected in the following figures:

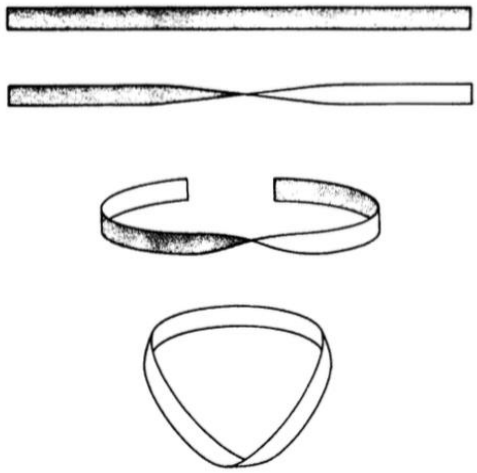

Figure 6. The band/ The Moebius strip[70]

[69] (Lacan, "Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever" 192)

[70] (Lacan, *S X* 97)

When he states that the Moebius strip "has no underside, that is to say, that in following it, one will come back mathematically to the surface that is supposed to be its other side" (*S XI* 235), Lacan points to this spatial continuity that complicates the binary demarcation between the inside and the outside. To exemplify the subject's simultaneous experience of the inside-outside, he also draws on the image of an ant walking along the surface of the Moebius strip. As he states, as "the Mobius strip is a surface that has just one face and a surface with just one face cannot be turned inside," "an ant walking along one of the apparent faces [of the Moebius strip] will pass over to the other face without needing to go over the edge" (*S X* 96). That is, rather than having a clear-cut edge or a symmetrically organized fixed structure that is fractured when forced to be bent, the topological model of the Moebius strip stands so flexible that it can be twisted or stretched without being distorted. With its flexible structure denying any closure, the Moebius strip presents "just one face" which involves the inside-outside continuity. This explains why it is no surprise that an ant beginning its walk on one face of the Moebius strip will simultaneously experience its other face, with the collapse of the inside/outside bipartition in this topological space.

In his problematization of the illusory inside/outside, interior/exterior, or familiar/unfamiliar categorical divides, Lacan consults the neologism *extimacy*, "the intimate exteriority" (*S VII* 139). By this term, he stresses that space is too dynamic and multilayered to be confined to the dialectics of otherness as a passive, simple, or fixed entity that can be easily expressed or depicted with a mathematical precision. As he reflects, far from being a frozen entity at the disposal of the structural rules, space is a rich, porous reservoir of multiple energies, formed by the inextricable knotting of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic as seen in the topological model of the subject. As Eyers similarly states, "'Space' for the subject…is not a fixed, a priori or 'absolute' arena through which a self-present subject might move but is rather, constituted and reconstituted precariously as signifiers 'pass on' the job of standing in for the subject in its absence" (74). If we further elaborate on the implications of the term *extimacy*, we can say that Lacan shifts the notion of space from the myth of totality to an unruly, a fluid, and polysemic ground of in-

betweenness that resists binary closure. This in-between space which hints at the simultaneous presence of the inside-outside is evidenced throughout his epistemology and most importantly when he complicates the almighty state of the One, bringing to the fore the sense of lack originating from the holes, voids, or cuts inherent in the human subject and talks about the pre-human flows of the imaginary-real into the symbolic through these holes. As Greenshields states, Lacan reflects on the vital role of the lack in subjectivity drawing on the image of a vase that comes into existence with the simultaneous emergence of a hole in it: "The potter performs the paradigmatic creative act by forging a hole (a nothing) in simultaneity with a structure (a something)" (41). To put it in the words of Lacan himself, the very creation of the void in the vase "introduces the possibility of filling it:"

> Now if you consider the vase…as an object made to represent the existence of the emptiness at the center of the real that is called the Thing, this emptiness as represented in the representation presents itself as a *nihil*, as nothing. And that is why the potter, just like you to whom I am speaking, creates the vase with his hand around this emptiness, creates it, just like the mythical creator, *ex nihilo*, starting with a hole. (*S VII* 120; 121)

The relation between the potter and the vase mentioned by Lacan can be likened to the relation between language and the subject. In the same way as amorphous clay turns into a vase through the hole opened in it by a potter that carves it out around "emptiness," the subject arises through the hole opened in him/her by language. In this respect, I think that this hole that lies at the core of the undifferentiated clay's access to the position of a vase sheds light on the primordial sense of lack one has to experience for his/her accession to a desiring subject position. Seen in this light, language acts like a potter in the structuration of an amorphous subject position: it constitutes the subject through causing a sense of lack and thus ensuring his/her desire to spring forth on the path of finding phallic substitutes to make up for this hole. Not surprisingly, it is also possible to state that what Lacan implies by the image of the hole in this vase addresses the hole which is opened in the real and through which the pre-symbolic energies flow into the symbolic: "language is tied to something that makes a hole in the real" (Lacan, *S XXIII* 21). Given the dynamic position of the imaginary-real energies that constantly voice themselves in the

symbolic, then, we can argue that the mythical notion of Oneness is eviscerated, hence the fixed model of space. This no wonder stems from that no subject can desire in the absence of a lack or no Moebius twist can arise without the cut of the imaginary homogenous circle, which explains also the reason why the unitary notion of subjectivity as an ideal figure of perfectibility estranged from all the residues of the imaginary-real is a mere illusion or "a scandalous lie" in Lacan's own words.

Rethinking space in the light of a non-hierarchical real-imaginary-symbolic interconnection, we can argue that embodying an experience of *extimacy*, Lacanian psychic space implies a continuum topologically stretching out from the imaginary-real into the symbolic with no fracture but some twists. Miller accordingly states that Lacan uses the term *extimacy* "to designate in a problematic manner the real in the symbolic" ("*Extimité*" 75). Similarly, what lurks beneath all the symbolic relations is the desire to re-experience a sense of imaginary wholeness, and this desire is stimulated by *objet petit a*,[71] which is linked to the imaginary. As Sbriglia and Žižek note, the *objet a* and the barred subject "can never encounter each other in a direct opposition or mirroring, but are instead like the two sides of the same spot on a Möbius strip" (26-27). This transversal bonding among the three psychic realms explains the reason why the symbolic which is regarded as a rational totality is actually interconnected with the realms of the imaginary-real and the symbolic relations are built on the imaginary misrecognitions and self-alienations. As Lacan states, "man's desire finds its meaning in the desire of the other, not so much because the other holds the key to the object desired, as because the first object of desire is to be recognized by the other" (*Écrits* 43). Phillips accordingly contends:

> A clinical relationship allows the structure of desire to emerge and to undergo a transformation. The theoretical *origo* for this structure involves the relation of the child and the mother. In this case the

[71] At this point, I want to refer to the fairy-tale "Hansel and Gretel." Upon overhearing that they will be left alone in the middle of a forest, Hansel sets out to leave behind him a trace that will help him and his sister Gretel return to their home. While leaving a trail of white pebbles in the first instance, he then leaves a trace of breadcrumbs to find the true path to their home. Besides, although the breadcrumbs are eaten by a bird (which I read as a problematization of the notion of origin), all these attempts of Hansel for leaving a trace that will take him back home echoes the human subject's quest for finding breadcrumbs-like phallic substitutes that will reconnect him/her with the mother.

> desire of the child circles the desire of the mother, which itself circles something completely unknown…the child remains oblivious to the provenance of its own desire; because by encircling what it thinks is the desire of the mother it thus encircles the 'desire of the Other.' (130)

As such, linking what is assumed to be the most unfamiliar (pre-symbolic, intra-subjective relations) to what is assumed to be the most familiar, the most certain, or the most symmetrical (the symbolic, intersubjective relations), the notion of desire which forms the backbone of the human subject's meaningful existence as a consistent self turns upside down all the epistemic inside/outside polarizations. In Watson's words:

> [T]he Symbolic order of signifiers and the Imaginary order of identifications can be traced back to [the] threads knotted around the Real void in the Other. Regardless of the seeming seamlessness of the fabric, it is actually made of myriad rings, linked Borromeanly and therefore held together only by the infinitely small points of absence (*a*) they locate by wedging. Consequently, there is something of the *jouissance* of the cut that comes through in language—pieces of the Real are present there. (122-123)

With the "pieces of the Real" finding a space of enunciation in the symbolic through *jouissance,* it is reflected that there are "myriad rings" in the weave of the human fabric, and the symbolic is only one thread among many in the weave of this fabric, as Watson implies. In the face of this, what is considered to be the most exterior or the least familiar is unveiled to be the most intimate and the most familiar part of the human subject. This simultaneous occurrence of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic is observed also when Lacan stresses that the space of language echoes also *lalangue,* addressed by Metzger as "the (w)hole through which language flows…a w(hole) in language" (142). The language-*lalangue* copresence no wonder gives insight into the heterogenous complexity of the Lacanian space, shaped by diverse flows and energies arising out of the symbolic-presymbolic intersection. As Ragland and Milovanovic similarly note:

> Beyond his discourse theory, Lacan's topology demonstrates that there is another meaning system that is not grammatical, but that operates logically and cohesively within the grammatical confines of

> regular language. Lacan called this the system of *jouissance* (libido) that cements fundamental fantasies in memory in*fixions* (fictions/fixations). (xiv)

Not confined to grammatical rules, this *jouissance* springs from the very presence of *lalangue* in language. As underlined by Greenshields, Lacan's notion of *jouissance* itself already hints at a third space beyond dualities: "By occupying the point at infinity, the twist that flips the surface, *jouissance* merges pleasure and pain—a topology distinct from the ideal maintenance of tension on a Euclidean plane" (Greenshields 90). Lacan regards this pain-pleasure simultaneity as one of the most inexplicable things about the human subject oscillating somewhere "between birth and death:"

> It is, of course, absolutely essential to understand how the symbolic order can enter inside the *vécu*, lived experienced, of mental life... Consider, however, that which is at the same time the least known and the most certain fact about this mythical subject which is the sensible phase of the living being: this fathomless thing capable of experiencing something between birth and death, capable of covering the whole spectrum of pain and pleasure in a word, what in French we call the *sujet de la jouissance*. ("Of Structure as an Inmixing" 194)

Interestingly enough, Lacan presents a portrait of the *extimate* once again when he evacuates the taken-for-granted notion of the unconscious as what resides in the deepest recesses of the human subject. For instance, he states: "I say somewhere that the unconscious is the discourse of the Other. Now, the discourse of the Other that is to be realized, that of the unconscious...is outside" (*S XI* 131). To Miller, "when he speaks of the unconscious as discourse of the Other, of this Other who, more intimate than my intimacy, stirs me," Lacan implies that what is the most intimate is also what is "radically Other" ("*Extimité*" 77). As Miller further elaborates on this:

> The unconscious is not something one has inside oneself. It is very difficult to think, maintain, or get used to the fact that the unconscious has no profundity; that it is not an internal thing. On the contrary, it is fundamentally external to the subject, to the point that the Symbolic order—a new concept and point of departure for Lacan's rethinking of Freud—is also the common discourse, all of which is tradition, that which speaks before the subject arises. The Other is just that, not simply the other in lowercase. In the greater range of its uppercase,

> the Other is our exteriority, the exteriority of every subject. ("Mathemes: Topology in the teaching of Lacan" 36)

Regarding the unconscious as "the discourse of the Other," Lacan implies its interdependence with the space of language. That is, the unconscious comes into existence through the scission of the subject by language: "unconscious is structured as a function of the symbolic" (*S VII* 12). After its emergence by the cut of language, it also does not stay silent but makes itself heard in the symbolic space, both motivating the subject's all relations with the Other and communicating nonverbally what is unsayable in symbolic codes. Moreover, what the unconscious communicates nonverbally is none other than the impact of the Other on it or the voice of the Other. As Lacan accordingly notes, "One should see in the unconscious the effects of speech on the subject—in so far as these effects are so radically primary that they are properly what determine the status of the subject as subject" (*S XI* 126). Although the Other constitutes and also tries to repress the unconscious, the unconscious material always resurfaces in the symbolic through symptoms, giving insight into what lies behind its repression. Thus, with the re-emergence of this repressed psychic material in the symbolic, what is considered to be passive or excluded from the symbolic is unveiled to be at the very core of the human subject, irreducibly lying side by side with the symbolic. As I have stated earlier, throwing into doubt the Other's claim to total mastery of Lacanian space, this points to the conscious-unconscious interdependence. To put it in the words of Sbriglia: "Lacan insists that the unconscious is outside because its intimacy with respect to the subject is so in excess of the intimate that it can only be described as extimate, something that ex-sists, that is ex-centric" (119). In this respect, we can argue that with its blurring of the boundaries between which is shaping and which is shaped, this affective unconscious-conscious relationality puts on the scene a performance of *extimacy*.

CHAPTER 3

UNCHAINING DESIRE IN "ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE" AND "IN DREAR NIGHTED DECEMBER"

The poetry of earth is never dead.[72]

> Poetry is the creation of a subject adopting a new order of symbolic relations to the world.[73]

> [T]he things of the human world are things in a universe structured by words…language, symbolic processes, dominate and govern all. When we seek to explore the frontier between the animal and the human world, it is apparent to what extent the symbolic process as such doesn't function in the animal world—a phenomenon that can only be a matter of astonishment for us…man is caught up in symbolic processes of a kind to which no animal has access.[74]

Keats's poems "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December" embody the post-anthropocentric tendency of decentring the anthropos and dispelling the illusion of metaphysical unity by the alternative subject positions they offer. As evidenced in the poems, the poetic personae's encounter with their naturalized others activates their repressed nonhuman potential and opens up a path for Becoming. Through this activation, the subject is saved from the dialectics of otherness and repositioned at the human-nonhuman, the symbolic-imaginary, culture-nature, and the *je-moi* intersection. The transitions and metamorphoses experienced in these in-between spaces thus shed light on the fact that far from being a fixed totality, the subject is a threshold between the presymbolic and the symbolic energies—that is, s/he is a

[72] (John Keats, "On the Grasshopper and Cricket," line 1)

[73] (Lacan, *S III* 78)

[74] (Lacan, *S VII* 45)

constantly alternating, multilayered complexity. To reflect on and discuss this post/non-anthropocentric subject position poeticized in a Keatsian form, I will consult the Braidottian ideas of becoming-animal/insect/imperceptible, zoe-bios, and the Lacanian ideas of desire, *sinthome*, affect, the imaginary, voice, *imago*, *lalangue*, and *objet petit a*. Through these concepts, I intend to create a kind of dialogue between Braidotti, Lacan, and Keats throughout my discussion of the poems. In this way, I argue that neither located nor delimited, the subject stands at the intersection of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. Besides, I claim that triggering the nonhuman potential in the human with its rich reservoir of *jouissance*, the voice of nature acts as a kind of *objet petit a* in the poems.

3.1. Confrontation of the human with the nonhuman in "Ode to a Nightingale:" From Becoming-animal to Becoming-sod

> I might drink and leave the world unseen,
> And with thee fade away into the forest dim:
>
> Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
> What thou among the leaves hast never known.[75]

Alternative to the fixity of the Cartesian *I*, Keats in his "Ode to a Nightingale" opens new subject horizons, marked by a non-unitary, nomadic vision of multiplicity, fluidity, and interconnection. Creating a poetic encounter between a human subject and a nightingale, he presents an aesthetic response to the classical vision of subjectivity, based on the anthropocentric premises of modernity. Though implied to be suffering from his entrapment in the symbolic codes, the poetic persona he presents moves from the dialectical boundaries of the symbolic codes to the imaginary, or from being to becoming, imaginarily captivated by the pre-linguistic song of the nightingale that unsettles him/her by its ambivalence. Incited by the song of the nightingale, his/her fleeting moments of access into the undifferentiated or nonpolarized space of nature gives him/her a sense of *jouissance*. Thus, awakened to

[75] (Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale," lines 19-22)

his/her ecological bond with the nonhuman, s/he dissolves along the continuum of nature-culture and achieves a simultaneous experience of the inside and the outside. With the encounter between these two diverse entities from different time zones, the poetic persona (the human) and the nightingale (the nonhuman), Keats opens a third (new) space, which belongs neither to the human nor to the nonhuman but to their harmonious coexistence. In this in-between space, termed by Braidotti as 'a space of becoming,' the nightingale and the poetic persona recreate each other, becoming other than what they are. In the context of Keats's rewriting of subjectivity, I will discuss the alternative subject position the poem presents, with regard to the poetic persona's affective experience of nature. I will underline that scattered along the culture-nature or the imaginary-symbolic interconnection, the Keatsian poetic persona in "Ode to a Nightingale" objectifies the Lacanian Moebius strip and becomes a nomad, standing 'between the no longer and the not yet' in Braidottian terms. I will discuss the multiple becomings activated by the interaction of the nightingale and the poetic persona to reflect the Keatsian alternative subjectivity from a different vantage point.

In the very beginning of the poem, the poetic persona suffers from heartache and a painful, "drowsy numbness:" "My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains/ My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk/ Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains" (1-3). His/her suffering from a 'drowsy numbness,' which I read as a sign foreshadowing the pleasurably painful metamorphosis s/he will go through by moving from the central to the peripheral, or from the rational to the irrational, is foregrounded but s/he does not know the reason of this.[76] The song of the nightingale, all of a sudden, disrupts the discourse of modernity and reminds him/her

[76] Being open to different interpretations, these lines can also be read as implying the disquiet of the poetic persona for being within the binary trap of modernity, which has taught him/her to perceive the world though polarizations and to establish his/her centrality to his nonhuman others as a unitary subject. In this sense, due to its taking reason as the sole master of the subject and trying accordingly to silence the subject's tie with the prediscursive space of irrationality under the name of civilization, the anthropocentric discourse of modernity might be implied to be acting as a kind of "hemlock" and "opiate" for dynamic subjectivities.

who s/he is in the absence of linearity. Captivating him/her by its song, the nightingale elicits the poetic persona's fluctuation along the continuum of culture-nature or the human-nonhuman, activating a process of Becoming in their interaction. From this moment on, the poetic persona no longer stands fixed but dissolves along the porosity of borders, reconnecting with the most archaic energies of the pre-symbolic domain.

Invited by the nightingale into the pre-linguistic space of nature, the poetic persona leaves aside the boundaries of modernity and metamorphoses into an interface between the human and the nonhuman. Within the context of this metamorphosis, s/he transliterates her/his imaginary fascination by the nightingale into human words, achieving a kind of psychic transposition. His/her imaginary seizure by the nightingale is elicited by the song of "summer" that it sings "in full-throated ease" (10). For T. Lee, this song impresses the poetic persona due to its resistance to be reduced to mechanical laws (119).[77] Though agreeing with T. Lee, I go one step further and propose that the song of the nightingale seizes the poetic persona as it speaks to his/her unconscious, taking on the role of *objet petit a*. Depicting it as "the remainder left over from the constitution of the subject in the locus of the Other in so far as the subject has to be constituted as a barred subject," Lacan argues that the *objet petit a* "is to be conceived of as the cause of desire" (*S X* 101; 284), with "the voice" being one of the four causes of desire (*S XX* 126). Epitomized in the song of the nightingale, this *a*— "this remainder, this ultimate Other, this irrational entity, this proof and sole guarantee, when all is said and done, of the Other's otherness" (Lacan, *S X* 27)—serves for the poetic persona as a phallic substitute to compensate for his/her missing thing. In this respect, the song of the nightingale gives the poetic persona the same sense of complementarity before his absorption by the symbolic codes and invites him/her into recreative encounters with nonhuman actors from nature. At this point, one needs to look at what Dolar notes with regard to the vital role that the voice takes in the constitution of a desiring subject position,

[77] T. Lee refers to Kant with regard to the extralinguistic nature of the birdsong: "For Kant, we can bring birdsong 'under no musical rule', for it 'seems to have more freedom' than rule-bound human song" (119).

reintegrating the subject in a continuous process of recreation through his/her dynamic intersection with others:

> The voice appears to be the locus of true expression, the place where what cannot be said can nevertheless be conveyed. The voice is endowed with profundity: by not meaning anything, it appears to mean more than mere words, it becomes the bearer of some unfathomable originary meaning which, supposedly, got lost with language. It seems still to maintain the link with nature, on the one hand—the nature of a paradise lost—and on the other hand to transcend language, the cultural and symbolic barriers, in the opposite direction, as it were: it promises an ascent to divinity, an elevation above the empirical, the mediated, the limited, worldly human concerns. (31)

As "the bearer of some unfathomable originary meaning" which has not been actually lost as Dolar notes, but which has been repressed or denied symbolic visibility in the name of the civilizational ideal of Humanism, the voice takes on the role of a splice between the imaginary and the symbolic: having the residues of nature, it trespasses the linguistic codes and shifts the meaning onto a slippery ground in the symbolic. So, inviting him/her into a pre-Oedipal universe and letting the flow of *jouissance* to the locus of the Other from this orifice that was opened into the imaginary, the voice of the nightingale promises the poetic persona to address his/her lack: similar to the mother's voice, which is "the immaterial tie that comes to replace the umbilical cord, and shapes much of the fate of the earliest stages of life" (Dolar 39), the song of the nightingale takes the poetic persona to the motherly space of nature and reintegrates him/her into an imaginary psychodrama of the mirror stage where s/he feels intoxicated by the absorbing specular images. As Lacan argues:

> What I have called the *mirror stage* is interesting in that it manifests the affective dynamism by which the subject originally identifies himself with the visual *Gestalt* of his own body: in relation to the still very profound lack of co-ordination of his own motility, it represents an ideal unity, a salutary imago. (*Écrits* 15)

While an infant in the mirror stage is marked by incoordination and dependence on the care of his/her mother, s/he replaces the empirical reality regarding his/her corporal insufficiency with his/her own version of reality that s/he reimagines based

on what is reflected back to him/her by the image in the mirror: "an ideal unity, a salutary imago" with no fragmentation or lack. By this replacement which is motivated by the mirror image, what results becomes a sense of wholeness. So, after the internalization of the logic of the signifiers, the same sense of non-hierarchical unity experienced with the mother in the imaginary is attained through the link with nature. In this respect, the song of the nightingale becomes a substitute for what the poetic persona lacks on the symbolic level (an ecological sense of unity) and injects *jouissance* to him/her. Henceforward, as the song of the nightingale unleashes his/her desire and activates the unrealized nonhuman potential in him/her, reminding him/her that s/he is only one of the many species on the earth, the poetic persona no longer stands the same but becomes other than s/he is and gets activated by *jouissance* to re-(e)merge with nature as a nomadic subject. In Braidotti's words, the poetic persona's subjective metamorphosis that is activated by the song of the nightingale points to how the subject's confrontation with the music (of nature) dissolves his/her on the path of access to forming affective bondings with "the imperceptible, the unthinkable, and the inaudible:"

> Music increases the intensity of becoming: it is about crossing as many thresholds of intensity as the subject can sustain. All becoming is transgressive; it also aims at approaching the imperceptible, the unthinkable, and the inaudible. Just as intensive writing for Deleuze can engender becoming by being intransitive, so music can express affectivity, immanence, and the dissolution of boundaries. Music is constant becoming, its refrains and rhythmic narrations. It makes audible the irreducibility of in-between spaces, polyphonic hybridization, and multiple sonic interferences. (*Nomadic Theory* 110)

The music of the nightingale "makes audible the irreducibility of in-between spaces" in Braidottian sense and problematizes the almighty notion of the Anthropos, testifying to the presence of nonhuman actors in Life apart from the human subjects. Moved by the music of the nightingale, thus, the poetic persona transgresses the metaphysical boundaries of the anthropocentric discourse and epiphanically transposes himself/herself from the site of the human to the site of the nonhuman for attaining the same sense of wholeness that surrounds the nightingale. In relation to the constant alternation of the subject, Eyers notes that "the subject is perpetually

constituted and fractured, and it is this movement of constitution and fracturing that renders distinctive Lacan's account of the 'becoming' of the subject in time and space" (73). Similarly, involved in this dynamic process, termed by Eyers as the "movement of constitution and fracturing," the poetic persona dissolves. Besides, having been released from the confines of egotistical unity, s/he begins to pay attention to the vibrant voice of the earth, that fastens him/her onto a signifying chain. As s/he moves from lack to fullness in his/her non-verbal experience of the nightingale, different from the humans who are led to a kind of "drowsy numbness" by repressing the pre-oedipal energies of the imaginary, the nightingale stands untouched by binary polarities and resists symbolization as a threshold figure. For instance, like a flying signifier, it flies "in some melodious plot/ Of beechen green, and shadows numberless" (7-9). Distorting clarity and easy articulation—on which the discourse of modernity is based—these "shadows numberless" imply the dissolution of the notion of a centre in nature: in the absence of a transcendental signified to be arrived at, the sky turns into an incommensurable network of signifiers and the nightingale is deprived of visibility. Thus, while it is heard and asserts its free existence as a "light-wingèd Dryad[78] of the trees" (7), it cannot be seen by the anthropocentric Other to be mapped, defined, or captured, which concretizes the lack of correspondence between the signifier and the signified. As the imaginary other, the nightingale stands alien to the codes of the symbolic by its slippage in the chain of signifiers and ambivalence that denies any kind of linguistic depiction. Linking the nightingale to the figure of Philomela in Greek mythology also presents us with crucial implications for its ambivalence: standing at the intersection of the human-nonhuman, pain-pleasure, absence-presence, or visibility-invisibility, Philomela poses a challenge to the symbolic codes, and she continues to voice herself imaginarily in the symbolic through art, though repressed and silenced by the metaphorical mutilation of her tongue (which is tantamount to the subject's forced estrangement from the pre-symbolic energies of the imaginary-real in the name of modernity). Similar to its representation in mythology, the nightingale in the

[78] According to Greek mythology, dryads were nymphs who inhabited forests and trees, especially oak trees (Bane 112). While some thought that "a Dryad was born with her tree, lived in it, and died the moment it did," others believed that "the nymphs migrated from a dying tree to a healthy one, and that they could live for close to 10,000 year" (Littleton 440).

poem undoes the binary codes by its freedom from transcendental categories. Captivated by its freedom, thus, the poetic persona attaches himself/herself to the nightingale, floating in the immense sky as a free flying signifier, or in Baker's words, s/he achieves "communion with the bird, in an intimate, confessional moment" (48). To foreground the inextricability of the three psychic realms, "to the imaginary and the symbolic…the real brings the element that can make them hold together," says Lacan (*S XXIII* 113). At this point, we can argue that complementing the knot of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic in a Borromean fashion, the nightingale takes on the role of a fourth ring, the *sinthome* for the poetic persona. Acting like an upholstery button, his/her attachment to the signifier-like nightingale anchors the poetic subject. However, far from giving closure to his/her non-unitary status, this anchoring opens a new space of Becoming and shows him/her that there lies a third space of enunciation for subjectivity. With his/her entrance into this new space of signification, thus, the poetic persona crosses the boundary of reason and dissolves along the real-imaginary-symbolic continuum, turning into a kind of a Moebius strip, an interface between the inside and the outside.

Incited by the song of the nightingale, the poetic persona's desire to delve into the imaginary space of nature is solidified in the second stanza. In the lines 'This not through envy of thy happy lot,/ But being too happy in thy happiness" (5-6) where "both pleasure and pain are deliberately heightened, and meet in a common intensity" (Fogle 211), the poetic persona bridges up the assumed rupture between himself/herself and the nightingale. According to Lundeen, rejecting to regard the bird as either subject or object, the poetic persona adopts in these lines a point of perception "which is coincident with neither an observer nor the bird, and thus appears to have escaped dialectical space:" though appearing to be as if one of the figures on the Grecian Urn "caught in a heavy gravitational field," the poetic persona "destabilizes his own ground" "in an attempt to situate himself in relationship to the bird" (107). As I argue, this destabilization that I consider as the subject's psychic deterritorialization on the way of forming a Borromean knot with his/her nonhuman agents is activated by the nightingale whose song triggers some unconscious,

affective reactions in the poetic persona in the form of *lalangue*. With regard to the concept of *lalangue,* Lacan notes:

> The unconscious evinces knowledge that, for the most part, escapes the speaking being. That being provides the occasion to realize just how far the effects of llanguage go, in that it presents all sorts of affects that remain enigmatic. Those affects are what result from the presence of llanguage insofar as it articulates things by way of knowledge *(de savoir)* that go much further than what the speaking being sustains *(supporte)* by way of enunciated knowledge. (*XX* 139)

Lying beyond the full grasp of linguistic codes, the unconscious knowledge manifests itself in human subjects in the form of nonverbal, "enigmatic" affects. Embedded in *lalangue* which, in Fink's terms, "has to do with the acoustic level of language, the level at which polysemy is possible due to the existence of homonyms" (Lacan, *S XX* 40)[79], these affects give important implications about the psychodynamics of the human subject. As Soler accordingly argues, "these enigmatic affects, which are the effects of the unknown knowledge residing in *lalangue*, are revelatory:" "they serve as proof the irreducible unconscious as *lalangue*" (103). As part of the poetic persona's ineffable unconscious knowledge, the imaginary finds a poetic transliteration in the poem in the form of the nightingale and its fleeting song (*lalangue*), and manifests itself by activating some bodily *jouissance* in him/her. Speaking to the poetic persona from the depths of his/her nonhuman, nonverbal, or precultural self and evoking extra/non-linguistic feelings in him/her, thus, this *lalangue,* standing as a reservoir of unknown knowledge, invites him/her to step out of the logocentric discourse into the pre-Cartesian space of nature and to feel the same sense of intoxication with the nightingale. For instance, after this encounter with the *lalangue* that is aestheticized in the song of the nightingale, s/he feels as if s/he drank "a drought of vintage, that hath been/ Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth/ Tasting of Flora and the country green" (11-13). This implies that

[79] As Fink further explains in the same footnote, *lalangue* is a neologism combining "the feminine article *la* with the noun *langue*" and "[i]t is the level at which an infant (or songwriter) may endlessly repeat one syllable of a word (for example, 'la la la'), the level at which language may 'stutter'–hence the translation provided here, borrowed from Russell Grigg, 'llanguage'"(Lacan, *S XX* 44).

her/his affective experience of nature has activated his/her desire by awakening him/her to the nonhuman, the vital force of life in him/her. Looking at the connotations of Flora in mythology can help us have a better grasp of the poetic persona's affective experience of nature. Flora who was a goddess of flowers and fertility and for whose name festivals were held at the end of April and the beginning of May, signalled "the annual renewal of life in nature," in the form of "joyous revels" or "licentious orgies" (Wentersdorf 73). So, with his/her "tasting of Flora," the poetic persona implies her psychic transposition by the dionysiac influence of the nightingale on him/her. Then, s/he wants to act out his/her phantasy "to leave the world unseen" and "fade away into the forest dim" with the nightingale (19-20) to have a kind of re-birth. As the forest knows no binary polarity and lies beyond the grasp of language with its extra-linguistic elements of "Dance," "Provençal song," and "sunburnt mirth" (14), entrance into it promises the poetic persona a sense of *jouissance*. For this reason, s/he wants to leave the world without being seen and to go to the obscure depths of the forest. Within this context, it is implied that the poetic persona does not stay fixed but fluctuates along the porosity of borders.

The decentralization and dislocation of the humanist view of subjectivity is reflected in the following stanza by the poetic persona's problematization of the Cartesian *cogito*, as s/he states: "to think is to be full of sorrow" (27). By his/her complication of the Cartesian logic, s/he means that being contained by the rational codes of the humanist discourse does not result in any sense of happiness but brings out discontent. So, with his/her desire to re-integrate himself/herself into his/her corporeality and to taste the same sense of wholeness that the nightingale experiences in its originary site of existence that stands uninvaded by the logos, s/he topologically transposes himself/herself from the site of the human (rationality) to the side of the non-human (irrationality). In Braidottian words, this transposition can be read as the confrontation of *bios*, the political or discursive life, with its colonized, dark other *zo*e, which is "the generative vitality of non-or pre-human or animal life" (*Transpositions* 37). As the poetic persona further reflects on his/her non-verbal experience of nature, set in the blissful context of *zoe*, the nightingale remains unafflicted with daily anxieties of life. While "men sit and hear each other groan,"

suffering from “weariness,” “fever,” and “fret” (23-24) as beings destined to ageing, the nightingale flies in the boundless sky, with no boredom or anxiety but a joyful affirmation of life. Besides, unlike the human subjects entrapped within the ideals of modernity, it remains ignorant of linear temporality: while in the *bios* “palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,” “youth grows pale,” “spectre-thin, and dies,” depriving the humans of their “beauty” and “lustrous eyes” (25-26;28), the nightingale floating in the *zoe* knows no telos or origin. Rather, reflecting that “standards and benchmarks do not exist in the animal kingdom; they are made possible only by language” (Fink, “Knowledge and Jouissance” 34), it gets scattered in the originary site of nature with its holistic perception of time. The lack of concurrence between the present time and the kind of song that it sings also adds to the nightingale’s ignorance of linearity due to its embeddedness in a holistic conception of time: although it is spring time (“mid-May”) and “summer eve” (50), the nightingale sings a summer song. By this way of shattering the Saussurean certainties about the presence of a happy solidarity between language and reality, it both problematizes the logic of linearity lying behind the humanist ideals and affirms life in a Spinozist fashion by delving into an active process of Becoming. So, while the nightingale belongs to *zoe*, which stands for “the mindless vitality of Life carrying on independently of and regardless of rational control” and which is regarded as “the dubious privilege attributed to the non-humans and to all the ‘others’ of Man,” the poetic persona belongs to *bios*, “the specific social nexus of humans” (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 37). However, their confrontation with each other problematizes the assumed rupture between them and offers an alternative ontological site to both of them where ‘life,’ no longer standing divided between *zoe* and *bios*, involves their non-hierarchical unity or co-existence along the axis of multiple temporalities.

In his move from the idea of the mythical One to “the triple alliance of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real,” Lacan constantly underlines subject’s affective interaction with the nonhuman: “the Borromean knot consists in the relationship which means that what is *enveloped* with respect to one of the circles finds itself *enveloping* with respect to the other one” (*S XXIII* 18; 24). In this respect, I argue that a third space is opened out of the poetic persona’s contingent interaction with the

nightingale. This alternative space or a reimagined notion of life which stands at the *bios-zoe* intersection knows no distinction between the "*enveloped*" and the "*enveloping*" in Lacanian terms—that is, saved from the closure of binary signification system, the human and the nonhuman agents in this third space constantly change roles and stand as an extension of each other. As Braidotti accordingly notes, "Life is half-animal, non-human (*zoe*) and half-political and discursive (*bios*)" and "these two competing notions of 'life' coincide on the human body" (*Transpositions* 37). With the nightingale's confrontation with the poetic persona, on whose human body *zoe* and *bios* intersect, the dominant vision of subjectivity is dislocated and the humanist discourse is bent to point to the *zoe-bios* intersection. Besides, no longer being forced to repress the *zoe* in him/her, the poetic persona steps into a continuous process of Becoming: activated by the freedom of the nightingale that reminds him/her of his/her nonhuman dimension of life and how his/her *zoe* is actually in a dynamic touch with his *bios*, s/he peels off his/her former position as an Anthropos, moves from the fixity of Oneness to fluidity, and fluctuates at the intersection of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic as a desiring subject.

The poetic persona's imaginary fascination with the flux of nature reaches its culmination in the fourth and the fifth stanzas and similar to the nightingale, s/he wants to fly and dissolve along the porosity of the borders: "Away! away! I will fly to thee,/ Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,/ But on the viewless wings of Poesy" (31-33). Rejecting Bacchus[80] in his/her access to the nightingale, the poetic persona implies that though "ardent and enthralling," his/her inspiration for stepping into the space of the nightingale is not accompanied with "the Bacchic elements of disorder and destruction" (Wentersdorf 76). Despite "the dull brain" that "perplexes and retards," s/he wishes to take this nomadic shift to enter the prediscursive space of the nightingale. As s/he notes, in this space of the nightingale where there is "no light," "the Queen-Moon" stands "on her throne," "cluster'd around by all her starry Fays" and "breezes" blow "through verdurous glooms and winding mossy/ ways"

[80] "Bacchus was a god not only of inspiration but also of the highest passions. The pards drawing his car, beautiful but terrifying in their savagery, symbolized the disorderly and sometimes violent manifestations of human sexuality" (Wentersdorf 76). The poetic persona in the poem experiences intoxication not with wine but with poesy.

(35-40). Different from the realm of the symbolic, the imaginary space of the forest denies easy capture or codification: in the same way as the nightingale is heard but not mapped out by its unbridled floating in darkness, breeze is felt but not seen or captured concretely. The point that needs to be stressed here is also that though repressed, nature does not remain silent but finds a way to imaginarily manifest itself in the symbolic through arousing affective responses that present a deadlock for modernity. This is what Lacan means when he argues: "the real both carries and does not carry a meaning, in view of the fact that the field of meaning is distinct from it" (*S XXIII* 115). While the way the real actualizes its potential in the symbolic is felt through untranslatable affects, it cannot be expressed by the linguistic codes. By its subversive mode of self-voicing, it would be better to use the term *ex-sistence* for the nightingale's semiotic system to underline its resistance to symbolization in the Lacanian context. Surrounded in this undifferentiated space by the very *ex-sistence* of the nightingale's nonverbal language that takes on the role of *objet petit a*, the poetic persona finds himself/herself in the middle of an imaginary psychodrama where s/he restages a *moi* fiction, establishing mental identifications with the specular images around. In his/her epiphanic moments of access to nature, thus, the poetic persona is captivated by the specular image of "the Queen-Moon" that speaks to him/her from the register of the imaginary as a kind of *imago*. The significance of "the Queen-Moon" as the *imago* is consolidated by its mandala shape. As specular images associated with the mandala shape of the mother's breast in the mirror stage, *imagos* inject a sense of unity into the unconscious of the subject and hence they assume the role of a quilting point given that they replace discordance with harmony and consistency in the subject's psyche. As Lacan argues,

> the specular image (of the narcissistic relation) is linked as a unifier to all the imaginary elements of what is called the fragmented body, provides a couple that is prepared not only by a natural conformity of development and structure to serve as a homologue for the Mother/Child symbolic relation. (*Écrits* 149)

For the role they assume in the harmonization of the imaginary elements, these specular images, *imagos*, play a vital role in preserving the subject's dynamic touch with the prelinguistic energies of the imaginary-real. As Boothby similarly states,

"the primordial imago coordinates the chaotic inner life of the neonate by referring it to an ideal unity, but also establishes a basis of stability over time" (25). Thus, identifying with "the Queen Moon" that s/he regards as an *imago*, the poetic persona achieves consistency, transliterating the nonhuman energies of the imaginary into the symbolic—that is, s/he creates a splice between the imaginary and the symbolic. This splice, also, opens a path of access to him/her to fasten the resonances of the imaginary into a greater network of signifiers, thus activating the possible potential in him/her to actualize himself/herself as a desiring subject. As Lacan states, "the function of the *imago*…is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality—or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*" (*Écrits* 3). In addition to the specular image of the moon that, imaginarily captivating the poetic persona, enables the translation of the *Innenwelt* into the *Umwelt*, the fleeting nature of the things in the forest also intensifies a flow of non-verbal energy between the poetic persona and the nightingale. Though both coming from different time zones and languages, they relate to each other and communicate in this space of transition opened through their intersection. When read in Braidotti's terms, their access to each other in this third space of enunciation can be said to enact desire— "a surplus value that does ensue from the expression of affectivity and its successful encounter with other forces" (*Transpositions* 192). As s/he moves from lack to fulness in his/her affective experience of nature, the poetic persona crosses the boundaries of the ego and feels interconnected with the nonhuman space:

> I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
> Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
> But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
> Wherewith the seasonable month endows
> The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
> White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
> Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
> And mid-May's eldest child,
> The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
> The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves. (40-50)

"For someone affected, the affect is all too obvious and yet it never belongs to the realm of a graspable pregiven," notes Soler (5). Evidenced in the lines given above, the poetic persona's topological regression into nature triggers some affective

response in him/her, standing somewhere between familiarity and unfamiliarity in an "obvious" but ungraspable fashion. This is exactly what Lacan states about the vital role of the real in creating a link between the extralinguistic (the body) and the linguistic: "Between the two poles constituted by the body and language, the real is what establishes an accord" (*Lacan, S XXIII* 29). Moved by the nonhuman actors of nature which, I would argue, acts as a playground for the affective manifestation of the real on his/her body, thus, the poetic persona transgresses the boundaries of the logocentric discourse. Besides, as part of his/her nomadic psychic oscillation, his/her ecological sensitivity to the world is heightened. For instance, these lines are described by Perkins as "a vivid assertion of the power of the imagination to see more than the sensory eye can see" (250). In a similar line of thinking to Perkins', I argue that as s/he cannot see what lies around because of darkness, s/he resorts to senses other than the sense of sight: left "in the midst of random, floating 'heres' and 'theres'" in the absence of linear temporality (Yang 155), s/he moves from the visual to the auditory, to the tactile, or to the olfactory in his/her perception of the world. As Fogle accordingly states, "sensations are blended in a soft and complex unity" in the poetic persona's experience of nature in darkness:

> Odor merges with touch and kinesthetic strain in 'what soft incense hangs upon the boughs.' 'The grass, the thicket, and the fruit tree wild' have tactual and plastic qualities. The 'fast fading violets' are invested with organic sensation through empathy by being 'covered up in leaves,' and the associations of the musk rose include taste and sound. (216)

With this intensity of non-visual sensorial perception of life, the poetic persona resembles a newborn baby, who carves meaning out of the external surroundings through touching, smelling, or listening due to being afflicted with blurred vision. As Baker states, the poetic persona's non-visual experience of nature stirs up his/her memories: '"Incense' and 'embalmed' bring exotic fragrance; 'eglantine' and 'musk' offer native scents;" "'Dewy wine' brings a reminder of the taste of 'Flora and the country green;'" and "sharpest of all though, is the sense of hearing: we listen to a continuously rustling music…that modulates virtually unnoticed into the buzzing of insects" (47). Expanding on Baker's argument, we can state that this psychic

transposition experienced in nature by the poetic persona can be read as his/her nomadization or awakening to his/her nonhuman dimension of life from which s/he has been estranged by human civilization. Thus, reflecting how flexibly s/he slides along the unruffled surface of the Moebius strip and bends the idea of Oneness without suffering from any fragmentation, the poetic persona does not feel threatened in the absence of a clear sight in nature. For instance, even though s/he can see neither "what flowers are at [his/her] feet/ Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs" due to "embalmèd darkness" (41-43), s/he does not feel alienated and threatened. Rather, with "this night world" being a "perfect arena for the imagination's enactment of the desired transformation" (Kappel 275), his/her penetration into the inexpressive layers of the forest gives him/her a non-hierarchical sense of unity and s/he experiences unconscious pleasure. His/her *jouissance* stems from that s/he steps out of linearity into a new timespace offered by nature. When he states that "jouissance partakes of the real" (*S XXIII* 63), Lacan underscores the significance of the affective role of nature in triggering a sense of *jouissance* in the human subject. From this perspective, his/her blurry vision stemming from darkness can be interpreted on a metaphorical level as the blurring of the categorical metaphysical boundaries in the nonhuman space of the imaginary, that is, in nature. Besides, the intensity of the bliss that s/he experiences in the darkness of nature dispels the illusion of these egotistical boundaries working insidiously on the unconscious level. Thus, in this alternative ontological site, which has neither fragmentariness nor species hierarchy but wholeness and continuity, the poetic persona feels interconnected with the nonhuman realm, merging the inside with the outside. Also, breathing the same air with the nonhuman space of "the grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild" or "the coming musk-rose," that is "full of dewy wine," s/he is taken back to his/her corporeality—to that sense of bliss before the intervention of the Law into the imaginary. This reintegration into corporeality reflects that with its affective flows of pre-oedipal energies, nature activates the becoming-nightingale of the poetic persona and the becoming-human of the nightingale without obliterating their unique qualities. In other words, in their leaking into each other on the topological surface of the Moebius strip, the poetic persona and the nightingale no longer carry the burden of normative labels assigned

to them by the dominant discourse of Humanism. Rather, they go beyond the limits of their species: within the context of their active Becoming, in the same way as the nightingale does not stand for the poetic persona as the repressed, imaginary other, the poetic persona also does not stand for the nightingale as the Anthropos, the symbolic Other. Rather, they metamorphose into other beings than how they are framed within the symbolic codes. Although they are both empirically grounded and embodied beings as the human-nonhuman subjects, their non-verbal interaction opens a path of access to a world beyond the borders of empirical reality: this world knowing no dualistic opposition brings them onto a polysemic ground.

In the next stanza, the poetic persona's imaginary captivation by the nightingale leads him/her to challenge even the vision of death as a teleological destination. As s/he notes, while the phantasy of death had always appealed to him/her, his/her desire for actualizing this phantasy is more faithfully activated after his/her encounter with the nightingale by the awareness that nature terms death not as a closure but as an open-ended transcorporeality—that is, as metamorphosis from the human to the nonhuman: "not entropy or the return to inert lifeless matter, but rather the opening up of new intensities and possibilities of the inhuman or non-human kind" (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 248). For instance, in the first lines of the poem, s/he expresses how s/he had always dreamed of dying:

> …for many a time
> I have been half in love with easeful Death,
> Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
> To take into the air my quiet breath. (51-54)

While the subject goes beyond the confines of the linear logic for his/her constant recreation through the transversal alliances s/he forms with the nonhuman, Humanism presents an ideal model of a unitary subject position based on the dialectics of otherness. Or, to put it in Ragland's words, "language gives the false impression that humans are synchronic, narrative, linear beings, fully present to themselves as subjects of 'free will'" (*Essays on the Pleasures of Death* 93). The falsity of this impression no wonder stems from the fact that the symbolic is actually not a fixed totality but a porous space having the residues of the pre-linguistic

energies constantly flowing into it from the orifice opened in the real. As Birlik reflects on the reason why the Symbolic cannot be considered as a fixed structure with knowable working principles, "on the one hand the *Shared Other* upon which the Symbolic is founded tries to repress the imaginary O/other (that is, the regulating principle in the imaginary), on the other hand it fails to totally eliminate the Imaginary O/other" (534). Seen in this light, the poetic persona's life-long phantasy of disappearing can be linked to his/her discontent with the illusory discourse of modernity, which operating on the illusionary ideals of unity and fixity, leads to the waning of desire, that vital force the subject needs to establish a meaningful relationship with life or to affirm life. So, his/her phantasy of death before his/her entrance into the pre-symbolic space of nature is shown to be related to his/her quest for releasing herself/himself from all the binary traps of the humanist discourse.

While suffering from feelings of lack and uneasiness due to his/her estrangement from nature and wishing to die to put an end to his/her universalization as a self-contained subject, the poetic persona confronts the nightingale, as mentioned earlier. Reflecting that "[l]anguage is, no doubt, made up of llanguage" (Lacan, *S XX* 139), the nightingale beats out the dust of the poetic persona's pre-conscious memory, when s/he had not been estranged from the imaginary space of nature. With the activation of his/her nonhuman potential that had already been residing inside him/her though repressed and overlooked by his/her absorption by the symbolic codes, s/he steps into an alternative universe, foreign to any teleological drive. Interestingly enough, after s/he gets the chance of stepping out of the linear temporality and having an epiphanic moment of access into the blissful space of the nightingale, the poetic persona affirms death more joyfully than ever. This semantic complexity evidenced in his/her treatment of death can be explained by the metamorphosis s/he goes through also in his/her perception of death. That is, though taking death as an end before the encounter with the nightingale and so wishing to die to erase himself/herself from the stage of bios, s/he begins to take the act of dying as a possibility to activate her/her nonhuman potential by dissolving into the continuum with nature after his/her affective encounter with the nightingale. This shift of perspective observed in him/her gives an important insight into his/her

nomadization or move from the imposed certainties of the linear discourse to the fluidity of meaning. We can better understand how the poetic persona's nomadic self is activated by his/her confrontation with the nightingale if we look at Braidotti, who states, "this constitutive longing for non-life" "lies at the heart of subjectivity:" "While at the conscious level all of us struggle for survival, at some deeper level of our unconscious structures all we long for is to lie silently and let time wash over us in the perfect stillness of non-life" (*Transpositions* 249). In a similar line of thinking, Baker underlines with regard to these lines the "constitutive" role of death on the way to Becoming a nomad when he argues that the poetic persona is motivated in his/her phantasy of dying by the "plenitude of life" offered by death:

> the world of fancy is shot through with reality, and therefore with time, death, and, paradoxically, life again. Once the consciousness has been jogged into readmitting death into its cognition, the outcome is renewed life. The burial of the violets is ambiguous—they will bloom next year and die next year. But there is nothing ambiguous in the assertion of life in the last three lines of the stanza. After the death of the violets we have the birth of the rose, 'mid-May's child', offering a form of that Provençal energy, 'dewy wine'. Finally there is the busy music of vitality, the warmth of mellow sunshine and life in the occupation of the flies on summer eves. The escape offered by fancy has failed; Keats knows that only a world that includes death can offer plenitude of life. (48)

Based on cyclical patterns and dynamic processes of continuous recreation, nature knows no line of demarcation between the notions of death and life: no sooner does it face "fast-fading violets" than it witnesses the sprouting of "musk-rose" as "mid-May's eldest child" and "the murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves" (47-50). Hence, seeing death as an alternative form of living, the poetic persona transforms the negative emotions related to death such as disappearance or passivity into positive emotions as active regeneration. "[T]he wish to die is another way to express the desire to live," it is "an affirmation of the *potentia* of that life in me, which by definition, does not bear my name," says Braidotti (*Transpositions* 248; 250). In a similar vein, I argue that with his/her more joyful affirmation of the idea of death as positivity, we are given an insight into the degree of his/her *jouissance* for having transformed into a nomadic subject. That is, her/his encounter with the nightingale

unleashes his/her desire for Becoming to such a great degree that s/he cannot restrain himself/herself from giving a positive depiction of death, which will open a path to the ultimate form of becoming or transposition.

The poetic persona's enigmatic phantasy of death to live more fully makes more sense if we look at how drawing on the myth of *lamella*, a libidinal force inherent in the pre-sexed life, Lacan reconfigures the notion of death as a kind of re-invitation into life without organs and underlines the vanity of death/life boundary: "When we get to the root of this life, behind the drama of the passage into existence, we find nothing besides life conjoined to death" (*S II* 232). As he states with regard to the *lamella*:

> It is the libido, *qua* pure life instinct, that is to say, immortal life, or irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ, simplified, indestructible life. It is precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction. (*S XI* 198)

Lacan reflects on the notion of the *lamella* to underline the motivating force behind the enchantment of the human subjects with the idea of death, to shed light on the reason lying behind their innermost wish to return to that pre-sexed state before humanization. As he argues, this pre-sexed, libidinal force refers to an immortal, "indestructible life" before the evolution of a life with a sexed body. Thus, while the access to a sexed life or birth means the loss of immortality or death, it is only death that can provide an unfiltered or an ultimate access to that immortal life that can be termed as the real on the psychic level. As expressed also by Jaanus, death implies a state of immortality in a Lacanian context:

> It [the *lamella*] is the immortal life that we lost at birth. It is us as libidinal, but pre-sexual *substance*, not as subject. It is the lost greater real of the subject as an immortal 'object' or the capital Other of the biological body. But because it is an immortality to which we are only connected by death, it is fundamentally a negative immortality. (131)

In this context, it can be argued that taking death as "the becoming imperceptible of the nomadic subject," as "part of the cycles of becomings," an "interconnectedness, a vital relationship that links one with other, multiple forces" (Braidotti,

Transpositions 235), the poetic persona wants to die to re-experience the feeling of his/her undifferentiated state as a non-codified, "pre-sexual substance" or to have a dynamic touch with the real. When he contests the idea of passivity associated with the notion of the death instinct, Lacan brings to the fore this dynamism desired by the poetic persona through death: "The death instinct isn't an admission of impotence, it isn't a coming to a halt before an irreducible, an ineffable last thing, it is a concept" (*S II* 70). However, it is essential to point out that the poetic persona does not have to die biologically to experience a nomadic transposition or to re-taste the wholeness of that libidinal life addressed by Lacan as the force that "survives any division, any scissiparous intervention" (*S XI* 197). Neither should his/her wish for death be taken as his/her foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father and exclusion from the symbolic, as in the case of a psychotic subject. Rather, by his/her yearning desire for death, the poetic persona expresses on a metaphorical level his/her thirst to bind the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic together and to restore a sense of wholeness, sliding along the axis of the inextricable knot formed by these three psychic rings. In this respect, in the context of the poem, I contend that by his/her wish to die, s/he expresses his/her desire to kill his/her self as an anthropos or break the illusion of human exceptionalism in order to be reborn as only one of the species among many with a sense of fulness. So, realizing that death will give him/her not closure but continuity by dissolving him/her into the continuum with nature and it will activate the process of becoming imperceptible, the poetic persona enjoys the idea of death more and is captured by *jouissance*: "Now more than ever seems it rich to die,/ To cease upon the midnight with no pain" (55-56). Benton uses the expression of "dying into life" (40) to refer to the poetic persona's treatment of death as a joyful experience. Thus, his/her delving into nature and dispersal along the Borromean knot of the real, the imaginary and the symbolic can be termed as the death of the unitary notion of subjectivity and the hierarchical, dualistic logic of modernity, as I have argued earlier. Accordingly, I also propose that her/his choice of "midnight" (56) as the most beautiful time of the day to die appears to be no accident, given that the midnight points to a state of in-betweenness, due to its suspension between day and night, or light and darkness. Seen in this light, his/her desire "to cease upon the midnight" (56) implies his/her move from closure to open-endedness as a non-

unitary subject: similar to the midnight that stands somewhere between the day and the night, the poetic persona turns into a subject of in-betweenness for his/her nomadic oscillation along the porosity of borders. In addition to this, having internalized the idea that even after his/her physical extinction, life in him/her will continue by a number of metamorphoses triggered through interconnection with nature (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 239), the poetic persona more openly expresses that behind his/her phantasy of death lies the desire for regeneration. For instance, the longer s/he contemplates the freedom of the nightingale, the more s/he wants to reconnect with it. Also, at the end of this contemplation, s/he does not simply talk of the richness of dying but overtly mentions how s/he will have "become a sod" while the nightingale will be still singing a song, though a "high requiem" to his/her memory this time:

> While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
> In such an ecstasy!
> Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain –
> To thy high requiem become a sod. (57-60)

While the poetic persona will no longer hear the song of the nightingale after his/her death, s/he will continue to exist through the vital force of life triggered in him/her, though no longer in the form of a human but in the form of "a sod" (60). In the poetic persona's ever-lasting metamorphosis as a human-grass interface, the song of the nightingale will play a vital role, finding a way to manifest itself on him/her even after his/her biological death. That is, the nightingale and its song will "keep transporting and translating themselves beyond the native land and into an alien realm," never staying "in place, moving instead, across times, places, cultures, and even bodies" (Yang 152). At this point, it is important to draw attention to the fact that it is the poetic persona himself/herself who envisages this dynamic process of Becoming following his/her death. What is equally significant is the way s/he imagines the response of the nightingale to his/her death. For instance, when s/he says that the nightingale will continue its own life, ecstatically "pouring forth [its] soul abroad" (57-58) after his/her death, his/her anticipation about this lack of change in the present course of things might be wrongfully assumed as nature's indifference to its human partner. However, given the following lines where s/he

adds that the nightingale, while not ending its song, will change it into a "high requiem"(60)—"a musical composition in honor of the dead"[81]—for his/her memory, it is revealed that the poetic persona does not think that nature will remain ignorant of its human agents. Rather, s/he implies the holistic perception of life in nature by the continuation of the nightingale's ecstatic song. More importantly, the nightingale's sensitivity to its human partner is anticipated by a subject who had been drowned in the illusion of Oneness, which no wonder sheds light on the degree of transformation that s/he has gone through, moving from the confines of a unitary subject to the position of a nomad, shaped by the real-imaginary-symbolic intersection.

We can use the Braidottian term "becoming imperceptible" to discuss the process in which the poetic persona continues Becoming after the experience of death, after having been de-centred by his/her imaginary captivation by the song of the nightingale. As Braidotti notes:

> Becoming-imperceptible is the point of fusion between the self and his or her habitat, the cosmos as a whole. It marks the point of evanescence of the self and its replacement by a living nexus of multiple interconnections that empower not the self but the collective, not identity, but affirmative subjectivity, not consciousness, but affirmative interconnections. (*Transpositions* 261)

Addressing an "affirmative subjectivity," becoming-imperceptible involves the opening of the epistemic self/Other closure into new possibilities and dynamic interconnections. In the context of this dissolution along the spatiotemporal coordinates of his/her "habitat" or "cosmos as a whole," the subject is reimagined as constantly evolving in a post-dualistic fashion. As evidenced in his/her phantasy of metamorphosing into "a sod" with the nightingale that will relentlessly sing its song, the poetic persona delves into this process of becoming-imperceptible, which points to the dislocation of the humanistic vision of the subject. Reading this dissolution of the linearity between the past, the present, and the future on a psychic level, I claim that the poetic persona steps into the process of becoming imperceptible the moment

[81] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/requiem

when the nightingale, as a reservoir of his unconscious knowledge, triggers an experience of *jouissance* in him/her. To put it in other words, voicing the real, "the mystery of the speaking body, the mystery of the unconscious" (Lacan, *XX* 131), the affective state of the nightingale decenters the poetic persona and repositions him/her in an unspecified locality, somewhere between the imaginary-symbolic. Getting involved in this process of becoming-imperceptible "for which there is no immediate representation and hence no identification" (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 262)—that is, over which all the words of modernity stumble and the Western hierarchical structure goes bankrupt—the poetic persona is constantly recreated by the affective force of the nightingale on him/her. This is exactly what Eyers means when he mentions "the simultaneity of the [affectively speaking] Real's constitutive function and its tendency towards dissolution, its logic of simultaneous formation and deformation" (104). Thus, with the dissolution of his/her unitary self to be reconstituted as a nomad by the nightingale that evokes an affective response in him/her as the real incarnate, the poetic persona moves from one ontological site to another: while being a human, s/he simultaneously becomes a nightingale, and then turns into a sod. So, as a threshold figure standing at the human-nightingale-sod intersection, s/he presents an aesthetic portrait of the subject's slippage along the porosity of borders. What is essential to underline regarding this metamorphosis is that in this move from his/her *H*uman state to the fluid position of a human-nightingale-sod intersection, the poetic persona does not lose his/her human specificity but rather becomes a colorful network of signifiers. That is, rather than being imaginarily invaded by the nonhuman domain of the nightingale and the sod, or being homogenized by his/her interconnection with them, s/he reconfigures her/his life in Braidottian terms as a bios-zoe intersection by translating the resonances of the nonhuman real-imaginary into the symbolic on the way to complementing his/her Borromean knot.

In the seventh stanza, the poetic persona again complicates the epistemic human/nonhuman rupture and points to the nightingale's floating in the boundless sky of nature, unburdened by the myth of linearity: "Thou wast not born death, immortal Bird!" (61). For Kappel, these lines give insight into the fact that the nightingale turns into an "object of emulation" for its "deathless ontological state:"

> Its [the nightingale's] immortality is simply and exactly its ignorance of death; it is not an ultimate longevity, [it] has, in fact, nothing to do with duration but instead with quality of existence. Lived in Fancy's garden, each moment of the bird's life is an eternity: it contains all time's eventualities. No generations tread the bird down because there are no such things in that realm. Its unregulated self-enactment or full livingness…is not, surely, an acceleration of its life in fear of death's imminence because for the bird there is, in a stricter sense than usual, no tomorrow, only a series of todays. (276-277)

As I have stated above, remaining ignorant of linearity, the nightingale resists closure and symbolization. As part of its resistance to symbolization, it also knows no binary logic as the poetic persona says: "The voice I hear this passing night was heard/ In ancient days by emperor and clown" (63-64). Acting as "a token of happiness or of consolation for unhappiness" "to rulers, ruled, and displaced persons alike" (Wentersdorf 81), the song of the nightingale also knows no hierarchy. Similar to the nightingale, the poetic persona desires to oscillate in the same undifferentiated time-space of nature, as freed from the hierarchical frame of modernity. Then, he points to the intoxicating nature of the nightingale's song, saying that the same song appealed also to Ruth[82] "when sick for home, /She stood in tears amid the alien corn" (65-66). Furthermore, establishing an imaginary identification with the nightingale, the poetic persona feels as if "opening on the foam of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn" (69-70). His/her phantasy of going to "faery lands forlorn," that we can take as the domain of the imaginary that has been left desolate due to the civilizing practices of modernity based on the categorical nature/culture divide, points to his desire for becoming a nightingale. That is, similar to the nightingale that is heard charming "magic casements" (69) "at the interface of the natural and the human" (Kappel 277), the poetic persona wishes to reposition himself/herself in a third space marked by a non-totalized harmony of the pre-symbolic and symbolic energies, and hence remove the blockage of his/her desire. His/her quest for an alternative site is solidified by the fact that the three figures hearing the nightingale's song—'"emperor and clown"'

[82] Being one of the most charming stories of the Old Testament, the story of Ruth tells the story of a Moabite woman, Ruth, who becomes the ancestress of Israel's greatest monarch, King David. In the very beginning of the story, Elimelech and his wife leave Judah due to famine. In Moab where they seek refuge, their sons marry two women, Orpah and Ruth. After the death of her Israelite husband, Ruth leaves her native land and returns to Judah with her mother-in-law. In Bethlehem, she meets Boaz while gleaning in his field and they marry (Nielsen 1).

("figures presumably out of the historical past"), Ruth (a figure from "a world of Biblical legend"), and '"these faery lands"' ("a place which may represent a destructive illusion") (Perkins 254-255)—"united in a common dramatic purpose, constitute a kind of progression, moving backwards in time and then into timelessness" (Gradman 16-17). Dispelling the illusion of a transcendental signified, the nightingale's constant transition and making its song heard by the "emperor and clown," "the sad heart of Ruth," and the "faery lands forlorn" (64; 66; 70) underlines the multilayered and evanescent nature of meaning that arises out of the continuous play of signifiers. This no wonder gives insight into the fluid, non-unitary, and negotiable nature of the subject who establishes a meaningful link with the symbolic, only by his/her recreative or desire-prompting encounters with the pre-symbolic energies.

At this point, looking at the implications of these distinct figures who intersect with one another through the song of the nightingale despite their diversity can help us better understand the role played by the free-floating nightingale and its vibrant song in the poetic persona's reaching subjective consistency. While the "emperor and clown" are associated with the symbolic domain as these ranks do not make any sense to the 'uncivilized' members of nature, both the biblical character Ruth and "faery lands" address the domain of the imaginary. Seen in this light, the nightingale's dynamic fluctuation between these spaces brings to mind what Lacan says in relation to the evolution of meaning: "Meaning emanates from a field that lies between the imaginary and the symbolic" (Lacan, *S XXIII* 57). In this respect, I argue that the poetic persona resembles the nightingale (that floats in the in-between space of the imaginary-symbolic) in his/her access to the position of a bent or twisted (desiring) subject who is capable of making topological transitions between the imaginary and the symbolic. Besides, I suggest that the nightingale can also be considered as a quilting point for the poetic persona because it is through the nightingale that s/he succeeds in having a fleeting moment of access into the imaginary while simultaneously being in the symbolic and fastening himself/herself onto the signifying chain.

The final stanza opens with the poetic persona's expression "Forlorn!" (71), depicting his/her state after the physical departure of the nightingale. As suggested by Hollander, by this Miltonic expression, the poetic persona "recalls Adam's sense of life without Eve in Paradise: 'To live again in these wild Woods forlorn'" (37). Pushing Hollander's argument further, I want to argue that similar to Adam, the poetic persona desires to re-attach himself to his/her fallen part, the nightingale (his nonhuman force of life), to have that prelapsarian sense of wholeness s/he has experienced in his/her constitutive confrontation with it. However, while his/her depiction of himself as "forlorn" points to his/her sense of uneasiness for the nightingale's immediate loss, the space of becoming activated by his/her encounter with the nightingale leaves such a deep affective mark on him/her that even after its physical departure, s/he continues to live in that third space brought out of their post-dualistic access to each other. As M. H. Williams also notes:

> The bird has moved away, but the song has not disappeared—except to the 'sensual ear' (as Keats will put it in his next ode, 'On a Grecian Urn'). It still exists, unheard, "buried deep" in the "next valley"—that is, the next 'aching spot' of the human heart, ready for the next encounter with the internal object, the next 'melodious plot.' (99)

The fact that the nightingale still sings its song though not heard by the '"sensual ear,'' waiting to activate another subject's power of Becoming in some other "'melodious plot"' no wonder gives insight into the fact that the way nature manifests itself on the human subjects goes beyond the grasp of five senses. What needs to be underlined with regard to these lines is also the implication that the poetic persona moves from the sensible to the conceivable through his/her nomadic encounter with the nightingale. That is, stepping out of the dualistic thinking into the non-hierarchical nature-culture intersection, the poetic persona gets rid of the restraints of empirical reasoning and even though no longer seeing the nightingale, continues to feel it by the sense of *jouissance* s/he has experienced by/with it. With regard to how the sense of *jouissance* triggered in the poetic persona surpasses any sensory perception and continues to mark him/her, Yang argues: "characterized by a

ceaselessly destabilizing process of dislocation and dislocution,[83] as well as deterritorialization and reterritorialization of lines of flight," the poetic persona "leaps over space and time, over the empirical verisimilitude of reason and logic" (145). Though being in a similar line of thinking to Yang, I change the vantage point a little and read what he addresses as the poetic persona's "deterritorialization and reterritorialization" within the context of the subject's metamorphosis that is activated by his/her having a dynamic touch with his/her desire. At this point, I also want to refer to what Lacan argues in relation to the originary state of meaning, which I think is essential to elucidate how the nightingale goes on contributing to the becoming-animal of the poetic persona despite its physical departure or lapse into invisibility. To underline the fluidity of meaning, Lacan talks about the trace of Friday's footstep, the erasure of this trace by Robinson Crusoe, and the replacement of the effaced trace with a bar. As he argues, in this long passage of signification, "the signifier presents itself as already endowed with the properties characteristic of the unsaid:"

> the signifier begins not with a trace, but with the fact that one effaces the trace. Nevertheless, an effaced trace does not a signifier make. What inaugurates the signifier is the fact that it is posited as capable of being effaced. Stated otherwise, Robinson Crusoe effaces the trace of Friday's footstep, but what does he put in its place? If he wishes to remember where Friday's foot was, at the very least he makes a cross at that spot – in other words, a bar [or: line, *barre*] and another bar on top of that one. This is what specifies the signifier. (*S VI* 80)

[83] Borrowing the term "dislocution" from Fritz Senn's *Joyce's Dislocutions* and using it with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of de/re-territorialization, Yang underlines "the entangled processes of displacement and deviation, translation and transcreation, which are intrinsic to the postmodernist/Buddhist deconstructive reading of Keats's 'Nightingale' ode" (158). As he further notes, for Senn, "dislocution not only suggests 'a spatial metaphor for all manner of metamorphoses, switches, transfers, displacements,' but also acknowledges an overall intrinsic tendency of waywardness, disruptiveness, and deviation in speech and writing" (ibid. 158). In this context, Yang emphasizes "the transgressive and regenerative power of 'reterritorialization' inherent in the very movement of 'the lines of flight"' in "Ode to a Nightingale" (ibid. 158). Though not thinking on similar terms to Deleuze and Guattari with respect to the notion of subjectivity, I also use their concepts of de/re-territorialization but re-read them from the perspective of the subject's recreation—that is, within the context of his/her constant bending on the path of forming nomadic alliances. Thus, I do not cherish the subject's psychotic dissolution, which is a far cry from Lacan's conception of subjectivity.

While Lacan refers to Robinson Crusoe's reaction in the face of his confrontation with Friday's footprint on the island to emphasize the multilayered states of meaning, I take this part of the novel as simultaneously staging a drama of desire. In this respect, I contend that although the nightingale physically departs from the immediate surroundings of the poetic persona, it leaves its trace, not in the form of a visible footprint as Friday does, but in the form of an affect that is not so easily deciphered. Then, it is implied that in a similar way to Robinson Crusoe who puts a bar on the spot of the effaced trace to mark it, though not knowing to whom that trace belongs, the poetic persona will feel empowered to search for imaginary substitutes to make up for the loss of the nightingale or to retrieve that affective sense of complementarity s/he has experienced with it. In this context, the departure of the nightingale or the sense of affect that it arouses becomes more meaningful than its staying for the evolution or suturation of the poetic persona as a subject of desire. To put it in other words, as the very departure of the nightingale, as the lost thing, promises its re-emergence, its absence perpetuates the poetic persona's desire for it more than its constant presence. As Lacan argues, "Desire is a relation of being to lack. This lack is the lack of being properly speaking. It isn't the lack of this or that, but lack of being whereby the being exists" (*S II* 223). Seen in this light, how the very loss of the nightingale, which can be thought as the loss of the phallic significance, motivates the poetic persona to search for new phallic equivalences to compensate for it becomes obvious.[84] Thus, incited by the nightingale that acts as the object cause of his/her desire, the poetic persona brings himself/herself into relation with more signifiers and unties the knots in his/her desire. This is also no wonder an interesting portrayal of what Lacan means when he states that "the signifier is the

[84] As explained in Lacan's example, erasing the trace of Friday's footprint and then putting a bar over it, Robinson Crusoe reflects that there is no origin but the originary with regard to meaning. Similarly, having been left with a trace of the nightingale in the form of an affect, the poetic persona will be motivated to search for substitutes to experience the same sense of affect. This points towards both the insatiability of desire and the open-ended nature of subjectivity that eludes the grasp of a teleological drive. What should be underlined here is the difficulty residing in the identification of the same nightingale. That is, for the difficulty of encountering the same nightingale (for its constant slippage) or identifying it due to the striking resemblance among the members of its species, the poetic persona will never reach the original, same song. However, s/he will experience the same sense of complementarity, continuing to assume each substitute nightingale as being his/her lost part (similar to Aristophanes' four-legged creature), as sign of his/her dynamic evolution.

cause of jouissance" (*S XX* 24). The poetic persona's move from Being to Becoming, or from stasis to desire is implied by the radical change in her/his perception of the world: though returning to his "sole self" and even reproaching imagination for its fallacy with the words of "Adieu! the fancy cannot so well/ As she is famed to do, deceiving elf"[85] (72-74), s/he does not passively give in to his/her centralization or totalization by the binary trap of modernity anymore but rather continues to live in the alternative ontological site that s/he has experienced with his/her encounter with the nightingale. As I argue, rather than being colonized by logocentrism, this originary site opened through the human-nightingale-sod intersection is marked by a non-hierarchical understanding of imaginary wholeness. Besides, as part of his/her psychic transposition as a subject of in-betweenness, s/he becomes other than herself/himself. For instance, s/he asks in the last lines: "Was it a vision, or a waking dream?/ Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?" (79-80). In relation to these lines, Yang argues that by the analogy of awakening as if from a dream, what is signified is the process of the poetic persona's "upward fall" (153). In a similar vein, I contend that in the context of this "upward fall," which can be likened to the process of the subject's epiphanic re-accession to his/her nonhuman life, to that pre-linguistic space shaped by an intoxicating sense of complementarity, the poetic persona problematizes the binary logic. In addition to this, s/he experiences a kind of nomadic shift—that is, through his/her intersection with the imaginary-real energies, s/he repairs the cuts in his/her Borromean knot and affirms life more joyfully than ever.

3.2. The feel of not feeling linearity with the December Happiness of a Tree and a Brook in "In drear nighted December"

In his poem "In drear nighted December," Keats dislocates the Cartesian self by juxtaposing a human subject with his/her nonhuman others, a tree and a brook. Though emphasizing "the difference between nature's unconsciousness of change

[85] These lines in which the poetic persona states the impossibility of flying with the nightingale do not actually reflect her/his loss of belief in imagination or failure to reconnect with the corporeal. Rather, these lines can be explained as yielding insights into the fact that s/he could not realize his/her Becoming topological yet. This is solidified by the following lines where s/he can no longer differentiate between dream and reality.

and death and human consciousness of these same unhappy phenomena" (Stillinger, *Romantic Complexity* 28), the poem transcends this boundary and aestheticizes the nomadic thought "replacing the metaphysics of being with a process ontology bent on becoming, that is to say, subversive moves of detachment from the dominant system of representation" (Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory* 7). Different from the human subjects, the tree and the brook presented in the poem remain unafflicted with memory due to the absence of linearity in nature. The dissolution of the linear flow between the past, the present, and the future in nature renders memory dysfunctional in their imaginary space and they remain in the continuous present of their life cycle as always happy.

The tree and the brook's blissful ontological site where they remain unaware of binary polarities unsettles the dominant subject position by unchaining desire, as I have argued earlier. From a Lacanian perspective, I want to link this poetic destabilization of Oneness and the stimulation of desire that is portrayed through the intersection of the human subject with the tree and the brook to the barred subject's constitutive encounter with little *a*, given that "desire is sustained in a confrontational relationship to ($\not{S} \lozenge a$)" (Lacan, *S VI* 366). To put it another way, in the same way as the *objet petit a* lets the subject re-taste a sense of primal unity, that sense of narcissistic omnipotence one feels while still dancing in the imaginary, the nomadic confrontation of the poetic persona with the tree and the brook, termed as his/her naturalized others by the anthropocentric discourse, activates a process of Becoming. So, through this process, s/he no longer stays stuck within the frames of the dualistic logic but dissolves along the rings of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic knotted together in a Borromean fashion. The way that the tree and the brook, as the nonhuman agents, inhabit a nonlinear temporality stimulates the desire of the poetic persona, making up for the missing signifier—that is, acting as a phallic substitute for what s/he lacks. What needs to be underlined in this process, however, is that both the poetic persona and his/her nonhuman partners, the tree and the brook, go through a transformation in this confrontation, which explains also the reason why I address their encounter as constitutive. Accordingly, "[the] capital I comes to be inscribed in a certain trace…The I is inscribed in a certain relationship to the

other, *a*, inasmuch as the latter is affected by the subject himself, inasmuch as the latter is affected by his desire," argues Lacan (*S VI* 110). In this respect, I argue that having found his/her *objet petit a* in the nonhuman tranquility of the tree and the brook, the poetic persona experiences a kind of metamorphosis, which in turn leads to the evisceration of all the epistemic labels assigned to both him/her and his/her nonhuman partners. That is, in this alternative space of resistance that is a far cry from an escapist or a solipsistic retreat into solitude, while the poetic persona is dethroned from the illusory position as the master of the earth, the tree and the brook also no longer stand as the radical others of the Man. Rather, striped of their labels, they voice themselves as interdependent agents of the human-nonhuman life (bios-zoe).

To begin with the first stanza, the tree resists symbolization by inhabiting its own version of temporality. Though located "in drear nighted December," it remains unaware of the empirical reality and stays "too happy" (1-2). As the poetic persona contemplates on it further, behind the tree's happiness despite the gloomy atmosphere of the dark winter season lies the absence of a functioning memory in its world: "Thy branches ne'er remember/ Their green felicity" (3-4). As the ontological site of the tree is comprised of heterogeneity of temporalities, it does not miss the past when its branches were green. Rather, it enjoys life in the eternal present. The tree reflects its challenge also by the strength of its branches in the face of the wind or the "frozen thawings:"

> The north cannot undo them
> With a sleety whistle through them,
> Nor frozen thawings glue them
> From budding at the prime. (5-8)

Despite all the difficulties of the winter, the tree continues "budding at the prime" (8). By this way of enduring all the hardships of season, it stimulates the nonhuman potential of the poetic persona as it speaks in imaginary terms to his/her unconscious. For Lacan, "the capture of the imaginary is enough to motivate all sorts of behavior in the living being" (*S XI* 207). That is, what attaches the subject to the signifying chain as a subject of desire is his/her insatiable quest to re-experience the sense of

maternal unity in the imaginary. Also, the subject's primary identifications lie at the heart of all his/her relations in the symbolic: "the Ideal-I…will also be the source of secondary identifications" (Lacan, *Écrits* 2). Seen in this light, it can be safely argued that though devalued by the anthropocentric discourse, the tree awakens the poetic persona to his/her ideal-ego and invites him/her to slide in the in-between space of the ideal-ego-ego-ideal as a threshold figure. As Braidotti argues, processes of becoming "push the subject to his/her limits, in a constant encounter with external, different others" (*Nomadic Theory* 35). In a similar vein, within the context of these dynamic flows of energies between the tree and the poetic persona, a simultaneous experience of the inside-outside is lived and borders are crossed.

After his/her affective experience with the happy tree, the poetic persona delves into the imaginary space of the brook. Similar to the tree that stays blissful in its cyclical perception of life, the brook stands happy, though surrounded by the freezing coldness of a December night. Also, immersed in the pre-linguistic space of nature, it reflects its resistance to symbolization by never missing the summer time:

> In drear nighted December,
> Too happy, happy brook,
> Thy bubblings ne'er remember
> Apollo's summer look –
> But with a sweet forgetting
> They stay their crystal fretting,
> Never, never petting
> About the frozen time. (9-16)

In this way of remaining resistant to the linear temporality, the brook challenges the discourse of modernity. As part of this challenge, it continues to voice itself by its pre-linguistic "bubblings" or *lalangue*. "The vocabulary may well distinguish nuances of meaning, but words fail us when we are faced with the infinite shades of the voice, which infinitely exceed meaning" (Dolar 13). Given an epiphanic access into the extra/non-symbolic "bubblings" of the brook that "exceed meaning," the poetic persona re-establishes a non-hierarchical kind of unity with nature. In this context, the brook unblocks the poetic persona's desire to re-connect with the pre-symbolic energies of the nonhuman life. As Lacan argues, "We can conceive of the

closing of the unconscious through the effect of something that plays the role of obturator—the *objet a*, sucked, breathed, into the orifice of the net" (*S XI* 144-145). So, acting as a kind of "obturator" that both fills in the void of the lost phallus and ensures the vital transition between the imaginary-real and the symbolic flow of energies, the affirmative force of the happy brook harmonizes the poetic persona on the psychic level or nomadizes him/her in Braidottian terms.

By their December happiness, both the tree and the brook act like an anchoring point for the poetic persona to put his/her fragments into a coherent whole as in the figure of a Borromean knot. As Eyers states, "[s]ymbolic…contains Real elements that point to the constant potential for meaning to dissolve, even as the very same elements form the essential foundation that allows the very horizon of the symbolic to cohere" (44-45). Reflecting how the affective force of the tree and the brook destabilizes the integrity of the Cartesian self on the path to an activated desire, the former assumptions of the poetic persona are unsettled: attaching himself/herself to more signifiers in the blissful context of the tree and the brook, s/he dissolves from fixity and in a way signifying his/her desire to reach subjective consistency, wishes to stand unburdened by the memories of "passed joy:"

> Ah! would 'twere so with many
> A gentle girl and boy—
> But were there ever any
> Writh'd not of passed joy? (17-20)

As s/he implies, while nature (*zoe*) creates a blissful context of life by its resistance to linear temporality, culture of modernity, taking rationality as the sole master of life, does not allow for dissolving along multiple temporalities. However, subjectivity arises at the nature-culture intersection and the Lacanian space is "not divide[d] between symmetrical oppositions of concepts or along binary lines of conscious versus unconscious, objective versus subjective" (Ragland-Sullivan 136). So, the subject needs the interplay of the imaginary-real with the symbolic to be harmonized on the psychic level. The vitality of binding the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic together in a Borromean fashion no wonder becomes obvious by the discontent the poetic persona feels for falling prey to the illusion of unity or linearity.

Reflecting that blind attachment to mere rationality deprives the human subjects of the sense of complementarity inherent in nature, for instance, s/he says that there is no one "writh'd not of passed joy," "there is none to heal it," and "[no] numbed sense to steel it" (20;23). These lines where s/he unsettles the discourse of modernity that privileges *bios* over *zoe* reflect the poetic persona's questioning of the taken-for-granted assumptions and move from linear temporality to nonlinear conception of time, both of which imply his/her dissolution as an open-ended subject, not being attached to an origin or a telos but fluctuating in the originary site of nature.

To conclude, reflecting "the need to visualize the subject as a transversal entity encompassing the human, our genetic neighbours the animals and the earth as a whole" (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 82), in his poems "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December," Keats decenters the Anthropos and offers alternative, post/non-anthropocentric subject positions. Different from the Cartesian subject built upon the myth of unity and the illusory idea of one-to-one correspondence between the conscious and the unconscious, this reconfigured, post/non-anthropocentric subject position aestheticized in a Keatsian fashion is shaped by open-endedness and harmonizing, contingent encounters with the nonhuman energies of the imaginary-real. While the dominant discourse overlooks the pre-symbolic/human dimension of the human subject and expects his/her estrangement from the imaginary-real (the nonhuman) for fitting him/her into its model of perfectibility as superior to all other nonhuman species, the subject, being too fluid to be confined to the symbolic codes, needs to be motivated by the presymbolic energies to reach consistency or to complement his/her Borromean knot. What I want to underline here is that far from implying the dislocation of the symbolic or the human or having a topographical, psychotic regression into the imaginary, this subject position implies the intersection of all the three psychic realms of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. Similarly, dispelling the illusion of Oneness, the poetic personae's encounter with their nonhuman partners in the poems—the nightingale, the sod, the happy tree, the babbling brook, and even the tired birds retiring into solitude in the shadow of trees—activates their repressed nonhuman potential and lets them dissolve along the porosity of the borders. Though termed as the radical others of the Anthropos and

repressed as the imaginary others, these nonhuman actors stand unburdened by linearity or the idea of closure. Different from their civilized partners, they inhabit their own version of temporality and joyfully affirm life with their everlasting songs. Reflecting in this context the irreducible force of the nonhuman that manifests itself in the symbolic despite its marginalization, they fill out the gaps. That is, their penetration into the symbolic speaks to the unconscious of the poetic personae and acts as a kind of *objet a*. This experience injects into their unconscious a sense of complementarity as if in the days before humanization (before their estrangement from nature) and lets them become other than themselves: no longer standing at the upper leg of the binary trap as superior to the nonhuman, they are repositioned at the human-nonhuman intersection, in a third space beyond the confines of Saussurean symmetries. Thus, for the role it takes in healing the wounds in the Borromean knot of the standardized human subjects, nature also acts as a *sinthome*.

CHAPTER 4

CROSSING BORDERS WITH THE RESURFACING OF THE PSYCHOTIC MATERIAL IN "ISABELLA; OR, THE POT OF BASIL," "LAMIA," AND "LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCY"

Set in liminal localities evading all epistemic categorizations, Keats's three narrative poems "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil," "Lamia," and "La Belle Dame sans Mercy" aestheticize the irruption of psychotic into the symbolic, reflecting a post/non-anthropocentric confrontation of the pre-linguistic spaces of the imaginary-real with the linguistic space of the symbolic in a topographical frame.[86] Taking the resurfacing Dionysian elements in the poems as a kind of psychotic outpouring in my discussion, I argue that Keats poeticizes the psychotic intervention into the symbolic and by the aestheticization of the unchained signifier's reappearance in the real, foregrounds the constantly metamorphosing positions in a post-Cartesian manner. As I further affirm, voiced through the poetic figures of Lorenzo, Lamia, and La Belle Dame sans Mercy, who come from cracks, occupying in-between spaces such as the human-nonhuman, the real-fantastic, the nurturing-devouring, the adorable-repulsive, Keats moves metaphysical dualities from fixity to instability and mingles them. In this non-hierarchical merging where the affective interaction of the periphery and the center draws a vibrant portrait of an alternative third space, thus, Lorenzo, Lamia, and La Belle Dame sans Mercy, escape easy depiction for their ambivalence which I discuss as an aesthetic transliteration of psychosis. In my reading of the poems from a post-anthropocentric Lacanian angle, I refer to the Lacanian concepts of the real, psychosis, the Name-of-the-Father, and ~~Woman~~ to underline how these Keatsian poetic personae destabilize the integrity of the sign and complicate the notion of the

[86] While "Isabella; or the Pot of Basil" and "La Belle Dame sans Merci" portray psychosis on the individual level, psychosis in "Lamia" is experienced on the collective level. It is worth underlining here that in these poems, the symbolic is "imaginarized" in Fink's terms or it is annulled for the psychotically disintegrated Isabella, the knight, and the whole Corinthians.

origin, by moving Platonic binaries from stasis to open-endedness marked by no hierarchy but interchangeability.

4.1. Dynamic Processes of Resistance in "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil"

Adapted from 14th-century Italian author Giovanni Boccaccio's medieval romance *The Decameron*[87], Keats's narrative poem "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil" ignites discussions regarding mostly its generic complexity. On the one hand, it is taken either as an "*anti*-romance" for presenting a universe in which "courtly love gives way to psychology, love-sickness becomes genuine sickness, and romance is put down by 'wormy circumstance'" (Stillinger, "Keats and Romance" 593) or as Keats's "Gothicization of Boccaccio," "a transitional work in Keats's attitude toward contemporary horror romance" (Lau, "Madeline at Northanger Abbey" 38-39).[88] Different from critics such as Stillinger or Lau, who emphasize the poem's transition from the ideal space of romance to the realistic space of the anti-romance, Luczynska-Holdys suggests that "with its emphasis on the incongruous, the shocking, the bizarre and the absurd, its overt and latent themes of madness, troubled eroticism, fixation on death, decay and disintegration," the poem reflects transition from the idealistic to the surrealistic, that is to the grotesque ("Keats, the Grotesque, and the Victorian Visual Imagination" 160; 162) addressing, in McElroy's words, not "the rationalist in us or the scientist in us, but the vestigial primitive in us, the child in us, the potential psychotic in us" (5). Notwithstanding all these labels ignoring the dynamic interdependence among genres and lack of a clear-cut boundary among them, Rajan argues that the poem, marked by "emotional indeterminacy" and lacking "a clear rhetoric of fiction," is difficult to be classified "as either sentimental or ironic in tone, as either romantic or antiromantic" (101). The poem's denial of generic categorization is manifested in its "shifting tone, its

[87] Keats rewrites the fifth story of the fourth day in Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, as evidenced on its pages 283-286.

[88] Lau notes that similar to the Gothic parodies, especially those written by Austen and Barrett, Keats's anti-romances imply "a warning of the ills that befall young women whose heads have been turned by too much romance reading and who can no longer distinguish the land of fiction from reality" ("Madeline at Northanger Abbey" 30).

professed tension between ‘modern rhyme’ and ‘old romance’, and its varying deployment of nature whereby the pastoral is frequently undercut by the grotesque” such as the reduction of the natural to “the basil’s perverse biotic” (McDowell 23; 25).

Though taking side with Rajan regarding the poem’s denial of generic categorization, I depart from these critics who read the poem in the context of its digressions from the medieval romance tradition. Thinking that in the context of these generic discussions, the richer implications of Lorenzo’s exhumation, decapitation, and burial into a pot of basil by Isabella are clouded, I propose to read the poem from a post-Lacanian angle and affirm that behind the love story having gothic overtones in “Isabella; or the Pot of Basil” is hidden a wider portrait revealing how psychotic material transforms into art, penetrating into the symbolic from the pre-human depths of the real and how it leads to constantly-shifting positions by its destabilization of the binary system. In this vein, I argue that sparked by the psychotic outbreak of Isabella, Keats’s narrative poem “Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil” opens the way for a post/non-anthropocentric world of fluctuating pluralities where the re-surfacing of the foreclosed signifier in the real and the mode of imaginary domination following it play with the logic of the binary discourse, obscuring all the epistemic boundaries. Thus, taking Lorenzo’s head that is buried in a pot of basil as the reappearance of the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father in the real, I affirm that this head reflects not only how Isabella loses grip of reality plunging into psychosis after Lorenzo’s death, but also how the real intrudes into the symbolic and invites binary polarities into a kind of interplay where they constantly shift positions, leaving aside their hierarchical epistemic categorizations. As I discuss throughout the chapter, poeticized in the form of Lorenzo’s decapitation, the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father reappearing in the real poses a challenge to the symbolic by deconstructing its epistemological categories such as the symbolic Other/imaginary other, the human/nonhuman, and life/death. In this deconstruction incited by Isabella’s entrance into psychosis, the epistemic rupture between the imaginary and the symbolic is erased to enable the dynamic transition among different states of Becoming.

To begin with, the psychotic material that finds an artful expression in the poem by Lorenzo's severed head makes its intrusion into the symbolic and destabilizes the boundary between the symbolic Other and imaginary other. At this point, we need to discuss the motivating force behind the appearance of this ambivalent figure of the head in the poem before elaborating on why it annihilates the metaphysical distinction between the Other and the other. Incarnating the foreclosed signifier, Lorenzo's decapitated head is traced back to Isabella's psychotic disintegration, which is triggered by his tragic murder. As a "diptych of before and after" (J. Barnard 77), the poem reflects Isabella's gradual transformation from the naivety of "drowsy ignorance" (265) to a psychotic figure of transgression, empowerment, and wit. Though masquerading herself within the familiar dress of a stereotypical Lady "leading [Lorenzo] to summer clime" (66) while she still walks at the edge of the hole in the symbolic, that is, before falling into the void of psychosis, Isabella stands as an amalgam of bestiality and maternal affection, as unveiled after Lorenzo's sudden loss. A closer look into the relation between Lorenzo and Isabella brings to light her standing on the edge of language before the eruption of her psychosis. Isabella and Lorenzo love each other so deeply that with their love growing "tenderer" every morn and "deeper and tenderer" every eve, they construct an imaginary space where they cherish each other's narcissistic omnipotence. For instance, Lorenzo sees Isabella wherever he looks: "He might not in house, field, or garden stir,/ But her full shape would all his seeing fill" (11-12). Similarly, Isabella takes Lorenzo as a specular other to satisfy her primal desire, given that she regards his voice as "pleasanter" "than noise of trees or hidden rill" and even "her lute-string [gives] an echo of his name" (13-16). Drowned in their illusion of Oneness, Isabella and Lorenzo build up a world of "great bliss" and "great happiness" (71) in their "bower of hyacinth and musk," (71; 85) depicted by Schulkins as "a sort of a 'time freeze' zone where society and reality play no part" ("The Economy of Romance in Keats's *Isabella*" 77). Opening a hole in their fairy space built on alienating identifications, however, Isabella's brothers, as "men of cruel clay," decide "in some forest dim/To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him" (173; 175-176). '"Enrichèd from ancestral merchandise' (106) and identified as self-interested exploiters of the labor of others," they "slay their sister's beloved because he is not the kind of husband

who will enhance her social status in the material way they desire" (Heinzelman 165): while Lorenzo works as "the servant of their designs," they "plan to coax her by degrees/ To some high noble and his olive-trees" (165; 167-168). In other words, under the guise of these "money bags" (142) who see him as "a threat to their ownership claims over Isabella," "capitalism destroys him in order to ensure the profitable trade of a woman for socio-political advancement into the aristocracy" (Harris 19; 20). Having murdered Lorenzo, they tell Isabella that he has gone to "foreign lands" due to "some great urgency and need/ in their affairs, trusty hands" (226-228). Isabella's psychotic outbreak is triggered at this moment when they try to make her forget him:

> Poor girl! put on thy stifling widow's weed,
> And 'scape at once from Hope's accursèd bands;
> To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,
> And the next day will be a day of sorrow. (229-230)

Upon receiving this news about Lorenzo's departure, the first response Isabella gives becomes crying alone all day long. However, all of a sudden, taken within the grasp of a hallucination, she encounters Lorenzo's "image in the dusk" (237). Reflecting that "what is refused in the symbolic order re-emerges in the real" (Lacan, *S III* 13), Lorenzo's apparition voices the irreducibility of the excluded signifier, finding a way to express itself in the real regardless of how traumatizing it appears to those located in the binary logic because of its unfamiliarity. Captivated by Lorenzo's shadow-like reappearance in the real, implying that no psychic reality can be totalized, Isabella then attempts to repossess him (and to create a substitute for the black hole in the symbolic, made visible with Lorenzo's loss) as she makes "a gentle moan" "to the silence" through "spreading her perfect arms upon the air,/ And on her couch low murmuring, 'Where?/ O where?'" (238-240). "Like the sexual penetration Isabella dreams of and longs for" (Schulkins, "The Economy of Romance in Keats's *Isabella*" 82), Lorenzo's phantom makes its second appearance when Isabella busies her mind with such unanswered questions as "what dungeon climes/ could keep him off so long?" (259-260):

> It was a vision. In the drowsy gloom,

> The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot
> Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb
> Had marr'd his glossy hair which once could shoot
> Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
> Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
> From his lorn voice, and past his loamèd ears
> Had made a miry channel for his tears. (273-280)

Isabella has visual and auditory hallucination, "breaking through into the external world" in the form of "a created reality, one that manifests itself well and truly within reality as something new" (Lacan, *S III* 142). As part of her "created reality," Lorenzo then begins to speak as if moaning "a ghostly under-song" and tells her how he has been stabbed to death, falling from stabs on "the sodden turfèd dell" (287; 295-296). Resolved to find him, Isabella goes into the "dismal forest-hearse" and finds Lorenzo's "earthy bed," surrounded with "flint" and "berries at his head" (344; 351-352). Isabella's psychotic disintegration reaches a culminating point when she finds the corpse of Lorenzo in the forest because in the face of this bereavement, she does not passively yield to the will of her brothers or accept Lorenzo's absence, but reconstructs her world on an imaginary plane as a subject unstitched from the signifying chain with the lack of a primordial signifier. By doing so, she wishes to restore a sense of unity on an imaginary plane with the corpse of Lorenzo as Lacan argues:

> For want of being able in any way to re-establish his pact with the other, for want of being able to make any symbolic mediation between what is new and himself, the subject moves into another mode of mediation, completely different from the former, and substitutes for symbolic mediation a profusion, an imaginary proliferation, into which the central sign of a possible mediation is introduced in a deformed and profoundly asymbolic fashion. (*S III* 87)

In the face of her shattered illusions, Isabella sets out to reconstruct a new fiction "in a deformed and profoundly asymbolic fashion," not letting others narrate her but becoming her own narrator. To this end, she digs up the earth with her knife, disintegrates the body of Lorenzo by cutting his head, and buries it into a pot of basil "moisten'd" "with tears unto the core" (424). From this moment on, Isabella loses all touch with external reality to be compensated by her psychotic restructuration:

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and the sun,
And she forgot the blue above the trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,
And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze;
She had no knowledge when the day was done,
And the new morn she saw not: but in peace
Hung over her sweet Basil evermore,
And moisten'd it with tears unto the core. (417-424)

"A hole, a fault, a point of rupture, in the structure of the external world finds itself patched over by psychotic fantasy" (*S III* 45), says Lacan. Seen in this light, the sweet Basil in which Isabella invests so much meaning after detaching herself from linear temporality takes on the role of a patchwork or a stabilizing point to cover the void or the black hole that she encounters in the symbolic with the death of Lorenzo. Besides, the severed head hints at the existence of the foreclosed signifier, reflecting that "there must have been something there that had not been materialized, at a certain moment, in the field of the signifier, that had been *verworfen*, thereby making the object of *Verwerfung* reappear in the real" (ibid. 190). Thus, reappearing in the real as part of Isabella's psychosis, the decapitated head of Lorenzo signifies the reappearance of the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father. It is linked to her castration fear or her resistance to symbolization that had been dwelling in her long before this psychotic outbreak.[89] In this sense, I argue that behind the psychotic eruption of Isabella lies the lack of the signifier *subjectification* (*symbolic realization of/by the Other*): topographically delving into the illusion of her *moi* fixations that she establishes with Lorenzo as a specular other in the imaginary, Isabella cannot bear the thought of Lorenzo's separation from her because she reads this separation as a threat to her imaginary narrative. As this basic signifier of *the Other* does not function in her relation to reality, she sets out to reconstruct a new imaginary drama

[89] As Helene Deutsch observes, in the pre-psychotic phase (before the eruption of psychosis), the subject may not reveal his psychic disintegration by imitating others as she argues: "the schizophrenic process goes through an 'as if' phase before it builds up the delusional form" (342). Similarly, it is noteworthy to state that before the eruption of his psychosis, Schreber "looked as if he, like everyone else, were upholding his role as a man and of being somebody" (Lacan, *S III* 252). These observations present us with a crucial insight into Isabella's "as if" state before her psychotic disintegration, reflecting that she had never internalized the logic of the signifiers, although the fissure opened with the lack of the primordial signifier in language made itself felt by her loss of Lorenzo.

with Lorenzo's head rather than acknowledging her or Lorenzo's integration into language by this decapitation.[90] So, it is worth noting that she gets stuck within the mirage of her *moi* fictions, unable to transliterate the residues of the imaginary into the symbolic codes in the absence of the signifier *the Other* that is rendered dysfunctional by its foreclosure.

Accordingly, if we go back to the question of how this psychotic material intrudes into the symbolic, shattering the epistemic boundary of the other/Other, we can say that in decapitating Lorenzo and burying his head into a pot of basil, Isabella reperforms an Oedipal drama in which one cannot easily distinguish the imaginary other from the symbolic Other as they constantly shift positions in Isabella's rewriting of castration. In so doing, Isabella talks from the register of the imaginary, unable to attach words to specular images or to translate the *moi* into the codes of the *je* as Lacan notes that in the case of psychosis, "what concerns the subject is actually said by the little other, by shadows of others, or, as Schreber will express himself to designate all human beings he encounters, by *fabricated*, or *improvised* men" (*S III* 53). Firstly, as part of Isabella's novel Oedipal drama, Lorenzo's decapitation poses a challenge to the categorical divides of the other/Other by the fact that far from signifying entry into the symbolic, this decapitation, that I take as a reversal of castration, is oriented toward regression into the imaginary where the bond with rationality is cut. When looked in detail, for instance, it becomes obvious that it is not by coincidence that Isabella decides to cut Lorenzo's head instead of cutting his other body parts. Based on Isabella's choice in cutting her lover's head, I argue that by this decapitation, she reverses the process of subjectification because Lorenzo does not step into the logic of the signifiers, that is, to the space of the Other, but rather (re)takes the position of the specular other. To put it in other words, he is transformed into the position of an imaginary other for Isabella. Given that the head signifies rationality, its separation from the body in Isabella's alternative Oedipal

[90] The relation between Isabella and Lorenzo portrays a symbiotic mother-infant dyad in the imaginary, thus the Other jouissance, before the intrusion of the Father. In this respect, Isabella's rejection to come to terms with Lorenzo's separation from her by her brothers (who take on the role of the Name-of-the-Father as surrogate Fathers) sheds light on her resistance to symbolization and the exclusion of the primordial signifier from her universe.

drama reflects, in this context, how she takes him from the space of rationality to the space of non/a-rationality—that is, back to his pre-castrated self in the imaginary, as if taking revenge on patriarchy for her fixation to the space of non/a-rationality. To put it in the words of Heinzelman, by this decapitation, Isabella puts on the stage "not merely the history of what has been done to her but also the history of what she can do" (185). According to Hoeveler, who also takes Isabella's act as a response to repressive politics, her revenge is solidified given that "she does not use merely a dull knife to cut the head from the body; she uses a knife 'with duller steel than the Persèan sword"' (393), echoing Perseus's assault on Medusa's head (333). Thus, though assigned the position of a silenced other within the frame of patriarchy, in her Oedipal drama in which she takes Lorenzo to his pre-castrated self, she moves from the position of a passive entity to be acted upon into an active position.

Reading what Isabella does to Lorenzo within the context of labour relations, Sider argues that by mutilating Lorenzo, Isabella strips herself of her imposed position as "the confined object of a capitalist patriarchy" and "carnivalizes capitalism's perversion of the law of labour value" (139; 140). Seen in this light, the way that she, "dig[ging] more fervently than misers can" (368), unearths the dead body of Lorenzo gives insight into how she actually brings to light history and unsettles its epistemic hierarchies:

> What Isabella here unearths is history. For the first time, she places herself in that history as an active participant in the economy of life and death. Isabella does not stamp and rave because, for the first time, she is not impoverished but productive. In her 'dismal laboring' Isabella practices a version of the dismal science that wrings the last commodifiable bit ('the kernel') from men who have been worked to death. Isabella wrings life from this kernel of the grave while her brothers wring labor to death. (Heinzelman 184)

Echoing Bernard Shaw, who argued that "if Karl Marx achieved the very curious feat of writing a poem instead of a treatise on Capital, he would have written Isabella"

(351)[91], Harris analyzes the poem from a Marxist viewpoint, and maintains that though resembling her brothers' tyranny on the working-class men, "Isabella's labor by the grave remains distinctly feminine and its result, distinctly utopian" (24). To Heinzelman, also, Isabella "contravenes the way her brothers produce fecund labor by working their laborers to death:" while her brothers make profit by the exploitation of their servants, her "economic process is conceptualized in terms of female labor, of making life and of nurturing it" (183; 184). In this sense, she subverts the politics of capitalism. For instance, her brothers' "'red-lined accounts'" (125) imply that "their ledgers are written in blood," that is, they make their laborers work like a slave (Lagory 323), as the lines given below reflect:

> …for them many a weary hand did swelt
> In torchèd mines and noisy factories,
> And many once proud-quiver'd loins did melt
> In blood from stinging whip; with hollow eyes
> Many all day in dazzling river stood,
> To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood. (107-112)

Isabella's selfish brothers make profit by murderously making their servants work in "torchèd mines and noisy factories" and taking their blood (their life). However, far from killing him, Isabella regenerates Lorenzo with her "tears that resemble the blood and sweat that her mercantile brothers have been exacting from their operatives" (Heinzelman 165-166). Similarly, though likened to a "miser" (368) in the digging scene, she "transforms the relationship between labour and product:" working not for "money-objects" but "erotic objects," she attempts to "release both the worker and the commodity from the control of the capitalist system" (Sider 140). To Nersessian:

> Like Lorenzo's head, delivered not simply from death to life but from human waste to horticultural use, Keats's poetry tries to defy capitalism's metabolic incursions, which consist 'not only of robbing the worker, but also of robbing the soil,' and to offer a multivalent germination in its place...At the level of political economy, we might call this a movement from capitalism to permaculture, or from gold to

[91] In line with Shaw's suggestion, Fermanis reads the poem as a critique of "Enlightenment conceptions of wealth-creation—in particular, the selfish privatization of interests that accompanies the modern commercial state" (120).

> green; at the level of genre, it might be a movement from tragedy to georgic, from a poetry of unprofitable loss to that of prodigal generation. (290)

As these interpretations revolving around labour relations imply, Isabella subverts the capitalistic hierarchies and the taken-for-granted capitalistic processes or aims in this scene in which she digs the earth with a knife to have access to the body of Lorenzo. Discussing the poem from a post-Lacanian angle, however, I contend that in this disinterment scene where she opens a new space of signification for herself, Isabella actually brings to the fore her resistance to castration and unburies her desire to compensate for her psychotic void by the head of Lorenzo. As "the lack of one signifier necessarily brings the subject to the point of calling the set of signifiers into question" in psychosis (Lacan, *S III* 203), she cannot establish a meaningful relation with reality on the symbolic plane and attaches herself to this decomposing body of Lorenzo. That is, with the absence of the primordial signifier in the symbolic, she cannot relate to the other signifiers in the signifying chain and resorts to this Oedipal drama as a sort of non-verbal communication that will act as a rallying point for her on the imaginary level.

Making the excluded signifier of *the Other* heard in the real, Lorenzo's decapitated head intrudes into the symbolic and poses a challenge to its anthropocentric dualities also by splitting open the closure of the human/nonhuman binary. As I have mentioned earlier, losing her grip of reality upon the sudden murder of Lorenzo, Isabella builds up a novel narrative the unfolding of which is dependent solely on herself, without letting anyone invade or interrupt it. In this narrative that she fabricates, the decapitated head of Lorenzo becomes one of the stabilizing points for her to fill the hole in the signification chain, though on the imaginary plane. To put it more explicitly, in the absence of a quilting point in her life to create for her a meaningful relation with the rest of the signifiers in the signifying chain, Isabella creates a substitute for what she lacks at the level of the symbolic: she regresses to the imaginary, recreates her own version of reality by decapitating Lorenzo, buries his head in a pot of basil, and breastfeeds it with her own tears. In this sense, her

finding of Lorenzo comes to mean her attainment of "the missing signifier," of "what was lost and only dimly remembered," or

> the essence of what Derrida has called 'the trace,' the residue of the father who both traps the son in the realities of the class system and proffers an escape through the metaphorically transformative power of the knife/pen. (Hoeveler 333; 323)

Reflecting the irreducibility of the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father, Isabella's sudden encounter with the decapitated head of Lorenzo implies, in this context, the self-expressing nature of psychic reality that goes on operating without the intermediary of the human subject as Lacan argues, "there is no need for any subject to recognize a sign for it to be there—a trace exists even if there is nobody to look at it" (*S III* 167). When we look at the way Isabella behaves in relation to this "trace" of the foreclosed Other, we can argue that she refracts the binary polarities of the symbolic because this decapitated head that spreads sweet basil, having been buried in a pot, belongs neither to the space of the human nor to the space of the nonhuman, but to a third space of their blend, thus inviting us to rethink the relation of the human subjects with nature. That is, while it carries the remainders of a human body, it also voices the nonhuman dimension of life, zoe, for its spreading basil. Luczynska-Holdys points to this in-between state of the head arguing that "Lorenzo's head is uncanny: it is him and no longer him" ("Keats, the Grotesque, and the Victorian Visual Imagination" 162). Sider also underscores how the severed head's transformation into a plant poses a threat to the anthropocentric binaries as he argues:

> The growth of human head into a form which is something between human and vegetable challenges the body's closure. Lorenzo's body, in Isabella's pot, is unfinished: it is only a part of a body, and it is also an ongoing body, the body in the process of extension and redefinition. It comes close to Bakhtin's vision of the grotesque body in *Rabelais and His World* as an unfinished state which outgrows its own limits (303-67). The grotesque body's lack of fixed parameters is implicitly revolutionary in this sense, because it escapes the delimitations of the capitalist world. Lorenzo receives a freer body through Isabella's grotesque love than he ever held as the object of capitalism. As the subject of the grotesque vision, Lorenzo achieves a fulfilment denied him by society. He not only grows 'thick, and green,

> and beautiful' (426), but he is continually in the process of becoming, a subject of unlimited freedom trans-planted into a new world. Isabella's grotesque love rescues the body from the confines of the capitalist system and makes it the place of human potential. (142)

Aesthetically objectifying the intervention of the missing signifier of *the Other* into the coherence of the signifying chain in the form of the ineffable psychotic material, the decapitated head of Lorenzo spreading basil in Isabella's pot presents a post/non-anthropocentric world of multileveled subjective states of Becoming, marked by no ending or beginning but open-endedness and continuity. As a threshold figure uncontained by space and time, this head that is transformed into sweet basil (the psychotic real) voices itself at spatio-temporal coordinates, reflecting in Lacan's words: "where the signifier isn't functioning, it starts speaking on its own, at the edge of the highway" (*S III* 293). That is, the excluded (primordial) signifier does not disappear but rather manifests itself by its corporeal translocation from the space of the symbolic to the space of the real, that we can term as "the edge of the highway" in Lacanian sense of the word. As I argue, with the basil pot turning into a storehouse of ongoing processes of Becoming, this transcorporeality embodied in the decapitated head of Lorenzo opens the path for a post/non-anthropocentric space of liminalities, where the boundary between the human and the nonhuman, or between the symbolic and the imaginary-real is blurred. This in-between space of Becoming opened by the translocation of Lorenzo into a nonhuman body is lent support by the threshold state of the plant (basil) that he spreads. As De Almeida notes:

> It [basil] is a hollow medium of conveyance, a medicine or pharmakon born of a poisoned love, an antidote for life deprived of life, richest juice borne by a ductile poison flower to nurture an already poisoned damsel, a love-philtre that elicits nurturing tears because of the debilitated disposition of its recipient, an unnatural energy masquerading as the energy of life, a Janus-faced symbol of disease and remedy, of living and dying: an urn for life. (215)

As a "symbol of disease and remedy," basil stands in an uncharted space away from the contamination of the dualistic logic. Its ambivalent state implies the nonfixity of Lorenzo: similar to the basil plant that remains beyond binary articulation, Lorenzo lies beyond the capture of epistemic polarities for his regeneration in the form of

basil at the real-imaginary-symbolic intersection. Thus, I argue that with his human body turning into a plant, Lorenzo reflects the constant evolution and metamorphosis of the Lacanian subject: not yielding to the closure of the symbolic codes, Lorenzo is translocated from a decomposing human body into basil. In this new site of existence to which he is transposed, he does not belong to one single space of the real, the imaginary, or the symbolic but to an undifferentiated space of the originary where they intersect.

In the same way as it deconstructs the metaphysical divide of the other/Other and the human/ nonhuman, the resurfacing of the unchained signifier in the real that attains an artful expression in the form of Lorenzo's severed head in the poem shatters the symbolic also by blending life with death or in Smith's words by offsetting "images of decay with images of regeneration" (309). It is reflected that long before his decapitation by Isabella, Lorenzo's corpse evades linear temporality given that no matter how much he is marginalized as the silenced other of Isabella's brothers who stand in Schulkins' words as "the emblem of moral and ethical collapse in a capitalist society, motivated by private dreams and self-engulfment" ("The Economy of Romance in Keats's *Isabella*" 80) due to his low social background, he transgresses all their attempts for repression and voices himself even from the pre-human or extra-linguistic realms of inaudibility. For instance, murdered "in some forest dim" and "quite for the slaughter" (175; 216), he is taken from the space of the symbolic (culture) to the space of the imaginary (nature), codified as the other of Culture within the context of modernity. Standing non-symbolized, however, nature lies beyond the grasp of symbolic codes by its ignorance of linear temporality. Having no linearity but continuity and interdependence among the multiplicity of non-linear temporalities, nature does not give Lorenzo closure but a dynamic recontinuation by incorporating him into its asynchronous levels of becoming. The scene where Lorenzo, with eyes, "though wild," "still all dewy bright/ with love," talks to Isabella sheds light on how he transgresses the linear flow of the symbolic codes and dissolves into the continuum with nature, embedded in "the sodden turfed dell" (289-290;295) as a corpse:

‘Isabel, my sweet!
Red whortle-berries droop above my head,
And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet;
Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed
Their leaves and prickly nuts; a sheep-fold bleat
Comes from beyond the river to my bed:
Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

‘I am a shadow now, alas! Alas!
Upon the skirts of human dwelling
Alone: I chant alone the holy mass
While little sounds of life are round my knelling,
And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,
And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,
Paining me through: those sounds grow strange to me,
And thou are distant in Humanity. (297-312)

In these lines, Keats puts together horror and beauty: though describing “at length the marring of Lorenzo’s body,” “he perceives beauty in corruption” (Smith 308). Surrounded by “red whortle-berries,” “a large flint-stone,” “leaves and prickly nuts” of “beeches and high chestnuts,” and melodies of “a sheep-fold bleat” coming to his bed, Lorenzo is re-incorporated into *zoe*, his nonhuman dimension of life. Standing “at the skirts of human dwelling,” also, he becomes estranged from the clock time as he notes that although he hears “many a chapel bell” telling the hour, he can no longer make sense of them: “those sounds grow strange to me.” This implies the subject’s encounter with the bankruptcy of the signifier in the context of psychosis—that is, Lorenzo’s indifference to the “chapel bell” points to “the moment at which from the Other as such, from the field of the Other, there comes the interpellation of an essential signifier that is unable to be received” (Lacan, *S III* 306). In this way, it becomes obvious that the brothers’ attempts to give closure to Lorenzo fail because nature, remaining indifferent to the chapel bell’s invitation to linear temporality, knows no telos or closure but continuity and constant metamorphoses, and creates tension for culture due to its nonlinearity.

The psychotic material that is poeticized in the form of Lorenzo’s decapitated head unsettles the categorical distinction between life and death also by the fact that taking on the role of a baby, it spreads sweet basil in the pot (womb) of Isabella and resists

the closure of clock time. Subverting the dichotomies of origin/telos, from the very beginning of the grave-digging scene to the burial of the severed head, Isabella acts out her phantasy of motherhood in her incorporation of Lorenzo into her own imaginary narrative as "a substitute child that she feeds with the milk of her tears" (Hoeveler 329). Accordingly, likening Isabella's three-hour grave digging to "delivery of a child," Lagory stresses that "the basil plant that Isabella later nurtures is in one sense the rebirth of Lorenzo, in another the child of the lovers" (329). In this sense, while "the exhumation of Lorenzo's body" signifies a "rite of passage" that transforms Isabella "from child to woman," Lorenzo's lifeless head becomes "a deviant child/object" (Alwes 70; 73) growing in the form of a plant. To Goellnicht, Isabella's phantasy of motherhood that I read as manifested in her decapitation of Lorenzo is linked to her phantasy of experiencing a sexual rapport, as he argues that "Isabella's frustrated motherhood is intimately connected with her sexuality, [it] is in fact Keats's decorous way of expressing her sexual frustration" (195). In a similar line of thinking, Ulmer states that "neither repelled nor averse, Isabella feels her love re-energized by repossession of her lover's body…Her reassertion of her claims on Lorenzo's corpse in the exhumation scene unfolds as a morbidly displaced re-enactment of sexual intercourse" although "it discloses the first stirrings of her proprietary madness" (*John Keats: Reimagining History* 118). Seen in this light, what she does when she encounters the "soilèd glove" of Lorenzo gives insight into her thirst to appease in Goellnicht's words her "sexual frustration," given that she eroticizes her relation with the glove, kissing it "with a lip more chill than stone" and putting "it in her bosom, where it dries/ And freezes utterly unto the bone" (369; 370-372). So, while "the absent hand" stands "as a metonymy—or non-metonym—for the amorous experience that remains unrealized,"

> the empty glove becomes an emblem of Isabella's dreams, suggesting with tactful indirectness what Isabella does not feel: the warm pressure of Lorenzo's living hand against her breast—an erotic sensation, yet a gentle one: sexual love unperplexed from marital love and parenthood. (Lagory 328)

As I argue from a Lacanian perspective, Isabella's attachment to Lorenzo's "soilèd glove" reflects the void in the symbolic that moves from darkness to visibility

through Isabella's psychotic eruption. Or, it implies that by her sudden encounter with the absence of a regulating principle that will attach her to the signifying chain, Isabella unravels from language and delves into the imaginary where she reconstructs reality from her *moi* fictions. In her alternative reality, thus, what speaks becomes not words but images. Being one of these images, the empty glove acts as a mental image, or "an unconscious signifier" that

> appears to be external to the subject, but it's another exteriority than the one that is evoked when hallucination and delusion are presented to us as a disturbance of reality, since the subject remains attached to it through an erotic fixation. (*S III* 142)

While her relation with the empty glove reflects, in Lacan's words, Isabella's "erotic fixation" in a psychotic context, I discuss her phantasy of motherhood that she actualizes by her decapitation of Lorenzo to foreground constant processes of Becoming Lorenzo goes through in the form of a psychotic material, that is, in the veil of a severed head. As indicated earlier, losing touch with reality upon Lorenzo's murder, Isabella looks for a substitute on the imaginary plane to fill the hole of the foreclosed signifier. With this aim, she (re)integrates Lorenzo into her narrative as a baby, unsettling all the dichotomies of linear logic. For instance, she firstly digs in the ground to have access to the corpse of Lorenzo, and being alien to the metaphorical use of language as a psychotic subject, she actually cuts Lorenzo's head as *a part object* to create a stabilizing point for her. By doing so, she literalizes the Lacanian metaphor. Though giving the impression of a monster with such a horrible act of chopping off her lover's head, Isabella then shifts her position to a nurturing mother as she, like an all-embracing mother cherishing her child's narcissistic omnipotence, combs Lorenzo's "wild hair with a golden comb" and clears "the smearèd loam" on his face "with tears, as chilly as a dripping well" (403;405-406). This sheds light on her beautification of death "with bodily and 'material' poetics," that "she, as a 'poet', writes a poem on Lorenzo's head with somatic fluid and contacts" (Chen 56). Further, although the head arouses a sense of repulsion with "each eye's sepulchral cell" and "fringed lash," and resembles, in Hoeveler's words, "an abject fetus" (334), she does not feel threatened by the

resurfacing psychotic material but rather swaddles the head "in a silken scarf" with kisses and painful cries (408-409):

> Then in a silken scarf—sweet with the dews
> Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,
> And divine liquids come with odorous ooze
> Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully,—
> She wrapp'd it up; and for its tomb did choose
> A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,
> And cover'd it with mould, and o'er it set
> Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet. (409-416)

"Isabella's absorption in the realms of imagination and her feeble mental state are made clear through the gap between her visioning of Lorenzo's image and Keats's macabre description of his appearance" (Schulkins, "The Economy of Romance in Keats's *Isabella*" 82). With "her insane conflation of the beautiful and the grotesque" suggesting her loss of touch with reality (Sider 144), she buries the head in her pot of basil and assigns it phallic significance.[92] According to Harris, with its phallic value, the basil pot turns into "replacement utopia" for Isabella through which she transgresses gender boundaries as she feminizes, infantilizes, and obtains Lorenzo "as the symbol of masculine power in her possession" (23;24). Actualizing her phantasy of transgression, Isabella further breastfeeds Lorenzo with her tears that take on the role of milk and sits beside her basil pot "as a bird on wing to breast its eggs again:/ And, patient as a hen-bird" (470-472).[93] In this context, while the basil

[92] That is, with the Law's intervention into the symbiotic dyad between the mother and the child, the subject experiences a fundamental lack, the lack of phallus, and to make up for the sense of loss opened through this loss, s/he searches for phallic equivalences in a Lacanian context. Termed as *objet petit a*, this part object prompts desire and arouses in subjects the same sense of wholeness before symbolization. When we look at the way Isabella cuts Lorenzo's head, we can see her loss of mastery in the use of metaphors as she actually takes one part of the person who serves as a mirror image to her in order to cope with the sense of lack.

[93] Harris underlines the way gender hierarchies are shattered by the tears of Isabella. As he argues, Isabella "fills the masculine role in the relationship as the tears (or sperm) act to fertilize the seed (or egg) that he has given. She is active and penetrating, while he remains receptive" (25). Though arguing along similar terms to Harris for Isabella's "active and penetrating" state, I do not think that she actualizes her potential by mimicry of a male figure. Rather, she, as a woman of bodily language and female energies, subverts the symbolic. Also, her relation with the basil pot does not reflect hierarchy but a simultaneous recreation of myriad forms of being—signifying not only Lorenzo's but also Isabella's metamorphosis.

pot spreading "perfumèd leafits" turns into "a metaphor for poetic creation,"[94] Isabella is positioned as "the artist, the sculptor, and the cultivator:" "Isabella's tears allow the plant to grow and spread, just as the poet's pen and ink enable the growth and proliferation of his poetry," reflecting that "even the most painful aspects of life have the potential to be inspirational to artistic cultivation" (Schaik 5). As I argue, Isabella's feminization or infantilization of Lorenzo's decapitated head can be taken as feminization of the foreclosed gaze that reappears in the real: treating the severed head as a baby, Isabella actually travesties the grandeur of the gaze as she both becomes its master and renders it impotent. Her imaginary relation to the gaze is also reflected by the state of the eyes in the head: "each eye's sepulchral cell" remains veiled by "fringèd lash" and "smeared loam" (408;409), reflecting the bankruptcy of the gaze in Isabella's psychotic universe.

Transliterating her psychotic disintegration into art as the incarnation of the foreclosed signifier, the decapitated head opens a new space of signification for Isabella and poses a challenge to linear temporality. This challenge stems from the fact that refiguring "the Christian allegory in a particularly Keatsian fashion," it resurrects as the pot of basil (Hoeveler 328) and dissolves into the continuum with nature:

> And so she ever fed it with thin tears,
> Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
> So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
> Of Basil-tufts in Florence; for it drew
> Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
> From the fast mouldering head there shut from view;
> So that the jewel, safely casketed,
> Came forth, and in perfumèd leafits spread. (425-432)

Fed with Isabella's "thin tears," the severed head grows "thick, and green, and beautiful" and smells "more balmy than its peers/Of Basil-tufts in Florence" (425-

[94] For Chen who thinks that "Isabella" exemplifies Keats's notion of the material sublime, "as a form of negative aesthetics empowered by human suffering, especially in a somatic sense," as well, the poem reflects Keats's configuration of "poetic creation:" as he expands on his suggestion, Keats sees "poetic creation" "not only as a state of anti-knowledge and anti-truth, 'uncertainties, Mysteries, and doubts'" but "also as a process that is anti-living, unhealthy, pathological, self-corroding and self-destructive" (41).

428). Becoming an actor for Isabella's own (pre)Oedipal drama, thus, the decapitated head by its burial into a pot of basil transgresses the life/death divide as it takes on a dynamic dissolution in the asynchronous flow of the "mould" (415) with other myriad forms of being, dispersed at some undifferentiated space of death-life continuum.

4.2. "From Human Trammels Freed:" Bending the Humanist Discourse with Lamia the Serpent-Woman

As a poem of interstices, Keats's "Lamia" invites readers into unruly layers of psyche. Opening at an unspecified locality in Crete, the poem eviscerates all the monolithic notions of being through the ambivalent figure of Lamia whom I discuss as the aesthetic intrusion of unlocalized psychotic material into the symbolic. Although the poem has been read in the context of the triumph of the rational over the irrational for Lamia's melting into a shade by Apollonius's demonic gaze at the end, I contend that far from representing the dominance of reason, the poem expresses incredulity towards the sole mastery of the rational or the symbolic. Though stigmatized as the other of the Corinthians and denied symbolic gratification for her elusive nature as a serpent-woman, Lamia does not stay silenced. Instead, she penetrates into their narrative from the depths of the unvoiced as the reincarnation of the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father in the real. Resembling Lorenzo in "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil" in terms of her resistance to closure or binary articulation, she shatters all epistemic categorizations, which points at the post-anthropocentric nonfixity of subjective processes in a Lacanian context. In the light of this, I argue that poeticizing the translation of the psychotic material from the nonhuman depths of Crete into the urban geography of Corinth, Lamia shatters epistemic boundaries through her denial of symbolic codification. As part of her ambivalence, she does not stay entrapped in either leg of the binary trap, but stands at the human-nonhuman, ending-beginning, man-woman, alluring-disgusting, and safe-threatening intersection.

Before elaborating on how Lamia, re-emerging in the real with the hole opened in the symbolic, trespasses the metaphysics of presence and offers an alternative

ontology of relationality by her dynamic metamorphoses, we need to look at how she has been received or discussed by other critics. “Lamia” has been subjected to different interpretive attitudes revolving mainly around the question of who or what Lamia is. To begin with, Wang sees Lamia as “the commodified image of cockney sensationalism,” embodying “the innately mysterious desire, the mystifying desirability, of the objectified commodity form” and thus calls her “the *objet petit a* of a desire equally specific and vertiginous in its historicity, the commanding eros of a still nascent but feverishly expanding capitalist mass culture” (492). Similarly, while Fermanis addresses her as a figure of commercialism, “as the symbolic incarnation of luxury and excess” (111), Levinson, who takes the poem as “an allegory about the evolution of value forms and their corresponding social forms,” thinks that Lamia stands for “the fetish—the gold, commodity, money, Pythagorean number—descending through its sequence of historical bodies” (261; 223). Different from Wang, Fermanis, and Levinson who discuss Lamia within the context of capitalism, Knipp, reading the poem as fictionalization of poetic creation, argues that while Lycius stands for “the poet of natural and sensuous beauty, the poet who escapes from the pain of reality…from the world of Apollonius,” Lamia represents “the beauty produced by his poetic imagination, the sensuous beauty in which he can forget the world” (129-130). Likewise, Roberts states that “Lamia is something that the philosophic mind hates as corruptive, but to which Lycius is a sweet delight. She is the antagonist to Apollonius—the principle of feeling as opposed to thought, of sensuousness as opposed to knowledge” (554). Along similar lines to Knipp and Roberts who see Romantic idealization of imagination in the figure of Lamia, Stevenson suggests that “Lycius is the dreamer, Lamia the dream” (247). Different from Stevenson, Clarke points to her stigmatization as a sexualized other as he says: “Lamia is an outcast that must hide itself for shame in doomed magical spaces, the fantastic figure of matriarchal power shamed and cast out by the revelation of its visible lack” (576). Lastly, recontextualizing the poem with regard to colonial history, as a literary portrayal of the encounter between Africa and Britain, D. Lee takes Lamia as the colonized, and he regards Apollonius and Lycius as representatives of the colonizer (138; 140).

Reading the poetic figure of Lamia in the context of pointless imagination/rationality, dream/reality, or the ideal/material dichotomies, the abovementioned critics overlook the multilayered implications of the poem that lie beyond binaries. As a result, the poem is reduced to such universalizing interpretations as to how it underlines "the need for the separation of dream from reality, of illusion from truth" (Gross 163-164) or how it insists "on the priority of the material conditions of life" and "on the falsehood of sentimental and idealized fictions, which distort actualities even as they mediate them for the multitude" (Hoagwood 691). Different from these critics who meet on a common ground to depict Lamia in the context of universalizing categorizations, I discuss Lamia as the unlocalized psychotic material spilling over into the symbolic by Lycius's psychotic disintegration and foreground the vital processes of Becoming or metamorphoses embodied in her subjectivity. Also, rather than asserting the triumph of one leg of the binary trap over the other, I focus on the aestheticization of the irreducible force of the psychotic material, underlining in Endo's words that the poem reflects "a remarkable mobility" in terms of space, with "the threshold between inside and outside" being "subject to dynamic, shifting pressures" (113). My discussion of the poem does not aim to foreground how Lycius sinks into psychosis with his omission of the primordial signifier from the symbolic to quilt or regulate him as a desiring subject. My contention is rather to bring to the fore how Lamia, as the aesthetic portrait of the foreclosed signifier's reincarnation in the real, penetrates into the symbolic on the collective level and shatters the illusory certainties of the Corinthians by her vibrant metamorphoses and unfathomable nature. Different from the previous readings whose focus overlooked the intricacies of Lamia's nature by reading her with regard to her relation to Apollonius or his student Lycius, I focus on the postmetaphysical subjectivity that Keats reveals in the transcorporeality of his psychotic figure Lamia and discuss how she shatters the division between epistemology and ontology with her re-appearance in the real and transition into the symbolic from the fissures of the dominant discourse. Moreover, what I want to point out between the lines is that reflecting the vital processes of Becoming inherent to subjectivity not in the body of a desiring subject but in the body of a psychotic material, the poem implies that for the busy-brained Corinthians, a third space of

signification beyond binary polarities is tantamount to a kind of psychosis. At this point, one cannot help asking 'Who is the psychotic?': This is the psychosis of both Lycius and Apollonius who cannot come to terms with the idea of continuity and vibrancy embodied in Lamia. What Lamia does is to reveal a collective psychosis.

As the re-appearance of the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father in the real—a psychic domain implying "a threshold, a margin, continuity"—Lamia penetrates into the symbolic where "every element has value through being opposed to another" (Lacan, *S III* 9) and shatters its oppositional dynamics by her fitting into neither the epistemic category of the human nor the nonhuman. The unspecified setting of the poem sets the tone of voice for Lamia's unsettling entrance into the symbolic as an uncastrated serpent-woman. Opening at "a forest on the shores of Crete" (I. 12), a fairy landscape still untouched by the splitting gaze of Apollonius, the poem invites the readers into the depths of the unvoiced. Leaving his "golden throne" (I. 8) behind in search of the nymph whom he loves, Hermes is found in the middle of this space:

> Upon a time, before the faery broods
> Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods,
> Before King Oberon's bright diadem,
> Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem,
> Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns
> From rushes green and, brakes, and cownslipp'd lawns,
> The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
> His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft:
> From high Olympus had he stolen light,
> On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
> Of his great summoner, and made retreat
> Into a forest on the shores of Crete.
> For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
> A nymph to whom all hoofèd Satrys knelt; (I. 1-14)

To Clarke, in these lines Keats "veils with fairy-tale commonness the sterner historical stuff of racial conquests, theological rivalries, and ancient imperialisms" reflecting that "the newer Teutonic, Christian, olden English 'broods' of King Oberon usurp the territories formerly possessed by the ancient pagan nature spirits" (556). From a Lacanian perspective, I argue that this premodern locality where the

prosperous woods are surrounded with Nymph and Satyr and "rushes green, and brakes, and cownslipp'd lawns" are filled with the Dryads and the Fauns points to a preoedipal space of jouissance. Not yet corrupted and invaded by modernity but still embedded in the spatiotemporal coordinates of once "upon a time," nature stands, in this context, as a reservoir of bliss. Adding further to the unbounded state of "these thornless wilds" (I. 95), Hermes[95] suffers from lovesickness. So, consumed by his love and "full of painful jealousies," he flies "from vale to vale, from wood to wood" and "breath[es] upon the flowers his passion" "to find where this sweet nymph prepared her secret bed" (I. 33; 27-28;30). Then, he asks for Lamia's help to make visible the nymph whom he loves. In such a context where the omnipotent image of God is shattered to be reduced to the state of an "ever-smitten," "pensive," and helpless figure who leaves even "his golden throne" (I. 7;33;8) behind for the sake of his nymph, logos is dethroned from its grandeur to leave its place to mythos. It is at this mythopoeic space of Crete that Lamia makes her first entrance into the poetic universe of Keats, asking:

> 'When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake?
> When move in a sweet body fit for life,
> And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
> Of hearts and lips? Ah, miserable me!' (I. 39-42)

Denied symbolic acknowledgement due to her serpentine state, Lamia suffers, and yearns for entry into the symbolic. To her chance, running into the depths of the forest from where her cries for "a sweet body fit for life/ And love, and pleasure and the ruddy strife/Of hearts and lips" (I. 40-42) come, Hermes encounters her in the form of "a palpitating snake, /Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake" (I. 45-46):

> She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
> Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
> Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
> Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barr'd;

[95] Contrary to established notion of God as the bearer of absolute notion of truth, Hermes stands as a figure of conflicts. As Chambers notes, "although he is often depicted engaging in charitable deeds" (for his "giving Apollo the lyre, freeing Ares from prison, returning Persephone from Hades, ordering Calypso to free Odysseus, helping Perseus kill Medusa, and so on"), "he is also a shrewd, cunning thief, patron of rogues and thieves, and the conductor of the dead to Hades" (591).

> And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
> Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
> Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
> So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,
> ……
> Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
> Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar:
> Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
> She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete;
> And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there
> But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
> As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.
> Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
> Came, as though bubbling honey, for Love's sake. (I. 47-65)

Denying easy articulation as the psychotic material, Lamia voices the primordial signifier of the Name-of-the-Father rejected by Lycius at the symbolic level or she, in Clarke's words, "comes forth as the sublimated, the displaced, the victimized Python that the harshly Apollonian psyche casts forth from its consciousness of itself" (573). From a Lacanian perspective, it would be better to argue that as "an anxiety provoking apparition of an image," she

> summarises what we can call the revelation of that which is least penetrable in the real, of the real lacking any possible mediation, of the ultimate real, of the essential object which isn't an object any longer, but this something faced with which all words cease and all categories fail, the object of anxiety par excellence. (*S II* 164)

Implied by her "gordian shape" (I. 47) in the face of which "all words cease and all categories fail," Lamia presents a riddle to binary discourse: though having the head and throat of a serpent, she owns "a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete," eyes "born so fair," and words coming "as though bubbling honey, for Love's sake" (I. 60-65). To complicate the matter further, while she occupies the in-between state of a serpent-woman, even her nonhuman state poses a threat to categorical divides. This stems from that although she is a serpent with a "gordian shape of dazzling hue, /Vermilion-spotted, golden, green and blue," she is also "striped like a zebra,

freckled like a pard,/ Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barr'd" [96] (I. 47-50). According to Perkins, in this way, Lamia epitomizes "a grotesquerie:"

> The quick, college-cheer movement of the verse, the incongruity of the menagerie, and the kaleidoscope of color all define an attitude toward her. Moreover, her array of patterns and colors, 'golden, green, and blue,' shifts, flickers, and dazzles as she breathes, and together with her overlavish collection of other ornament her 'silver moons' and her 'crest…Sprinkled with stars,' it does not seem to be a highly tasteful display. She reminds one of a burlesque dancer. These wonders are topped by the bizarre absurdity of the mingling of woman and serpent. (267)

Stating that Lamia does not present "a highly tasteful display," Perkins stresses her grotesque nature and calls her dance "burlesque." In this vein, Ulmer might be right in his suggestion that "Keats's amusement at Lamia's expense fashions her into an icon of cultural parody. Figuring the canon in drag, she caricatures and debases the high seriousness of epic tradition—or rather, advertises the fact of its debasement" ("Serpent's Tongue" 189).[97] However, I would argue that what is burlesqued in Lamia's dance is the idea of Cartesian fixity or human exceptionalism. Stated in other words, in her state weaving together different ontological layers in her being, Lamia the "burlesque dancer" bends the humanist discourse upon which the notion of Oneness or metaphysical unity has been founded to criticize species hierarchy and point to the human-nonhuman continuum. When he suggests that "consisting of a bewildering variety of texture," "[Lamia] is so many things at once in terms of beauty that she becomes self-cancelling" (81), Whale refers to her subjective fluidity. As I argue, Lamia's fleeting nature addressed as "self-cancelling" by Whale can be taken as her dissemination or postponement as a complex network of signifiers. In

[96] Reading these lines meta-poetically, Wang proposes that "the passage's perceptual and conceptual confusion, its breathtaking clash of color and design, would then stand for a Cockney sensationalism brazenly resplendent in all its hyperbolic class colors" (486). Thus, he argues that embodying "a peculiar 'Cockney sublime,'" "Lamia is neither large nor distant; nor is she in shadow nor immediately dangerous in the manner of other forces of nature. Seemingly well-proportioned she should be beautiful. Yet she is not" (ibid. 486).

[97] As Ulmer further argues, "Once the poetic property of Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Dante, and Milton, the snake that *Lamia* presents, batting her eyes for Lycius's benefit, shows Keats mocking the feminization of literary culture in Regency Britain" ("Serpent's Tongue" 189).

this context, why she is given in the shape of a gordian knot becomes more meaningful: through the inside-outside dimensions of the knot, she embodies *extimate* nature of the human subject or in Lacanian terms, she objectifies a Moebius strip, which involves an intersection between the human(ist) discourse's epistemic categories.[98]

Chambers reflects on the presentation of different spaces of existence in Lamia based on the vibration of different colors on her body. As he notes, while her vermilion, gold, green, and blue colors are charged with rich implications suggesting not "only the universe, but the traditional 'four elements,' or realms of existence—earth, air, fire, and water," her simultaneous presence as a zebra, leopard, and peacock hints at her fluidity and constant metamorphoses: implying both "illusion and deception" and "natural beauty" (593). Endo also focuses on Lamia's dazzling appearance in her resistance to be binarily contained as a serpent-woman: "The colors and lights glancing off of Lamia paradoxically hide rather than illuminate her. She is like a prism that is present only in its aspects" (121). Accordingly, although the expression that she is "'Eyed like a peacock"' (I. 50)—which referring to the eyes of the mythological figure Argus[99]—foregrounds "the eye's objectification as a gaudy ornament," it does not mean Lamia's lack of "any capacity for sight" (Jones 359). Read in this perspective, Lamia's transgressive nature is solidified because it becomes obvious that under the veil of her enchanting appearance, she reverses the dominant gaze and resists her objectification as a sexualized or a naturalized other, as well.

As proposed by Wang, in the face of her image that is resistant to "any static or frozen mode of being," these series of similes "attempt to anchor Lamia's riotous visual qualities in a set of known animals. The conceptual result, however, is a hybrid zoo whose exotic exhibition fails to secure Lamia's image in any mentally

[98] In my argument that Lamia objectifies a Moebius strip, I do not mean that she is a desiring subject. My aim is rather to foreground how she, as a psychotic figure, denies definition by bending the humanist discourse.

[99] "Mercury, by order of Jupiter, slewed him, by lulling all his eyes asleep with the sound of his lyre. Juno put the eyes of Argus on the tail of peacock, a bird sacred to her divinity" (Lemprière 89).

synthetic manner" (486). That is, although these familiar animal names like zebra, peacock, or leopard intend to move Lamia from the unknown to the known, they conversely problematize the notion of familiarity. Thus, standing somewhere between the familiar and the unfamiliar, Lamia presents an aesthetic portrayal of the psychotic material or the untranslated unconscious psychic material to be given a verbal shape in its transition to the space of the Corinthians. Even after her attachment to words as a woman in exchange for her help to Hermes, however, Lamia does not stay as a fixed totality. For instance, though being "too much to be contained in a 'woman's shape, and […] woman's form"' (Gigante 440), she is transformed into a human state in the form of a woman at the cost of losing all her nonhuman beauty:

> The colours all inflamed throughout her train,
> She writhed about, convulsed with scarlet pain:
> A deep volcanian yellow took the place,
> Of all her milder-moonèd body's grace;
> And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
> Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede:
> Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
> Eclipsed her crescents, and lick'd up her stars:
> So that, in moments few, she was undrest
> Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
> And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,
> Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
> Still shone her crown; that vanish'd, also she
> Melted and disappear'd as suddenly. (I. 153-166)

As the lines given above reflect, Lamia's penetration into Corinth as the psychotic material requires her translation from a serpent-woman into a woman. In her transition from the space of the real into the symbolic as a woman, Lamia momentarily loses all her beauty and colors: being "undrest/ Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst/ And rubious-argent," she is left with "nothing but pain and ugliness" (I. 161-164). According to Schulkins,

> In order to become Lycius's image of perfection, Lamia feels she must renounce her physical existence and hide her true identity. By undressing her sensuous physicality, Lamia removes all the sexual elements that define her, thus becoming a blank canvas on which

> Lycius projects his private desires. ("The Humanization of the Serpent Lamia" 130)

As he further argues, "Lamia rejects her sensuous body to pass as an inexperienced virgin," "a virgin purest lipp'd" (I. 189) as she depends on Lycius for recognition (ibid. 137; 144). Contrary to Schulkins, I think that Lamia does not need to be recognized by Lycius to manifest herself, and she just masquerades as a woman to enter the space of Corinth. I also argue that while her momentary loss of beauty in her metamorphosis from a serpent-woman into a woman implies the surplus jouissance of the unknowable over the knowable, this transition never comes to mean Lamia's totalization or complete absorption by the symbolic codes. Rather, "with her vivid coloration always in transition from one state to another—as she breathes, so she changes—Lamia represents the multiplicity of the world and its flux at once" (Stewart 11). In other words, from a Lacanian viewpoint, unsettling the binary dualities, she points to the irreducible nature of the foreclosed signifier. Different from Schulkins who underlines Lamia's position as a sexualized other in this metamorphosis, another critic D. Lee draws attention to Lamia's racial stigmatization and how she restages the oppression of the West Indian slaves by the process of her transformation:

> She sloughs off her colorful skin and dark origins, possessing instead 'white arms,' 'neck regal white' and a 'new voice luting soft'…This whiteness affords her social mobility. As a 'lady bright,' she wins the love of Lycius who gives her the opportunity to move from slave dwelling, to the house of the master, from 'love in a hut' to 'love in a palace'...Such freedom, however, only serves to underscore the enslaving function of possession. Like the West Indian slaves she partially recalls, Lamia is entangled in the continual process of giving herself up. (132)

Although I can say, in D. Lee's words, that Lamia leaves her Cretan clothes for "social mobility," I do not think that she capitulates to her oppression like her gendered or racialized ancestors. Rather, she shatters the logic of the symbolic, hiding her serpentine nature in the veil of a figure that is familiar to Western eyes: transforming from a colorful text with rich resonances to a lady with white arms or a neck, she gives the impression of safety, though on the surface level. Moreover, her

transformation into a woman appears to be not coincidental. That is, though being given entrance into the symbolic, she still obscures the boundaries for her denial of easy categorization as a woman. In this respect, she portrays what Lacan means when he addresses woman as "not-whole," when he says that "there is always something in her [woman] that escapes discourse" (*S XX* 33). So, Lamia portrays an assemblage of interwoven but self-voicing differences with her "not-whole" state.

As the unlocalized psychotic material penetrating into Corinth in the body of a woman, Lamia unsettles the humanist logic of the symbolic also by complicating the notion of origin. As I have argued earlier, not located in a fixed, knowable space, but scattered along undifferentiated coordinates, Lamia poses a threat to oppositional dynamics. The sense of threat that she evokes as a being saved from the stasis of name, family, or gender is felt even in Lycius as he cannot understand who she is or from where she comes although she is none other than the outcome of his psychotic dissociation. At this point, Lycius's attitude towards Lamia needs to be mentioned to shed further light on how she perplexes even him. After her metamorphosis into a woman, Lamia's first encounter with Lycius occurs when he, "wearied of [his companions'] Corinth talk," sets forth to walk "over the solitary hills," on "the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades" "where reason fades" (I. 231-233;235-236). These solitary hills which stand alien to the paternal metaphor become the meeting ground of Lamia and Lycius. As Lacan argues, "for the psychosis to be triggered off, the Name-of-the-Father, *verworfen*, foreclosed, that is to say, never having attained the place of the Other, must be called into symbolic opposition to the subject" (*Écrits* 165). Although we do not know the triggering force behind Lycius's psychotic outbreak, we can say that encountering Lamia on "the mossy green" into which he topographically delves with his "silent sandals" (I. 239), Lycius who had already lost his subjective consistency and plunged into psychosis failing to integrate himself into the chain of the signifiers actually confronts the black hole opened in the symbolic. So, faced with the absence of the phallus to which he can submit to suture his void and help him establish a meaningful link with the rest of the signifiers in the signifying chain, Lycius takes Lamia as an imaginary substitute and wants her to stay with him, unable to bear the idea of a life without her: "'Even as thou vanishest so I

shall die. /Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!"' (I. 260-261). Furthermore, Lamia feels anxious for moving from the blissful context of her '"hills and vales"' into the space of Corinth where there is "no joy" and which is "[e]mpty of immortality and bliss!"' (I. 277;278). As she says:

> 'Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
> That finer spirits cannot breathe below
> In human climes, and live. Alas! Poor youth,
> What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
> My essence? What serener palaces,
> Where I may all my many senses please
> And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease?
> It cannot be – Adieu!' (I. 279-286)

Although Lamia expresses her anxiety about living in Corinth, Lycius cannot leave the hills alone: replacing what he has never internalized on the symbolic level (the Name-of-the-Father), Lamia becomes a part of his world that he reconstructs on the imaginary plane as an alternative to external reality. Interestingly enough, although Lamia yearns for being retransformed into a woman for the sake of meeting Lycius before her metamorphosis, she expresses disquietude about her translocation to Corinth when Lycius wants to enter the city with her. When she asks Lycius "What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe/ My essence?" before they manage to pass "the city gates" "noiseless" (I. 279-280; 348-349), for instance, she voices her dread about annihilation in the symbolic due to her threshold state as a serpent-woman. Besides, as evidenced in her wish for a space "Where [she] may all [her] senses please/ And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease" (I. 281-282), she asserts herself "as an unconsumable overabundance:"

> Instead of the five senses by which we register sensation, Lamia boasts an unbounded 'many.' In place of a single thirst, she has 'a hundred,' which she must try to appease by 'mysterious sleights,' since by all standard means they are unappeasable…Asserting herself as an unconsumable overabundance, Lamia is more than human—or more than material organization alone would allow. (Gigante 444)

Adding to her inexhaustible state, she reflects a stunning beauty: "And soon [Lycius'] eyes had drunk her beauty up,/ Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,/ And still the cup was full" (I. 251-253). As she knows that with her "unconsumable"

nature that poses a potential threat to the smooth operation of the ideological illusion of civilization, she will get a hostile reaction from Apollonius in Corinth, Lamia feels afraid. To her horror, as if smelling Lamia's unsettling presence in Corinth, no sooner they make their entrance into the "human climes" of Corinth than they encounter Apollonius who, "with curl'd grey beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald crown,/ Slow stepp'd, and robed in philosophic gown," approaches them (I. 364-365).

Before continuing my discussion on how Lamia perplexes even Lycius as an unbuttoned signifier, I want to place a particular focus on the way Lycius relates to Apollonius as a psychotic subject: 'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide/And a good instructor; but to-night he seems/ The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams" (I. 375-377). As the kind of words he chooses to depict Apollonius reflects, while he takes Apollonius as his "sage," "trusty guide," or "good instructor" before the eruption of his psychosis, he now calls him "the ghost of folly haunting [his] sweet dreams," implying his resistance to the intrusion of any third party into his reenactment of his *moi* fiction. What should be underlined here regarding Lycius's addressing Apollonius as "a good instructor" before his confrontation with Lamia is his misinterpretation of the Law as a psychotic subject prior to the activation of his psychosis. As Mills notes, for a psychotic subject, "the law exists, but it does not emanate from a social authority," representing instead "an arbitrary restriction that an illegitimate external authority imposes on the subject" (5). At this point, the question that instantly arises is: How could Lycius be a scholar and a student of Apollonius with the absence of the logic of the signifier? To answer this, we need to give a hearing to Lacan who argues that the subject, when faced with the "impossibility of assuming the realization of the signifier *father* at the symbolic level" is "left with the image the paternal function is reduced to," "an image which isn't inscribed in any triangular dialectic, but whose function as model, as specular alienation, nevertheless gives the subject a fastening point and enables him to apprehend himself on the imaginary plane" (*S III* 204). Underlining the "nihilation of the [primordial] signifier" experienced in psychosis, Lacan further argues:

> The subject will have to bear the weight of this real, primitive dispossession of the signifier and adopt compensation for it, at length, over the course of his life, through a series of purely conformist identifications with characters who will give him the feeling for what one has to do to be a man. (ibid. 205)

Thus, with the primordial signifier being already *verworfen* on the symbolic level, Lycius takes Apollonius as an imaginary substitute for the void opened in the signifying chain and establishes "conformist identifications" with him to compensate for the absent signifier. In this context, the reason why he respects him before the outbreak of his psychosis becomes more meaningful. However, it should be noted that Apollonius speaks to Lycius not from the register of the symbolic, but from the register of the imaginary or not as the symbolic Other, but as the imaginary other, both before and after the outbreak of his psychosis. What is tragicomic in this context is also the fact that Apollonius to whom Lycius invests so much meaning as an imaginary substitute for the absent signifier before his psychosis is triggered also shares the psychosis of Lorenzo and actually trivializes the established status of a symbolic authority by his gaze that is rendered impotent in a psychotic context.

Having underlined Lycius's imaginary relation to Apollonius, I want to discuss the link between him and Lamia. As I have argued earlier, after his sudden encounter with the absent signifier, Lycius begins to live with Lamia in "a place unknown" touched by none "but feet divine" (I. 388; 385-386). He even marries "this fair unknown" (II.100), summoning only his kin to their marriage feast and introduces her to other people through this wedding ceremony. Solidifying her elusive nature, Lamia employs for the feast unknown and unseen servitors who resemble floating signifiers: "About the halls, to and from the doors,/ There was a noise of wings" (II. 119-120). Through these "viewless servants" (II. 136) about whom nothing is known for sure as to from where they come and who they are, they play out an imaginary psychodrama:

> The herd approach'd; each guest, with busy brain,
> Arriving at the portal, gazed amain,
> And enter'd marveling: for they knew the street
> Remember'd it from childhood all complete
> Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen

That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne. (II. 150-155)

Set on an imaginary plane, Lamia's wedding in "secret bowers" (II. 149) that underlines the invasion of the symbolic by the imaginary can also be taken as a metaphor for sinking into psychosis on the collective level because attending this wedding, the busy-brained Corinthian wedding guests share the imaginary fantasy of Lycius. Besides, with the waning of their reality principle under the influence of "sweet wine" and "soft" music sounding like a lullaby, Lamia appears to them "no more strange:"

> Soft went the music the soft air along,
> While fluent Greek a vowel'd under-song
> Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
> At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow;
> But when the happy vintage touch'd their brains,
> Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
> Of powerful instruments: – the gorgeous dyes,
> The space, the splendor of the draperies,
> The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
> Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear.
> Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed
> And every soul from human trammels freed,
> No more strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,
> Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.
> Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height;
> Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright;
> Garlands of every green and every scent
> From vales deflower'd or forest-trees branch-rent,
> In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought,
> High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought
> Of every guest; that each, as he did please,
> Might fancy-fit his brow, silk-pillow'd at his ease. (II. 199-220)

With the wine touching their brains, the wedding guests begin to talk more fervently and they participate in the imaginary play of Lycius. Besides, stepping into the hallucinatory experience of Lycius, they no longer regard Lamia as an outcast but rather get used to her state of in-betweenness: "when the wine [does] its rosy deed," "every soul from human trammels [is] freed" (II. 209-210). Reflecting their release from the confines of dominant discourse's binary mode of thinking, this freedom from "human trammels" sheds light on their awakening to the potential existence of

a third space lying beyond dualities. While the busy-brained wedding guests no longer stigmatize Lamia through the intoxication of such Dionysian elements as wine or soft music, Lycius cannot so easily accept her due to her lack of an origin. As "a martyr of the unconscious, giving this term *martyr* its meaning, which is to be a witness" (*S III* 132), though re-establishing his world on the imaginary level with Lamia in their "purple-linèd palace of sweet sin" (II. 31), he cannot silence his mind as to Lamia's unresolved complexity. In other words, he gets engulfed by Lamia's perplexing image that comes from without, from an unknown space as an unchained signifier and cannot understand what she implies. In this context, reflecting that "due to the absence of *Bejahung*, themes of the subject's existence do not enter into the law of the Symbolic, but emerge in the Real as puzzling and overwhelming problems that seize the subject from the outside" (Vanheule, *The Subject of Psychosis* 71), he finds himself in the middle of unanswered questions with regard to Lamia. For instance, although he implies Lamia's irreducible state as the real, as "what resists symbolization absolutely" (Lacan, *S I* 66) when he reflects on the difficulty of entangling, trammeling up, and snaring her soul in his, and labyrinthing her there "like the hid scent in an unbudded rose" (II. 52-54), he wonders her name and family. To his surprise, Lamia states that she has no one and saying that "[her] parents' bones are in [the Corinthians'] dusty urns/ Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns" (II. 94-95), she points to the Corinthians' vain attempt to annihilate the psychotic material:

> 'Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,
> I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee
> Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny;
> As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
> Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
> Or friends or kinsfolk on the citied earth,
> To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?'
> 'I have no friends,' said Lamia, 'no, not one;
> My presence in wide Corinth hardly known.
> My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
> Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
> Seeing all their luckless race are dead save me. (II. 85-96)

Lycius vainly attempts to understand Lamia or to "reclaim/ Her wild and timid nature to his aim" (II. 70-71). Standing "so neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen" (I. 240-241), Lamia embodies the primordial signifier that he has never internalized. So, as a psychotic subject "having no words or speech at his disposal to explain what is happening to him" due to the rupture opened in discourse (Vanheule, *The Subject of Psychosis* 103), he falls into the void in the signifying chain, into that devouring mass of unbuttoned signifiers:

> At the heart of the psychoses there is a dead end, perplexity concerning the signifier. Everything takes place as if the subject were reacting to this by an attempt at restitution, at compensation. Fundamentally the crisis is undoubtedly unleashed by some question or other. (Lacan, *S III* 194)

In her unlocatable state leading Lycius to "a dead end," Lamia stands as "a meaning that comes from nowhere, and which refers to nothing, but is an essential meaning, one that concerns the subject" (ibid. 86). Moreover, even though she has never mentioned her name, Lycius calls her "Lamia" when he asks her "'Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou start?/ Know'st you that man?"' (I. 255-256). This reflects that he, as a former scholar, has at his disposal for her only the term 'lamia,'[100] which has lethal connotations as a demon or serpent. Based on the negative implications of the term, I think that addressing her as Lamia, Lycius implies the degree of tension and disgust that she evokes in him with her complexity. With the aim of avoiding her complexity that poses a threat to his taken-for-granted assumptions and his mastery on her, he might name her Lamia. In this way, he deludes himself into her closure, although she evades easy depiction. It is worth noting that apart from creating an impasse of meaning with her lack of a name or family, Lamia complicates the notion of origin also in terms of her ungendered state. As Stewart notes with respect to her problematization of gender, for instance, she

[100] While "in ancient Greek folklore, Lamia was a name often given to a kind of spirit that was believed to kill infants, similar to and sometimes identified with the empousa," "by the early Roman Empire, Lamia had changed in literature from an infant-killing spirit to a sexual monster that seduced and devoured young men" (Weinstock 368).

seems at once "some penanced lady elf[101]/ some demon's mistress, or the demon's self" (I. 55-56) (12). Besides, Clarke argues that referring to "a hermaphrodite then cast out by a spiritual authority," she expresses "the fate of a feminine soul in a masculine body, or of any psyche inscribed or penned in an inappropriate form through the mortifications of a patriarchal conscience" (576). However, what I see in Lamia's ungendered and sexually ambivalent self that I link to her uncastrated or unsymbolized state as an unchained signifier is none other than a trace of postmetaphysical subjectivity revealed in a Keatsian fashion.

Being not so different from Lycius who goes to great lengths to totalize Lamia or to fix coordinates for her, Apollonius denies Lamia visibility in the face of her unnamable nature and tries to annihilate her. By doing so, he reflects that "It is not for nothing that the real is always in the background…It is, quite precisely, and quite properly speaking, excluded" (Lacan, *S I* 206). Before elaborating on how Apollonius attempts to erase Lamia from Corinth, we need to discuss the way he intrudes into her world. Though having faced her earlier, Apollonius makes his distressing presence truly felt on Lamia on her wedding day. Lamia warns Lycius not to invite Apollonius into their wedding feast saying: "'do not bid/ Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid'" (II. 99-100). However, Lycius lets him into the inner doors of their fairy palace where they play out an imaginary psychodrama, obscuring clarity[102] with wine and the "censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood" fuming before each lucid panel and setting up a *moi* fiction with "the mirror'd walls" (II. 192; 174-175; 182). In the face of all this splendor, the wedding guests are left "'wondering / Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could spring'" (2.197–98). To

[101] In a similar vein to Stewart, Clarke underlines Lamia's problematization of gender boundaries with regard to the term of "some penanced lady elf." As he notes, while the term "elf"' was masculine and "elven" feminine by *OED,* 13th and 14th centuries witnessed the interchangeable use of the terms and modern use of "elf" mainly refers to a masculine fairy, which reflects that Keats's use of "lady elf" blurs gender boundaries (574).

[102] Noting that slaves had to conduct their ceremonies during the middle of the night to protect themselves from the threat of planters, D. Lee links this obscured clarity, that I read as part of Lycius' imaginary psychodrama, to Lamia's need for protection from the gaze of the colonizer: "Keats provides the 'half retired' serpent woman with a similar kind of nocturnal concealment (1: 312)" (133). As he further notes, apart from her wedding ceremony, "the entire narrative [also] takes place in the protective covering of the night, moving from 'evening dim,' to 'wide-spreading night,' to 'eventide,' to 'midnight' (1:220; 1: 354; 2:17; 2:84)" (133).

Ulmer, the banquet-room, with its "luxurious excess and empty artifice," resonates with "Byronic Orientalism, sensuality, and duplicity" and Lycius stands, in this context, as "the effeminized occupant of a private harem replete with Oriental mystery, Oriental luxury, and Oriental sensuality" ("Serpent's Tongue" 199-200; 198). I read this hall of mirrors as a sign of not luxury but Lycius's immersion in the illusory intoxication of the imaginary. Then, as if pressing a "cold sponge" on their pleasure in this intoxicating setting, Apollonius's entrance into their banquet-room built out of alienating identifications points to the penetration of the annulled symbolic into the imaginary. Laughing "as though some knotty problem, that had daft/ His patient thought, had now begun to thaw/ and solve and melt: 'twas just as he foresaw," then, Apollonius transforms Lamia "into a shade" and labels her as "'A serpent!"' (II. 160-162; 305):

> Do not all charms fly
> At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
> There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
> We know her woof, her texture; she is given
> In the dull catalogue of common things.
> Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
> Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
> Empty the haunted air and gnomed mime—
> Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
> The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade. (II. 229-238)

Finding it difficult to come to terms with the idea of a subject that is epistemologically nonexistent though ontologically existent, "the bald-head philosopher" Apollonius fixes his "juggling" eye "without a twinkle or a stir/ Full on the alarmèd beauty of the bride" and deprives Lamia of her visibility by "the mere touch of [his] cold philosophy" (II. 277; 245-247; 230). In this way, though being once a rainbow in heaven, Lamia turns into an Angel whose wings have been cut and melts into a shade under the gaze of Apollonius's "lashless eyelids" (II. 287). Besides, with "the myrtle [sickening] in a thousand wreaths" and with the departure of "voice, lute, and pleasure" "by faint degrees," "a deadly silence" surrounds the room, she once more dresses her Cretan clothes as the unmediated real, and gives her place to "a horrid presence" (II. 264-267):

> There was no recognition in those orbs.
> 'Lamia!' he cried—and no soft-toned reply.
> The many heard, and the loud revelry
> Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;
> The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.
> By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;
> A deadly silence step by step increased
> Until it seem'd a horrid presence there. (II. 260-267)

Her transformation into "a horrid presence" reflects how "monstrous" she stands "in the eyes of a calculating world" (Gigante 445). That is, due to its resistance to any attempt for mathematical articulation, Lamia's complexity evokes a sense of threat and fear in "the calculating world." Also, the tension that she creates in the positivist universe of deductive reasoning is no wonder heightened in the face of her "deadly silence" (II. 266), which far from signifying a mode of passivity or lethargy, takes on a subversive role in the destabilization of the dominant discourse. As Dolar also notes, "not all voices are heard, and perhaps the most intrusive and compelling are the unheard voices, and the most deafening thing can be silence" (14). Focusing similarly on the dissecting practices of the binary thinking system with regard to Lamia's transformation "by faint degrees" into a "deadly silence," D. Lee takes Apollonius "as a figure for the centre of white culture" and argues that he "exemplifies Britain's systematic and therefore most destructive side" in his relation to Lamia (137; 133). However, Wang finds it difficult to put into words how Apollonius treats Lamia:

> we cannot tell if he looks upon Lamia as a teacher, physicist, ideological critic, magician, huckster, or pornographer. He himself might very well just be another image, a parody of Apollo or one of the 'Theosophers' also called up by the phantasmagoria's séance. But he is also a monster simply in his ability to make Lamia pay for being an image. (498)

Sitterson, Jr. is in the same line of thinking as Wang who suggests that embedded in Apollonius might be a parody of Apollo. As he argues, "Apollonius' claim to absolute knowledge is being undercut" by his depiction with the label of a "sophist" that implies uncertainty (II. 172; 291; 299) (204). I would like to use the term a dsyfunctional rational eye or the primordial Father for Apollonius regarding his

relation with Lamia because as if "a displacer, an authority enforcing a territorial exile" (Clarke 564), he deprives her of visibility, though failing to give an end to her. At this point, looking at what Jones says in relation to Apollonius might shed further light on his inability to entrap the irreducible nature of the psychotic material that finds aesthetic objectification in the body of Lamia. Likening him to the mythological figure Alexander, Jones stresses Apollonius's failure to reveal or explain Lamia despite all his attempts to erase her from the scene of Corinth:

> His [Apollonius's] 'knotty problem' is evidently Lamia, whose serpent-form initially appeared to Hermes…as a 'Gordian shape'…Now that she appears as a woman, the 'Gordian' figure is less justifiable—and yet it is her very appearance as woman and subject that makes her that special object in the eyes of Apollonius, a knot whose '[dis]solv[ing]' will confirm his own authority. Since the 'sharp-eyed' Apollonius plays Alexander in this respect, it is important to recall that Alexander's severing of the Gordian knot was not…a proof of acumen so much as a desperate, cynical, and self-aggrandizing feat of force. The oracle had specified that untying the knot would distinguish the destined ruler of Asia. As applied to Lamia, the broad implication is that Apollonius murders rather than dissects. He cannot even be said to 'Unweave a rainbow'…in the sense of reducing it to light or knowledge…—for under his eyes Lamia is neither revealed nor explained, but 'melt[s] into a shade.' (365)

Boulger argues that as "the eye of discursive logic, 'Keen, cruel, perceant, stinging,'" Apollonius "pierces Lamia's secret, and by naming her species, 'a serpent,' reduces at once the dream to nothing" (253). In a similar vein of thought, Luczynska-Holdys argues that "the power of his [Apollonius's] eyes brings about her ultimate destruction" (*Soft-Shed Kisses* 61), implying the annihilation of the irrational by the rational. However, Lamia's melting into a shade by the gaze of Apollonius does not give her a closure. Rather, as I would expand on Jones' argument, it points to language's failure to fully comprehend Lamia. Moreover, considering the poem as "Keats's most explicit and at the same time most problematic allegory of reading," Bennett argues that while Lamia stands as "the desired (textual) object," "Lycius, in this reading, would figure the enthralled, seduced, enticed, entrapped or entrammelled reader" (173). In the words of Bennett, Lamia's melting body expresses "the potential melting, the dissolution, of language in reading:" "words in

'Lamia', like Lamia herself, constantly threaten to dissolve in the irreducible instability of the signifier" (ibid. 177).[103] In this respect, with her portrayal of the constant slippage of the signifier—which I have already underlined with regard to her vibration of diverse colours and text-like heterogeneity—Lamia can be likened to a text of bliss in the Barthesian sense of the term. As her constant transpositions reflect, for instance, she flies like a signifier:

> …where she will'd her spirit went;
> Whether to faint Elysium, or where
> Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair
> Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair;
> Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
> Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine;
> Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine
> Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.
> And sometimes into cities she would send
> Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend. (I. 205-214)

As the lines given above reflect, Lamia flies where her spirit wills: "to faint Elysium," "down through tress-lifting waves" where "the Nereids fair" "wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair," to the location "where God Bacchus drains his cups divine," to "Pluto's gardens palatine," and "sometimes into cities" (I. 205-211;213). Her constant flights imply her fleeting nature, hence the difficulty of her complete annihilation by Apollonius. Moreover, given the intensity of *jouissance* she experiences while burning, the vanity of Apollonius's attempt to annihilate her by his gaze is unveiled: "She burnt, she loved the tyranny" (II. 81). The dissemination or cancellation of meaning embedded in Lamia's corporeal melting becomes more obvious by the fact that taking on the role of Alexander[104], when failing to untie Lamia, Apollonius chooses to eliminate her from the space of the symbolic. While Fermanis argues that "Apollonius exhibits an hostility to the human world of luxury

[103] Bennett refers to the earlier corporeal melting that Lamia goes through in her transformation into a woman: Lamia "Melted and disapear'd as suddenly; in the air, her new voice luting soft,/ Cried, 'Lycius! gentle Lycius!'…/These words dissolved: Crete's forests heard no more" (165-168;170).

[104] As given in *Bibliotheca Classica*, according to an oracle, who could untie the Gordian knot was promised the empire of Asia and to "make his enemies believe that he was born to conquer Asia," Alexander "cut the knot with his sword; and from that circumstance asserted that the oracle was really fulfilled, and that his claims to universal empire were really justified" (Lemprière 312).

and excess, a contempt towards its inhabitants" (118) by melting Lamia into a shade, I argue that from this perspective, what he does to Lamia can be likened to what modernity does to Gordian knot-shaped subjectivities by exposing them to deadly categorizations. To put it differently, with her in-between state of a serpent-woman, presenting nature-culture or nonhuman-human intersection, Lamia leaves Apollonius no other choice but to 'cut' her. Also, while Apollonius's inability to untie Lamia's Gordian knot implies the crisis of binaristic representational system, his decision to cut the knot gives insight into how dichotomous logic reduces anything that does not fit into its ideals to the state of non-existence by chopping or fragmenting. At this point, we need to look at D. Lee who links Lamia's melting to her exposure to Eurocentric categorizations in his claim that "Like Aeneas's Dido, her encounter with white culture destroys her; it turns her 'deadly white,'" (2: 276) and who further notes, "to place the African serpent's chameleon transformations under the static view of the scientific writer or the possessive gaze of colonial authority is, Keats realizes, to kill it utterly" (125; 128).[105] While arguing along similar lines to him due to Lamia's deprivation of her colours by modernity's fear of heterogeneity, I take this death as metaphorical, as denial of symbolic visibility rather than a complete destruction, as I have argued earlier. Also, I do not think that Lamia remains stuck within the frame of the colonized. Based on this, I argue that though reduced to a shade or denied visibility in the symbolic, Lamia cannot be totally extinguished. This is clarified also if we look at what she says to Hermes while in Crete. On her first encounter with Hermes, for instance, Lamia does not simply want to be transformed into a woman, but wants to regain her woman shape. This hints at the idea that she had already been in the symbolic and once again had melted into a shade—that is, she had already been transformed into the space of the imaginary for her disturbing presence for the symbolic as the psychotic material, implying in a Lacanian context that even when it is rendered dysfunctional or foreclosed, "the signifier continues on its way alone whether we pay attention to it or not" (*S III* 293-294). Thus, although "both Apollonius and Lycius—the teacher and the student of philosophy—commit

[105] Expressing this analogy between the serpentine Lamia and the Africans in more detail, D. Lee notes that "Africans and snakes are brought together ideologically during the Romantic period most often in the debate on the slavery," with "snake worship" being one of the many justifications for slavery (129).

the fallacy of overrestriction by identifying Lamia according to what she is not" (Benvenuto 6) due to her complication of the notion of origin, Lamia keeps her self-voicing presence.

Lamia shatters the dualities also through oscillating between the images of the m(o)ther whose words come "as though bubbling honey, for Love's sake" and the (m)Other with her phallic, serpentine throat and "demon's self" (I. 64-65; 56)—that is, through her simultaneous standing as both Mary and Eve. Solidified by Corinth's symbolic value as a space for prostitution[106], as well, she takes on the role of "a virgin whore or demonic Eve, who hides beneath the appearance of new-born innocence a serpent-like disingenuousness" (Stevenson 245). As evidenced throughout the poem "in which all absolutes have been relativized" (Reiman 659), from the very first moment of her encounter with the lovesick Hermes to the moment of her unintentional meeting with Apollonius who intrudes into her wedding feast, Lamia presents a riddle that denies to be untied. In her denial to be given an Essence as a phantasy figure or a complementary part of the humanist ideal of Man, she reflects that "There's no such thing as Woman, Woman with a capital *W i*ndicating the universal" (*S XX* 72). Of these uncanny moments, the kind of stance that she adopts with regard to her relation with Hermes attracts attention: on the one hand, she stands as a transgressive figure strong enough to give a nymph the freedom of invisibility, but on the other hand she needs the help of Hermes (a God who has been dethroned from the assumed grandiosity of omnipotence and rationality) to regain her woman state for the sake of Lycius. The first time Hermes sees Lamia, for instance, he wants her to tell him "only where [his] nymph is fled—where she doth breathe!" (I. 85-86). Not so much moved by the grief-stricken state of Hermes, however, Lamia confesses that it is she who has veiled the nymph's beauty "to keep it unaffronted, unassail'd/ By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,/ Of Satrys, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus' sighs" (I. 100-104). Besides, she points to how she saved the

[106] As Stevenson notes, '"Cupid's college" means, in the context, a brothel, and reminds one of Burton's reference (a few pages after his anecdote of the lamia) to the 'Temple of Venus' at Corinth where 'a thousand whores did prostitute themselves' with the result that 'All nations resorted thither as to a school of Venus"' and "Lamia shrewdly tells Lycius she once saw him 'At Venus' temple porch' (I. 317), an association which he does not deny" (245).

nymph from the "woe of all these lovers," plunging her hair in "weird syrops, that would keep/ her loveliness invisible, yet free/ To wander as she loves, in liberty" (I. 105-109). As she further notes, now that she is invisible, the nymph enjoys her freedom, straying about "thornless wilds," tasting "unseen" "her pleasant days," with "her nimble feet" being "unseen," leaving "traces in the grass and flowers sweet," plucking "the fruit unseen" "from the weary tendrils and bow'd branches green," and bathing "unseen" (I. 94-99). Freeing the nymph from the bondage of male gaze, Lamia takes on the role of a bold figure having the potential to challenge the dominant discourse which, obsessed with binary articulation, privileges the visible over the invisible. Adding to her transgressive nature, she also undoes the notion of marriage by her melting down in the end of the poem: "The eroticized animal has ruined the marriage-feast, killed off the fiancé, any chance of reproduction, and disrupted the optics of love and marriage" (Carman 53). In this respect, we can say that it is possible to find posthuman feminist overtones in Lamia: as Braidotti notes, posthuman feminists "state the primacy of sexuality as ontological force, in opposition to a majoritarian or dominant line of territorialization—the gender system—that privileges heterosexual, familial, reproductive sex" ("Posthuman Feminist Theory" 690). Thus, with her ungendered state, I would argue, Lamia resists the ends of "heteronormative, familial, reproductive sex" in Braidottian terms. Viewed in this light, the degree of the threat that she will pose to Apollonius after her metamorphosis into a woman is implied, and she gives the impression of a *femme fatale*. However, contesting the image of a *femme fatale*, she, lifting "her Circean head," asks for Hermes's help to be translocated from her nonhuman, serpentine state into the symbolic as a woman so that she could be visible to Lycius:

> Ravish'd, she lifted her Circean head,
> Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lisping said,
> 'I was a woman, let me have once more
> A woman's shape, and charming as before.
> I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!
> Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.' (I. 115-120)

To regain her woman shape, Lamia begs of Hermes, and she assures him that the nymph he loves will be made visible to him only if she regains her woman state:

“Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,/And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now’” (I. 121-122). Then, with the nymph made visible, Hermes flows “into the green-recessed woods” not growing pale different from mortal lovers (I. 144-145). The question as to how Lamia can both save a nymph from the woe of her lovers by turning her into an invisible figure and at the same time need the help of Hermes to be transformed into a woman for the sake of love creates a puzzle, pointing to the idea that she is a “merger of contraries”—“a flirt, a liar, and a hypnotist of sorts, as well as a loving and an innocent woman”— “making it impossible to classify her under the headings of conventional morality” (Benvenuto 6; 11).

4.3. Poisoning the Man with La Belle Dame sans Mercy’s “honey wild”

Similar to “Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil” and “Lamia” that present readers with an aesthetic portrayal of topographical regression into the intoxicating realm of the imaginary through their threshold poetic figures Lorenzo and Lamia, “La Belle Dame sans Mercy” opens the door to a realm where the imaginary rules with its sole mastery over the symbolic. In this world of the imaginary triggered by the eruption of a knight’s psychosis, the unnamed figure La Belle Dame sans Mercy exerts her authority. As the re-appearance of the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father in the real, La Belle Dame sans Mercy cracks the teleological drive and renders the Saussurean certainties dysfunctional. In the collapse of the Saussurean sign and renegotiation of established categories, her unfathomable or incommensurable nature plays a pivotal role. That is, shifting the emphasis from fixity to unpredictability, she creates a fissure in the binary discourse. As part of her challenge to standardized categories, she stands somewhere between the human and the non-human, between a saintly looking fairy-woman and a demonic monster-woman. In this context, putting a particular focus on the way she contests the idea of Oneness as a crossed-out female subject (~~Woman~~), I will discuss the notion of postmetaphysical subjectivity embodied in her.

Emanating from a popular belief in folkloric tradition about the existence of creatures who, though lying beyond human realms, masquerade as human and copulate with human lovers, or being linked to a story in demonology about a devil

assuming either a male or a female form to sleep with mortals (Seigneuret 169; 170), "La Belle Dame sans Mercy" attracts the attention of scholars with its suggestive tone of voice. The poem is most dominantly interpreted as a literary portrayal of Keats's own traumatic biography, with the beautiful merciless lady fictionalizing either his mother whom he lost at a very young age (A. H. Williams 63-81; McCurdy 175-176) or his lover Fanny Brawne (McFarland 56-58; Murry 124), reflecting in Holstein's words "his profound distrust of romantic love and romance" (40). In this context, what is foregrounded in the lady's poetic character becomes her devouring nature: she is taken as a vampire (Twitchell 31) or a "dominant and demonic" figure destroying men with her "overwhelming sexuality" (J. Barnard 69). On the other hand, some other critics underline her gendered stigmatization based on her silent state (Mellor 223; Swann 88). Different from these critics who try to put La Belle Dame sans Mercy into a familiar frame within the context of Keats's biography or to limit her into one pole of the binarized categories, as submissive or enchanting, I discuss the poem against the background of the collapse of the metaphysics of presence and contend that as the incarnation of the foreclosed signifier in the real, the lady portrays a post/non-anthropocentric subjectivity marked by states of inbetweenness or, she presents, in Slote's words, "a naiad[107] mingled with mermaid, siren, fairy, [and] undine" (22).

Implied to be set in either late autumn or early winter season due to "the sedge" "wither'd from the lake," the fullness of "the squirrel's granary," and the completion of harvesting, "La Belle Dame sans Mercy"[108] opens with the depiction of a "wretched wight,/ Alone and palely loitering" on a solitary, "cold hill side" where "no birds sing" (3; 7-8; 1-2; 36; 4). In the narrative account of an unnamed interlocutor who establishes a dialogue with him, the knight suffers badly due to a cause unknown:

[107] Drawing on Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* depicting naiads as creatures who "'resorted to the woods or meadows near the stream over which they presided,"' Slote establishes an analogy between the mythological figure of naiad and the lady in the poem (22). As he argues: "Like the myth of mythology, Keats's lady is in the meadow by a lake, light-footed, wreathed with offerings of flowers, knowing wild foods of honey and roots, loved by the knight in her elfin grot" (ibid. 22).

[108] In my discussion of the poem, I refer to the "Indicator" version.

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
……
I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too. (5-6; 9-12)

Loitering on the hill side "so haggard and so woe-begone," the knight appears to be afflicted with love on the surface level, reflecting, in Wells' words, "the beautiful and sometimes fatal consequences of a passionate love for an otherworldly, phantasmatic woman" (261). However, a discussion of the textual details in the poem from a Lacanian point of view unveils that his suffering stems not from love but from a cut in his visual and auditory hallucination with the sudden disappearance of La Belle Dame sans Mercy. As Lacan notes, "after the encounter, the collision, with the inassimilable signifier, it has to be reconstituted" (*S III* 321). With his encounter with the absent signifier, the knight gets engulfed by the imaginary and reconstitutes his life on an imaginary plane with this hallucinated lady who outpours in the real as a symptom of the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father. While this lady poses a riddle to his humanist perceptions as a threshold figure, he attempts to re-create or tame her according to his own selfish aspirations. However, implying his failure in creating an ideal looking mirror that will give him recognition as an ideal Man of perfectibility, the lady departs from his immediate surroundings, making him feel as if left with a broken mirror. In this way, far from presenting a stereotypical image of a knight whose desire is propped up with the unattainability of the lady whom he loves as in courtly love tradition, the knight resembles the psychotic subject Lycius.

We can get a better grasp of the forlorn knight's psychic dissociation if we look at the incongruity between the empirical reality and his own version of reality. For instance, the coldness of the hill side and its deserted state imply that it is either early winter or late autumn season. Besides, the lack of any bird song on this cold hill side hints at the departure of spring. However, in stark contrast to his external surroundings marked by solitude, coldness, and uncomfortable silence, the knight reconfigures the fleeting moment of interaction he establishes with La Belle Dame

sans Mercy as a kind of spring. For instance, he tells the unnamed interlocutor "I met a Lady in the meads" and "we slumber'd on the moss" (13; 33). Revealing his drowning in the intoxicating image of the lady who evokes in him feelings of both anxiety and wonder, his imaginary link to his external surroundings reflects the bankruptcy of not only the paternal metaphor but also linear temporality. In this context, the "lily on [his] brow" that is "anguish moist and fever dew" and the "fast withereth" "fading rose" on his "cheek" voice his fall into the void of language with the absence of the primordial signifier and imply the cut in his hallucination after his psychotic outpouring. Seen in this light, the reason why no birds sing there becomes double-layered: on the one hand while there might not be any birds there due to winter season as I have stated earlier, on the other hand the lack of the bird song might indicate his indifference to the voice of nature. That is, due to his psychosis, the knight lacks desire and no bird speaks to him, reflecting his loss of touch with external reality. In this sense, this "pathetic scene of endings rather than creation" (Alwes 104) that resembles a "realm of death, inferno, or Avernus" (Utley 117) sheds light on his psychic disintegration as a psychotic subject. It is in this space of utter isolation and deadly silence that the knight begins to utter the source of his torment—how he has encountered there a Lady who, having stolen his heart with exotic food and enchanting songs, lured him into sleep in her elfin grot and left him alone.

With the narrative account of the knight, that is "built with no coherent and obvious connection, but rather [with] random descriptions of broken memories from his affair with La Belle" hinting at his mentally "broken" state (Schulkins, "Figures of Romance and Anti-Romance" 115), La Belle Dame sans Mercy presents a complex amalgam of the human and the nonhuman, or a fairylike nurturing mother and a vampiric phallic (m)Other in her subjectivity. In this way, similar to Lorenzo (basil-man) or Lamia (serpent-woman), she blurs the boundaries and challenges both species hierarchy and the illusionary notion of unity. To begin with, presenting a stereotypical image of a saintly, nurturing mother, she stands as "full beautiful, a fairy's child" (14). Her fairy state, which involves in Slote's words, "enchantment, fate, the magic of a visionary world" (22) serves the ends of male gaze, assigning her

a standardized image of perfection. Denying gravity with her "light" "foot," she also sings "a fairy's song" to the knight (19-20). To Fay, the lady's song, which he thinks as sounding more like a "siren," takes on the role of seducing the knight: "Halfway between the birdsong of the melancholy bird-muse and the silence of the unavailable troubadour mistress, the siren beckons sexually to the poet, drawing him to song not of his own accord" (219). I think that though seeming to lure the knight sexually, this song gives voice to his regression into the hole of the unbuttoned signifier. When he says "I set her on my pacing steed, /And for nothing else saw all day long" (17-18), the knight refers to his drowning in the *moi* fiction that he writes under the spell of his encounter with this lady. As Lacan argues,

> It is the lack of the Name-of-the-Father in that place which, by the hole that it opens up in the signified, sets off the cascade of reshapings of the signifier from which the increasing disaster of the imaginary proceeds, to the point at which the level is reached at which signifier and signified are stabilized in the delusional metaphor. (*Écrits* 165)

The hole opened in the symbolic due to the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father leads to the outpouring of "reshapings of the signifier from which the increasing disaster of the imaginary proceeds" and the subject unravels from the signifying chain. In the face of such disintegration, what the psychotic subject does is to create what Lacan terms as a "delusional metaphor." Functioning "as building blocks in an imaginary bridge built over the hole in the symbolic," these delusional metaphors "endow psychotic reality with some sense of stability, as through them the psychotic is able to perceive the world from the perspective of a personal organizing law" (Brenner 94). In this context, the figure of La Belle Dame sans Mercy serves the function of an imaginary substitute for the knight. As part of his relapsing to the imaginary realm, the knight deifies the lady as if she were a saint. However, it should be noted that by this deification, he actually objectifies her:

> I made a garland for her head,
> And bracelets too, and fragnant zone:
> She look'd at me as she did love,
> And made a sweet moan. (21-24)

The knight makes “a garland for [the lady’s] head/ And bracelets too, and fragnant zone” (21-22) as if expressing his love for her. However, given that these flowers, bracelets, or fragrance stand as “symbols of decoration,” it is implied that he “tries to embellish his trophy, the lady, by his own artwork in order to claim her as his own” (Schulkins, “Figures of Romance and Anti-Romance” 118). In a similar line of thinking, Alwes maintains that wrapping these flowers around her neck and head, he “attempts to restrict the lady’s movements, to keep her in his purview and thus dispel her mystery” (106). As part of his phantasy of containing the lady, the knight also assigns her the position of a fairylike idealized mother. For instance, his expression as to how “she look’d at [him] as she did love” (23) points to the idea that he takes her as a mother cherishing her baby’s narcissistic omnipotence in the mirror stage and positions himself as a son to her. In this context, the lady’s “sweet moan” (24), which actually implies her expulsion from language as a psychotic figure, speak to him as a lullaby, as well. The knight’s treatment of the lady as a complementary part to him exactly echoes what Lacan says:

> Man believes he creates—he believes believes believes, he creates creates creates. He creates creates creates woman. In reality, he puts her to work—to the work of the One. And it is in that respect that the Other—the Other insofar as the articulation of language, that is, the truth, is inscribed therein—the Other must be barred, barred on the basis of *(de)* what I earlier qualified as the One-missing. That is what S(Ⱥ) means. (*S XX* 131)

Finding it difficult to put the lady in either leg of the binary system, the knight goes to great lengths to recreate her in a way that would fit his phantasy of Oneness. However, despite all his attempts, the lady resists categorization as a barred subject. Therein resides also the reason why he changes his mind about the lady all of a sudden and seems to be happy for not falling into her trap after her departure. That is, when failing to depict the lady due to her in-between state, the knight covers his failure up, appearing to be happy for her departure.

Notwithstanding her nurturing aspects as a fairy, singing songs or having a bucket of flowers on her head, the lady also stands as a metaphorical representation of the devouring (m)Other and resembles more a monster than an angel. For instance, with

her long hair[109] and "wild sad eyes"[110] (15-31), she bewitches the knight and offers him exotic foods from the depths of the real, which are alien to his human life:

> She found me roots of relish sweet,
> And honey wild, and manna dew;
> And sure in language strange she said,
> I love thee true. (25-28)

While the "roots of relish sweet" she offers the knight give the impression that she takes on the role of an all-embracing mother nourishing her son, her "honey wild"[111] and "manna dew" (15-26) cast doubts on the degree of tenderness she shows him. As Bennett accordingly notes, "the wild food introduces, or reinforces, the sense of 'uncultivated' wildness and the wilderness (which is where the biblical 'manna' leads us)" (123). So, "though she may offer her knight wild herbs as a restorative," the lady "renders him more vulnerable to their foreign and potentially poisonous elements" (Braun 27). Besides, adding to the indeterminacy about her nature, she speaks "in language strange" (27) and lives in an "elfin grot" (29). While reflecting her outcast position, her strange language most importantly gives insight into the knight's having no word at his disposal to understand her or what she says. That is, she appears

> in the form of an irruption in the real of something that he has never known, a sudden emergence of a total strangeness that will progressively bring on a radical submersion of all his categories to the point of forcing him into a veritable reshaping of his world. (Lacan, *S III* 86)

Similar to Lycius who stumbles over the serpentine complexity of Lamia, the knight feels baffled in the face of the lady's "total strangeness." Viewed from a feminist

[109] "La Belle Dame's hair remains long and loose…Interestingly, long hair and the exotic became aligned in nineteenth-century literature and painting with loose sexual morals and untamed, independent woman" (Braun 27).

[110] For Schulkins, his presentation of the lady never in a complete form but "as a collection of beautiful dissociated parts such as her voice, her hair, her feet and her eyes" reflects the knight's fantasy for domination: "the knight's idiosyncratic description of La Belle can be thought of as a fetishist perversion that comes to regain control over her" ("Figures of Romance and Anti-Romance 118).

[111] As A. H. Williams notes, "honey dew was used to bewitch people and give them supernatural powers" (72).

vantage point, his puzzlement explains also the reason why he, confronted with her extra-linguistic or non-verbal communication, comes up with the commonplace expression as to how "she said, /I love thee true" (27-28). At this point, one needs to look at Vanheule who notes, "The voice heard in a hallucination is essentially nonsensical…The surplus of tension or *jouissance* that the impossibility of signification evokes is exactly what returns in the hallucination. The voice expresses the overwhelming surplus the signifying chain fails to grasp" ("A Lacanian Perspective on Psychotic Hallucinations" 99-100). So, failing to come to terms with such an ambivalent figure in the absence of suitable vocabulary in his baggage, the knight, in a similar way to Lycius who comes up with the label "lamiae" for Lamia, tries to re-create the lady according to his own human and male self-projections. In this context, interpreting the "nonsensical," hallucinated voice of the lady as "I love thee true" (28), though not understanding even a word she says in her strange language, he both expresses his "tension" due to her undecipherable state and experiences a sense of *jouissance* as if he conquered a virgin land not yet known or invaded. Then, he falls in love with the image of his own creation in a Pygmalion fashion. This is exactly what Swann means when she notes in "Harassing the Muse:"

> [The knight's] active capture of the fairy lady brings about her passive, reflective response of 'love' together with its domestic signs—meals, sexual favors, lullabies. The reader, however, sees and hears more: the regular alternations of active agents in the knight's story—'I made,' 'she looked,' 'I set'—and, finally, a suggestion of the lady's ascendency over the knight in stanzas 7 and 8, which list an unbroken series of her actions—'she found,' 'she took,' 'she wept.' Gazing on the lady's face the knight 'nothing else saw all day long'—captivated by the mirror he constructs, he fails to realize it may simply reflect back his own enchantment. (88)

Focusing on the choice of words that the knight uses to refer to himself and the lady, Swann stresses how he tames the lady, re-constructing her in the image of a passive entity to be acted upon. From this perspective, it is seen that embedded in his statements as to how the lady sang "a fairy's song" to him, looked at him with love, or gave him "roots of relish sweet" (20; 23; 25) lies his egocentric need of gaining dominion on her. Similarly, given that such signs as moans, sighs, or tears imply more "resistance" than "love or duplicity," it seems that "the exchange between lady

and knight looks less like a domestic idyll or a fatal encounter and more like a scene of harassment" (Swann 89). Besides, using the oxymoronic expression "sweet moan" in his narrative account of the lady in a positive context, the knight "strip[s] her words of their initial intent" and replaces them with the words of his own fantasy (Schulkins, "Figures of Romance and Anti-Romance" 119). Through these manipulative narrative interventions into his experience with the lady, the knight tries to fit her into his own fantasy.

As the knight goes on telling his experience with the lady, having been taken into her "elfin grot," he kisses her and then sleeps: "And there ['in the elfin grot'] she gaz'd and sighed deep, /I shut her wild sad eyes—/So kiss'd to sleep" (29-32). Although his kissing the lady to sleep implies his infatuation with her on the surface level, I argue that behind his kiss lies no other reason but his wish to avoid her deep sigh and deadly gaze of "her wild sad eyes" (30-31). That is, as he cannot depict La Belle Dame sans Mercy with the words at his disposal, he chooses the easiest way to render her gaze impotent by making her sleep. What he tells with regard to his dream, having "[slumbered] on the moss" (33), also, unveils the degree of the riddle that the lady presents to the Eurocentric representational system with her in-between state of a nonhuman monster-woman and a fairylike mother-devouring (m)Other. As he says:

> And there we slumber'd on the moss,
> And there I dream'd, ah woe betide,
> The latest dream I ever dream'd
> In the cold hill side.
>
> I saw pale kings, and princes too,
> Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
> Who cried, 'La Belle Dame sans merci
> Hath you in thrall!'
>
> I saw their starv'd lips in the gloom
> With horrid warning gaped wide,
> And I awoke, and found me here.
> On the cold hill side. (33-44)

After falling asleep on the moss with the lady, the knight has a dream that he calls "the latest dream [he] ever dream'd/ In the cold hill side" (33-36). In his dream, he is warned by "kings," "princes," and "pale warriors" (37-38) to be careful against the lady. Mellor underpins the lady's denial of voice in this dream and throughout the whole narrative as a patriarchal strategy of rendering her impotent or denying her full agency:

> What does he (and the kings, princes, and warriors of his dream) gain by defining the belle dame as 'sans merci,' cold, cruel, lacking in compassion? The gain is clear: even though the knight is left 'Alone and palely loitering' in a wasteland where the 'sedge has withered' and 'no birds sing,' even though his harsh dream has become his reality and he remains unloved, unloving, even dying, he gets to tell the story. Male voices and this male's story appropriate and silence the female. We never hear la belle dame's side of the story, what she thought or felt. (223)

Different from Mellor, I argue that far from presenting her passivity, the silence of the lady in the poem gives insight into her transgressive nature as she shatters the dominant discourse, under the guise of a silenced lady. As Braun accordingly notes,

> La Belle Dame, like Geraldine, feigns passivity for the sake of gaining power. She allows her knight to 'set' her where he pleases and to dress her up in distinctly exotic garb. She accepts his gifts of 'a garland for her head, and bracelets too' with 'sweet moan' and 'language strange,' indeterminate gestures that encourage the knight to translate her intent and desires for her. She then successfully lures him deeper into the woods, distancing him from the active world of progress and productivity. By giving the knight an illusion of his own control and maintaining the mystery of her own allure, La Belle Dame retains control over lovers past and present by turning them into passive and languishing victims. (27)

Besides, what the knight sees or reports to have seen in his dream actually discloses his fear of the lady notwithstanding his previous adoration of her. As Luczynska-Holdys argues, the dream "indicates the knight's subconscious fear and reluctance towards parting with the sphere he is familiar with…If the lady embodies inspiration, the knight fears its consuming power" (*Soft-Shed Kisses* 46). Though arguing along similar lines to Luczynska-Holdys regarding the knight's "fear of a union with the fair lady," I think that behind his nightmare actually lies his fear of failing in his

depiction or objectification of the lady according to his self-projections. In this context, the warning of the "death-pale" "kings," "princes," and "warriors" who cry "'La Belle Dame sans mercy/ Hath you in thrall!"' with their "starv'd lips in the gloom/ With horrid warning gaped wide" (37-42) actually voices his anxiety in the face of his failure to put the lady into a frame. His fear is explained also by the way he addresses the lady: "as the object of their dread and fascination, she is a fetish, a figure whose alien status is the product of a collective decision to name her 'la belle dame sans merci'" (Kelley 333). That is, due to her elusive nature, presenting a crossing of the human-nonhuman or fairy-vampire, she is assigned the label 'La Belle Dame sans Mercy.' However, such strategies to depict her fail because the lady, veiling herself in a familiar cloth, unsettles the dominant discourse. Accordingly, underlining the role of her silence in her threat to patriarchy, Schulkins notes:

> La Belle's reticence does not necessarily come to confirm male authority over language but rather to challenge it. Words can have the opposite effect if left unsaid, almost as if spoken. La Belle's silence implies her rejection of the knight's romantic love. By giving the sole authority over language to the knight, Keats's silent lady is the resistor of romance. La Belle does not confer to the knight's subjective understanding of her words and sighs, but rather she leaves her sighs and tears to speak on her behalf and challenge the knight's narrative. By keeping La Belle silent, Keats adds to the uncertainty and ambiguity of the poem, which comes to discard the knight's narrative and undermine his understanding of reality. Furthermore, by silencing La Belle, Keats removes her from the romantic world the poem depicts. La Belle's silence indicates her refusal to partake in the romantic discourse initiated by the knight, even though she is the object of his romantic dream. ("Figures of Romance and Anti-Romance" 123)

Given the subversive nature of the lady's silence, why the knight finds himself "sojourn[ing]" on the hill side, "Alone and palely loitering" (45-46) when he awakes also becomes more meaningful. As I have argued earlier, although he seems to be suffering from lovesickness, his torment stems from his inability to depict La Belle Dame sans Mercy, reading her departure from his immediate surroundings as a kind of challenge to binary categorizations. In other words, the cut in his hallucination points to the lady's elusive nature or her oscillation somewhere between absence and

presence. So, the knight's depressive state over her departure, even after the warnings of the kings and warriors against her destructive side, sheds light on his dejection about his failure to comprehend her. In this sense, his dream about the lady serves as a defense mechanism to make up for his sense of anger over his failure to designate coordinates for her.

By way of a conclusion, I can say that as the re-appearance of the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father in the real, Lorenzo, Lamia, and La Belle Dame sans Mercy pose a challenge to the myth of totality or Oneness. As threshold poetic figures standing at the intersection of the human-nonhuman, death-life, or disgusting-alluring, they open the doors to a post/non-anthropocentric universe which involves diverse species' non-dualistic continuity and constant metamorphoses along different ontological layers. Due to their state of in-betweenness, these figures speak to the world built on Saussurean certainties as the nonsymbolized signifier, and their irruption into this world is met with both wonder and fear. Unable to come to terms with their constantly-shifting positions and complexity of character, the world of modernity attempts to exclude them or push them to the deepest recesses of silence. Despite all the attempts to be given a closure, however, they continue to voice themselves nonverbally. In their demythologization of the myth of unity, they dethrone the Anthropos from His grandeur by fitting into neither the epistemic category of the human nor the nonhuman but presenting an intersection between the two partners: the decomposing body of Lorenzo recomposes in the form of a plant (basil); Lamia stands as a serpent-woman; and La Belle Dame sans Mercy blurs the boundaries due to her monster-woman state. Similarly, saved from the stasis of the teleological drive, they deny closure. As part of his denial of closure, for instance, Lorenzo becomes an extension of the soil into which he has been buried by the bloody brothers of Isabella, dissolves into the continuum with nature by regenerating in the form of basil, and he is reconfigured by Isabella as a newborn baby. Similar to Lorenzo, Lamia refutes the claim that the symbolic is under the sole mastery of the rational. Thus, problematizing the pseudo-almighty state of Apollonius who acts as the primordial Father, she voices her existence in the symbolic. Besides, despite Apollonius's whole attempts to erase her from Corinth, she does not simply vanish

by her melting. Rather, experiencing an intense sense of *jouissance* in her melting by the gaze of this old sage, she dissolves like a text of bliss and preserves her potential *ex-sistence* through her constant postponement. As for La Belle Dame sans Mercy who leaves the knight alone on the solitary hillside where no birds sing, after having lured him into her elfin grot, she rebels against her containment (or death) by the humanist discourse, rejecting to take part in the knight's phantasy of Oneness embedded in his intent for what Braidotti terms as "heterosexual, familial, [or] reproductive sex." Not letting the knight project his own selfish aspirations on her as an all-nourishing mother but rather standing as a complex demonic fairy, she shatters all his plans to depict her as the Woman. As it has been discussed in the chapter, apart from La Belle Dame sans Mercy, Isabella and Lamia also deny closure as female subjects. In her novel Oedipal drama that she writes with the severed head of Lorenzo, for instance, Isabella plays with the logic of subjectification. She cuts off Lorenzo's head and makes what he represents relapse into the imaginary. Also, while she is confined to the lower leg of the binary trap in the symbolic due to her gendered stigmatization, she declares herself as an active agent in her alternative Oedipal drama. In a similar way, Lamia blurs the boundaries through her lack of an origin: having no gender, family, or a name, she presents a riddle that denies resolution. In her transgressive state likened to a Gordian knot in the poem, she objectifies a Moebius strip and underlines the not-whole state of women.

To put it in a nutshell, Keats reveals the seeds of post/non-anthropocentric subjectivity in his "Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil," "Lamia," and "La Belle Dame sans Mercy" through the poetic figures Lorenzo, Lamia, and La Belle Dame sans Mercy who give an aesthetic portrait of the foreclosed signifier's reincarnation in the real. Besides, opening a path of access to an undifferentiated poetic space shaped by contingent encounters and flows of jouissance not in the figure of a desiring subject position but in the figures acting as the nonsymbolized or the unbuttoned signifiers, Keats implies the idea that the notions of fluidity, heterogeneity, or non-dualistic continuity are charged with lethal connotations for the discourse of modernity. To put it in other words, in the same way as a psychotic subject cannot come to terms with the master signifier that s/he has foreclosed not having any vocabulary at its

disposal to depict it or to establish a meaningful link with it, discourse of modernity stumbles over the complexity of these threshold figures although they are none other than what it has reduced to the state of nonexistence, failing to fit them into the binary signification system. Therein resides also the reason why we could safely argue that Lorenzo, Lamia, and La Belle Dame sans Mercy outpour in the real as a sign of psychosis.

CHAPTER 5

BECOMING TOPOLOGICAL IN "ODE ON A GRECIAN URN"

Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" presents a simultaneous inside-outside experience with its poetic persona's psychic transposition from the confines of empirical reality to the unexplored realm of the imaginary in a topological manner. Sparked by his/her spontaneous encounter with an urn, the poetic persona is confronted with a set of images and their untold stories. No sooner does s/he step into the imaginary space of the urn than s/he penetrates deeper and deeper into its uninvaded layers where s/he meets a kaleidoscopic set of things stretching from a pastoral scene to a sacrificial procession belonging to an archaic past. By his/her epiphanic shift from his/her symbolic self to the pre-symbolic space of the urn and the images sculpted on it, the poetic persona objectifies a Moebius strip which involves the merging of the inside with the outside. This chapter aims to discuss the poem with regard to the notion of *extimacy* to reflect the dynamic states of transitions and flows springing forth through subject-object or human-nonhuman intersections embodied in the topologisation of the poetic persona. What I aim is to argue that the poetic persona overcomes all the epistemic dualities and becomes *extimate* through his/her constitutive intersection with the urn, hence unveiling the illusion of spatial fixity.

5.1. Experiencing States of *Extimacy* in the Cradle of Unheard Melodies

Renowned for its distinct tone of voice, Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" still remains a riddle that refuses to be solved. Stirring imagination and raising unresolved questions in the mind, the poem has been a topic of concern for many critics reading it mostly with regard to the conflict between human transience or mortality and nonhuman permanence or immortality represented through the images carved on the surface of the urn. Besides, these criticisms have mostly underlined the final disillusionment of the poetic persona who comes to realize that though permanent,

the urn is lifeless. To quote a few of these critics, for Mauro, the poetic persona "embraces the transient condition of the world as an antidote to the terror inherent in the urn" and "finally turns away from that which he initially thought might give him solace" (291; 300). As Thompson similarly states, "Keats attempts to escape into a world of ideal and enduring beauty. He discovers, however, that while art gives permanence to fleeting moments and fixes them in unchanging form, it also destroys warmth, emotion, and passion-values" (27-28). Thus, they have underlined the epistemic illusion about the subject's separation from the object and overlooked the poetic persona's becoming *extimate* through his/her intersection with the urn. Reading the poem from a post-Lacanian perspective and stepping outside dialectical oppositions, I argue that the poetic persona's confrontation with the urn portrays the affective relationality of the imaginary and the symbolic or the human subject and the nonhuman object[112] dispelling the illusion of hierarchical dualism between them. As I further contend, the human poetic persona's dissolution into the imaginary space of the nonhuman urn puts on the scene a performance of *extimacy* throwing into doubt all the spatial fixities, certainties, symmetries, or neat narratives. Each stanza of the ode "corresponds to a stage of meditation, a station of the speaker's progress towards his epiphany" (Schrero 79). Thus, presenting both the reader and the poetic persona with a view of spontaneously scattered sculpted images on the urn, ranging from a pastoral to a sacrificial scene, the poem opens up a polysemic space that becomes therapeutic. With the aim of laying bare the fluid layers of this space, I will underline the poetic persona's psychic transposition from the confines of empirical reality to the imaginary depths of the urn, putting a particular emphasis on how her/his stretching into the story of the urn collapses the subject/object distinction. Also, in the face of the poetic persona's topologisation through his/her

[112] I certainly acknowledge that the urn acting as *objet petit a* in the poem is not a simple object but an art object, or a product of human mastery. However, in a Lacanian context, whatever promises a sense of complementarity to the subject can take on the role of *objet petit a*, regardless of its artistic value or ordinariness. So, we cannot link the poetic persona's infatuation with the urn to simply its artistic nature: what transforms the urn into *objet petit a* is related to the poetic persona's unconscious motivations. What is more important, the urn does not stay passive but asserts its agency and creates a riddle to minds involved in its concretization or access to visibility, which intensifies its transgressive side. In other words, the fact that it has reached visibility by the hands of a human does not come to mean that it sustains the myth of object's inferiority to subject. Rather, as revealed by its resistance to closure or the role it plays in activating the *extimacy* of a human subject, it works on the subject.

imaginary identification with the images on the urn, we are faced with the question of what the urn stands for: An archaic *imago*? The void inherent in the human subject with the emptiness around which it is constructed? O*bjet petit a*? A sublime reconfiguration of what has been repressed from the symbolic? A symptom of the unheard? Or, an empty signifier? Not putting the urn in a reductionist either/or frame, I will discuss it as an *extimate* image, incarnating the lost object with the images of pre-modernity sculpted on it, and hence initiating states of *extimacy* in the poetic persona.

The poetic persona steps into the intoxicating realm of the urn, moved by its uncharted, noncolonized, or nonverbalized position. Although "[t]he urn is symmetrical in proportion," "it symbolizes that which is asymmetrical, for eternity has no perspective, no beginning-middle-end" (Swanson 303). As the poetic persona accordingly states, the urn stands unburdened by the logocentric practices of modernity: "THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness!/ Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time" (1-2). The silence of the urn imaginarily captivates the poetic persona as it implies not passivity but its nonhuman potential and agency to speak in forms other than verbal. Through his/her captivation by the prelinguistic nature of the urn's imaginary space, the poetic persona also likens it to a "sylvan historian, who canst…express/ A flowery tale more sweetly than our [human] rhyme" (3-4). Telling "a flowery tale," a tale of the pre-human history or of the time before the fall from grace, the urn shatters all the taken-for-granted truths dictated by the known, visible history as it reflects that outside the written history, there is also a different dimension of experience. According to Brooks, the urn, as an unacknowledged sylvian historian, differs from other historians for leaving aside the exactitude of historical details or chronologically ordered events: as "[t]he sylvan historian certainly supplies no name and dates," the poetic persona cannot recognize the figures storied by it and hence asks "'What men or gods are these?'" (93). In a similar line of thinking, Hill states:

> The urn, as art, transmits feeling rather than fact, so that the identities of its actors are not revealed to Keats nor to us. Nor, for that matter, is the identity of the maker of the urn, revealed…What is revealed, then,

> is the affective quality of the urn as a vibrant and universal entelechy transcending the particularities of language and history, permanently approachable through the imagination of any audience…On the urn, the narrative *is*; it does not unfold as a time sequence with antecedent causes and their inevitable consequences. It is simultaneously origin and end, or, more appropriately, since the urn is spherical, center and circumference. (435)

Rejecting to follow a linear time sequence in its narration of events, the urn breaks cause and effect relationship. In this way of distorting the smooth operation of linear narratives, it asserts its resistance to be pinned down: "The urn is a found object that…cannot be possessed at all either historically or imaginatively: no summary conclusion of its meaning is possible" (Mulrooney 222). Also, addressing not a locatable past of facts but an uncoordinated and open-ended story that constantly changes depending on the imagination of each individual contemplating it, it both problematizes the validity of historical narratives and opens a new space of signification beyond polarities. This is exactly what Haley means when he argues that "[t]he urn figures…remain a vignette without past or present, orphaned of their tale as the urn is of its own history" (239). In this respect, what the urn does as a sylvian historian is, I would argue, a kind of destabilization of the integrity of the Saussurean sign. Reflecting on the urn, the poetic persona asks:

> What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
> Of deities and mortals, or both,
> In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
> What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
> What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
> What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? (5-10)

In these lines, "music is presented by visual art, with a certain sleight of sculptor's rhetoric presenting the piper as a metonymy of his music" and "the sculptor's ekphrasis of music is ekphrastically presented by the ode, which in turn is a musical, at least an audible, presentation, muted into a written text" (Hofmann 262). Involving a synaesthetic experience where auditory and visual images are intertwined not to be "muted," as Hofmann says, but to be transliterated into poetry, these lines give insight into the way that the urn initiates a constitutive process in the poetic persona. As Hill accordingly states, Keats takes art "as a point of stability that will organize

the instability of our changing world into meaningful pattern" (430). Thus, penetrating into this imaginary realm where there is no hard demarcating line between deities and mortals or between gods and human subjects, the poetic persona reconnects with his/her pre-human history. With this pre-human history echoing his/her lost thing, she repairs his/her cuts, gives harmony to his/her discordant psyche, and achieves a kind of subjective consistency. How s/he reaches her/his pre-linguistic self before codification by the symbolic is better reflected when we look at the way that s/he relates to the urn: having been bent from his/her civilized self to connect with the urn, s/he establishes an identification with it. In other words, though inhabiting a different ontology from the urn, the poetic persona bridges up the epistemic rupture set between him/her and the urn by psychically transposing himself/herself from the confines of the linear logic to the nonlinear temporality of the urn. In this respect, we can argue that stretching himself/herself from the symbolic to the imaginary realm of the urn which tells "leaf-fringed legend[s]" about "deities and mortals" "in Tempe[113] or the dales of Arcady," s/he is not fractured. Rather than being broken or losing touch with the external reality, thus, s/he awakens to what lies in the folds of his/her Moebius strip in a topological manner. In this way, the urn takes on a vital role in the topological dissolution of the poetic persona by speaking from an imaginary register and triggering some unconscious reactions in him/her on the path to becoming *extimate*. For instance, instead of capitulating to its narration by the visible history, it takes on the role of a "sylvan historian" and tells its own story. In its fairy-tale like story which gives no precise information or

[113]As Dixon-Kennedy notes, Apollo chased after Daphne, "the daughter of the river god Peneus in Thessaly or Arcadia," in Tempe although this chase resulted in failure: upon asking for the help of gods to rescue her, Daphne was transformed into a laurel bush and Apollo put a laurel wreath around his head as a sign for his love and grief (104). This myth calls to mind also how the forest nymph Syrinx was turned into wild marsh reeds to escape from Pan's grasp: overcome with his sense of failure, Pan tore down the reeds and upon hearing her voice in these pieces, created a kind of pan through them to regain the sweet voice of Syrinx (Hard 216). What makes these two myths meet on a common ground is no wonder their ending: art is taken as a phallic substitute for the lost thing, that is—a kind of *objet petit a* to regain the missing thing. Both myths, I would further argue, can be read on a metaphorical level also as nature's resistance to be mapped or colonized by culture. In this context, likening the images on the urn to the figures in Tempe, the poetic persona implies not only the uninvaded state of the urn but also his/her desire for reintegrating himself/herself into this uncharted, imaginary space it opens.

temporal coordinate about the figures involved in it, it opens a pre-linguistic space surrounded by the pre-verbal melodies of the Arcadian "pipes and timbrels" and "flowery tale[s]" that lie beyond the grasp of rule-bound human "rhyme." As Rayan similarly argues:

> it is the urn's *silence* that teases us out of thought. The discrete figures on the urn, presented mutely without the discursive action of language, leave the beholder bewildered and conjecturing and oblige him to move away from 'consequitive reasoning' to imaginative apprehension. The urn's withdrawal from language is thus necessarily a withdrawal from logic. It is equally necessarily a withdrawal from time…The moments encapsulated on the urn, being insulated from the universe of process and independent of language and its temporal structure, share the nature of eternity. The silence of the urn frustrates reason; like the eternal, it demands suprarational apprehension. (19)

Resonating with the melodies of a pre-modern world, the self-narrating urn becomes other than what it is for the poetic persona: far from being an inert matter or a passively standing visual object finalized by being mapped in history, it becomes a mental image and speaks to the unconscious of the poetic persona as if a voice from his lost childhood, dissolving him/her into its once-upon-a-time stories. As evidenced in the role it plays in the interpenetration of the psychic with the physical, the urn moves from the position of a simple object to the position of *objet petit a* for the poetic persona. In this respect, it presents the poetic persona with a sublime experience though standing as if sterilized from any kind of relationality. As Leighton states, "Timeless and well-wrought…It [the urn] is there, for no reason, for its own sake only, and it refuses to answer human questions" (40). I think it is this very "timeless[ness]" and silence of the urn that captivates the poetic persona and paves the way for unblocking the imaginary-symbolic interconnection. Put another way, resurfacing as a symptom of what has been denied a visible space in the symbolic though lying at the core of subjectivity—due to its portrayal of nonlinear, harmonious imaginary identifications—the urn and the images sculpted on it incarnate what has been repressed on a subjective level, or voice the repressed of modernity in a sublime manner. Looking at how Lacan delineates the notion of sublimation can help us have a better insight into the urn's evocation of the sublime. For Lacan, endowed with "an imaginary function," sublimation "raises an object…to

the dignity of the Thing" (*S VII* 99; 112).[114] "The Thing becomes our first outside because it has been excluded from our inside" and "its exclusion is what creates our exteriority…The Thing is extimate inasmuch as it constitutes the subject's intimate experience that gives meaning and existence to the external things" (Pavón-Cuéllar 662). With the Thing (or *das Ding*) expressing "a primary object" that has been lost, sublimation "concerns what is cut and the object *a* that comes to take the place of the missing part:"

> Lacan called the process by which any person works with the object *a* sublimation. While sublimation is not repression—that is, it is not unconscious—it, nonetheless, responds to the drive which is essentially the demand to *be*, at the level where *being*, for instance, means being heard (the invocatory drive), being seen (the scopic drive), being nurtured (the oral drive), being given things to prove our value as creatures of lack and reciprocity (the anal drive). (Ragland, "Lacan's Theory of Sublimation" 112; 104-105)

Speaking to his/her unconscious, the urn is repositioned in the poem as a substitute for "the Thing," which is defined by Lacan as "the beyond-of-the-signified," the "excluded interior" standing "next to the subject" and "at the core of human activity, namely, in that precarious existence in the midst of the forest of desires and compromises that these very desires achieve with a certain reality" (*S VII* 54; 101; 105). Its repositioning is reflected by the way it captivates him/her and leads the blockages of desire to move out of his/her way, initiating a sublime process. Relating to each other outside the confines of binary logic, thus, both the urn and the poetic persona metamorphose into beings other than what they are according to their epistemic definitions: no longer epistemically fragmented as a subject and an object at a subject's disposal but standing at the subject-object intersection. If I go one step further in my argument, I can liken this intersection to a kind of objectification of the subject and subjectification of the object to pinpoint the erasure of the hierarchizing line set between them within the context of binary thinking.

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[114] "[I]t is this object, *das Ding* [*the Thing*], as the absolute Other of the subject, that one is supposed to find again. It is to be found at the most as something missed" (Lacan, *S VII* 52). Besides, "One doesn't find it, but only its pleasurable associations. It is in this state of wishing for it and waiting for it that…the optimum tension will be sought; below that there is neither perception nor effort" (ibid. 52).

Behind the imaginary enchantment of the poetic persona lies also the "forbidden object" position of the urn: similar to an "untouched virgin" who "is simultaneously desirable and taboo," the "unravished" urn stimulates the desire of the poetic persona though evoking a sense of anxiety in him/her at the same time (Zeitlin 283). Being both dazzling for its unmapped, virgin state and daunting, the urn makes the poetic persona a tantalizing promise of *jouissance* involving a simultaneity of pain and pleasure. Moved by the unravished state of the urn, the poetic persona goes deeper into its layers that stand inaudible to "the sensual ear" (13). In this topological transition from the audible to the inaudible, s/he feels elated, as if filled with the wonder and amazement of a child for whom every experience is new. For instance, in the face of the blissful scene presented by the images sculpted on the urn, s/he firstly feels a sense of complementarity for having a link with the "unheard melodies" of the piper that sound more sweetly than "heard melodies:" "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ Are sweeter" (11-12). S/he finds the "unheard melodies" "sweeter" than those heard, stating that the pipes do not speak to "the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,/ Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone" (13-14). Lying beyond the sensible, the "unheard melodies" of the pipes pave the way for the conceivable for the poetic persona or, to be more precise, they awaken him/her to what already participates in his/her Becoming as a desiring subject, though not heard by "the sensual ear." On that basis there enters into play what Lacan terms as "the intimate exteriority" (*S VII* 139). In other words, what is assumed to be standing outside the human poetic subject is revealed to be already residing deep inside him/her, considering the sense of wholeness s/he feels for having encountered this urn and for delving into the pre-modern life of its images. Also, the poetic persona's penetration into the imaginary space of the urn unveils the inside-outside continuity. When the role it plays in stretching the poetic persona from the symbolic into the imaginary, making him/her stand somewhere at the inside-outside intersection not letting him/her getting drowned by the lure of the blissful context of its images is taken into consideration, the urn can be taken as what substitutes the missing phallus—that is, the *objet a*, which I would like to discuss as the touchstone of subjectivity. Elaborating on this move that I regard as a kind of *extimacy* on a subjective-objective level, Swanson states:

> Silence teases us out of thought, eternity is out of time, the sweeter melodies are out of sound: this is a progression from the definite to the indefinite, from the symmetry of the urn to the asymmetry of the undefined. The indefinite is co-extensive with the definite as the urn is co-extensive with its parts. (304)

The urn hides "the asymmetry of the undefined" behind "the symmetry" of its form and stands at the porous edge of the indefinite-definite, as Swanson argues. I cannot help but agree with Swanson for the ambivalent position of the urn. When viewed from the perspective of the poetic persona, I would argue, this transition from the petrified form of the urn to its amorphous layers reflects the subject's topologisation on a metaphorical level: his/her transition from a petrified (unitary) to a non-petrified (non-unitary) subject position. Moreover, with his/her epiphanic flow into the imaginary through his/her captivation by the urn, the poetic persona realizes that it is not a stone wall but only a twist that lies between the *moi* and the *je*, and they already stand on the same surface. As if faced for the first time in his/her life with this kind of an experience, thus, the poetic persona's desire is unchained by the urn and s/he is filled with a thirst to become a part of the images on it—that is, s/he feels motivated to mend the wounds in his/her Moebius strip by re-connecting with his/her pre-human self or by filling the epistemic void opened between him/her (human subject) and the urn (nonhuman object).

Along with the urn's noncolonized, pre-linguistic state, the nonlinearity of the images on it that remain unburdened by the teleological drive also triggers some unconscious reaction in the poetic persona to topologically dissolve into the continuum with them. S/he juxtaposes himself/herself with the young lovers on the urn in terms of their relating to temporal linearity:

> Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
> Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
> Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
> Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
> She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
> Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair! (15-20)

Being unafflicted with linearity, the lovers on the urn will not fade away but always lie "beneath the [ever-green] trees" (15) and sing their songs happily, as in the days of pre-modernity. According to Vendler:

> The[se] lines focus alternately on life matter—the beauty of the maiden, the ardor of the lover—and on the coercions of the marble medium—'Never, never canst thou kiss.' The quick shuttling back and forth in the speaker's mind between immersion in the fervent matter and recognition of the immobile medium represents a tension as yet unconceptualized in the poem. (76)

Arguing that the poetic persona seems to be stuck between two conflicting situations— "the coercions of the marble medium" of which the urn has been made on the one hand and the liveliness of the images on it on the other hand—Vendler addresses the state of in-betweenness portrayed in the configuration of the urn. I agree with Vendler with regard to the urn's threshold position for voicing a fluid space on the psychic level though being solid on the surface level. However, I think that rather than the physical solidity of the urn, it is the buoyant image of the lovers on it that makes an impression on the poetic persona. Far from giving a pathetic tone of voice to the poem, the fact that these lovers will never be able to kiss each other gives insight into their unalloyed joy, implying behind the veil of their unconsummated love an unconsumed desire that will be always kept alive. That is, as their sexual union or kissing is held in abeyance, they feel a stronger desire for each other as in courtly love tradition. Never actualizing their phantasy of kissing in its fullest sense "though winning near the goal" (18), these lovers portray where the subject stands in relation to desire—perpetually looking for new phallic substitutes to more dynamically attach himself/herself to life and hence deferring the fulfilment of desire even if s/he stands near enough to his/her goal to hear its heartbeats. To express desire's unattainability, Lacan says that "it is in so far as his desire is unknown, it is in this point of lack, that the desire of the subject is constituted" (*S XI* 218-219). In this respect, it also seems that the maiden in the poem will always stand for her lover as "an object of fascination and desire" rather than turning into "an object of affection:" "A woman can be a man's object of desire in so far as she 'veils' the 'mysteries' for which he searches…If the man's conquest is successful, its

mystery vanishes and the object loses its fascination" (Sarup 127). So, the maiden will be an object of desire for him eternally and will not fall to the position of object of pleasure. At this point, it is worth looking at what Lacan says with regard to what Ophelia means to Hamlet before and after her suicide. As he puts forward, we are presented throughout the tragedy with "Hamlet's ever-flagging desire, that exhausted, unfinished, and unfinishable thing that characterizes his position" (*S VI* 267) and his waned desire is prompted with the death of Ophelia, which yields insights into where the subject is positioned in relation to desire:

> We have seen Hamlet behave quite scornfully and cruelly toward Ophelia. I highlighted the degrading, humiliating aggression to which he constantly subjected her, she who suddenly became for him the very symbol of the rejection of his desire. We cannot fail to be struck when this object suddenly reassumes its full value to him…In short, it is to the extent to which Ophelia has become an impossible object that she once again becomes the object of his desire. (ibid.; 335)

Projecting his feelings of wrath for Gertrude's unchastity onto Ophelia, Hamlet begins to treat her cruelly, with his words of "'I did love you once"' announcing that "Ophelia has completely ceased to exist for him as a love object:" "To Hamlet, Ophelia becomes a bearer of children and of sins of all ilks. She is doomed to engender sinners and to then have to succumb to all sorts of calumny" (ibid. 320;321). However, he changes his aggressive attitude toward her after her death as evidenced by these dramatic words pouring out of his mouth and addressing his challenge to Laertes in the cemetery scene: '"I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers/ Could not with all their quantity of love/ Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?"' (Shakespeare qtd. in ibid. 335). Behind Ophelia's once more becoming an object of Hamlet's desire lies surely her shift from a possible or an obtainable object to "an impossible object position" through her death, thinks Lacan. Saying further that "there is always a note of impossibility in the object of desire, which has to do with the very structure and foundations of desire, Lacan also underlines that as the idea of unattainability already lies at the core of desire, what leads Hamlet to reglorify Ophelia and speak highly of her is his "encounter with this impossibility" (ibid. 335). Thus, becoming aware of the idea of impossibility embedded in Ophelia's absence or burial, Hamlet is filled with desire for making Ophelia possible

once more.[115] In this respect, the maiden in the poem resembles Ophelia who turns into an object of desire for Hamlet in the face of her "impossibility." Similar to the young lovers whose love will always be alive with no waning in their desire, the ever-green trees also speak to the unconscious of the poetic persona. As s/he states, denying gravity or temporal linearity, the boughs of the trees always stay in the springtime, swinging in the cradle of nature's ever-fresh melodies:

> Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
> Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
> And, happy melodist, unwearièd,
> For ever piping songs for ever new. (21-24)

Different from the human poetic persona, the pastoral figures sculpted on the urn do not get older or "bid the Spring adieu" (22). Rather, they always stand happy, enjoying their nonhuman life to the full extent, forever intoxicated by the unique touch of the "happy melodist" (23), the Spring. Thus, contrary to the poetic persona, the images on the urn always enjoy the eternal present in their poetic space whose coordinates cannot be easily determined. As Wigod puts forward:

> [T]he tree, piper, lover, and maiden will always be enjoying or about to enjoy: the tree, its green leaves; the piper, his song; the lover, his pursuit and passion and the hope of winning his bliss; the maiden, her spirited youth and radiant beauty. The graceful movement and living action of human creatures—moment of being and becoming, aspiration and growth—have been caught and held, suspended permanently in art. (114)

Comparing her/his own life with the joyful experience of the boughs and the young lovers remaining unburdened by the linear flow of time, the poetic persona feels uneasy for being destined to ageing. As s/he reflects on the ageless figures, while they remain forever "warm," "panting," and "young," "human passion" "leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloy'd/ A burning forehead, and a parching tongue" (26-

[115] The shift of tone in Hamlet's relation to Ophelia is observable also in the burial scene where he jumps into Ophelia's grave, having seen Laertes jump into it to give a hug to his sister: The scene where "Hamlet suddenly sees the passionate relationship of a subject with an object" as "being manifested by someone else [Laertes]" "grabs him and offers him a prop by which his own relationship as a [barred] subject…with Ophelia—little object *a*, which had been rejected owing to the confusion or compounding of objects—is suddenly re-established" (*S VI* 288).

30). In this way, the poetic persona seems to acknowledge human weakness in the face of nonhuman permanence. However, I read these lines as reflecting not a hierarchy between these two partners but as reflecting a human subject's confrontation with the illusoriness of the idea of Oneness or the myth of human exceptionalism. In other words, although the idea of ageing spoils the mood of the poetic persona, making him/her feel inferior to the ageless images, s/he manages to overcome this feeling through topologically stepping into the urn's fairy land inhabited by no time sequence and establishing a narcissistic identification with the non-ageing images on it. By this way of moving from Being to Becoming *extimate* at the imaginary-symbolic intersection, s/he gives a response to the idea of unity built on the phantasy of closure or certainty. To put it more precisely, the poetic persona's narcissistic infatuation with the images on the urn whose ever-springtime happiness s/he wishes to taste through this topological sliding into their space hints at the activation of his/her desire for re-connecting with the irrepressible imaginary and awakening to the potential of the prehuman imaginary energies working hand in hand with the symbolic energies for the sake of his/her subjective consistency. So, the poetic persona comes to realize that "[a] symmetrical or binary division cannot be made between the *moi* and the *je* in any case, since both participate in consciousness, in the unconscious, and in an alternating balance of influence" (Ragland-Sullivan 62). As I further contend, his/her topological dissolution on the subjective level through identification with the urn reflects his/her entry into a third dimension of truth standing somewhere between the imaginary-symbolic, the nonhuman-human, or the object-subject. Thus, his/her acknowledgement that s/he is not superior to the urn or the images carved on it gives insight into the degree of transformation s/he goes through as a human subject: psychically repositioning himself/herself into the imaginary space of the urn, s/he awakens to his/her becoming just one surface with his/her nonhuman object partner, the urn, (or with his/her imaginary energies) and dispels the myth of egotistical unity.

Having contemplated the young lovers and the ever-happy boughs surrounding them, the poetic persona is all of a sudden transpositioned to a ritual procession which

involves the sacrifice of a beautiful heifer to deities. As Brooks states, emphasizing "not individual aspiration and desire but communal life," this scene

> constitutes another chapter in the history that the 'sylvan historian' has to tell. And again, names and dates have been omitted. We are not told to what god's altar the procession moves, nor the occasion of the sacrifice. Moreover, the little town from which the celebrants come is unknown; and the poet rather goes out of his way to leave us the widest possible option in locating it. (96-97)

As s/he translates into his/her own human words the story of the self-narrating images in this scene, in a "little town by river or sea-shore,/ Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel," a "mysterious priest" sets out to sacrifice a heifer whose "silken flanks" are dressed in "garlands" (35-36; 32; 34). Faced with the emptiness of the town's streets due to this ritual, the poetic persona is filled with complex feelings mixed with pain and pleasure. The complexity of his/her feelings no wonder stems from that the sacrifice is held in abeyance similar to the postponement of the young lovers' kissing. With the ever-cancellation of the sacrifice, then, while the town is doomed to remain forever desolate, the reason behind the town's lapse into a stunned silence is also left without an answer: "And, little town, thy streets for evermore/ Will silent be, and not a soul to tell/ Why thou art desolate, can e'er return" (38-40). According to Mauro, "[w]hat was originally a poem about a man in despair seeking solace from an object is perverted…to streets and buildings in despair, in need of consolation" in these lines (295). Different from Mauro, I read the desolation and deafening silence surrounding the town due to the ritual as implying not a tone of desperation but a state of *jouissance*. The poetic persona's *jouissance* no wonder stems from the suspension of linearity through this pristine ritual. As Thompson states, "many primitive rites were performed in an attempt to deny history and the passage of time, or to celebrate annual renewals, which are, in effect, a kind of conquest of the passage of time" (28). At this point, looking at what Eliade himself says about the rites in archaic societies can help us have a better grasp of the sacrificial procession's impression on the poetic persona. As he states:

> What is of chief importance to us in these archaic systems is the abolition of concrete time, and hence their antihistorical intent. This

> refusal to preserve the memory of the past, even of the immediate past, seems to us to betoken a particular anthropology…In the last analysis, what we discover in all these rites and all these attitudes is the will to devalue time…Basically, if viewed in its proper perspective, the life of archaic man…does not bear the burden of time, does not record time's irreversibility; in other words, completely ignores what is especially characteristic and decisive in consciousness of time. Like the mystic, like the religious man in general, the primitive lies in a continual present. (qtd. in Thompson 28)

Embedded in the idea of the primitive rites was the collective yearning to renounce the linear conception of time, notes Eliade. In the light of the archaic subjects' renunciation of "the burden of time" through rites of regeneration, I would argue that faced with the scene depicting a rite on the urn, the poetic persona experiences a sense of unconscious pleasure. Moreover, the ever-cancellation of the death of the heifer heightens the degree of his/her *jouissance*. That is, identifying with this scene sculpted on the urn, s/he is psychically repositioned into the "continual present" of these archaic people and saved from the chains of linearity. About the sacrificial rite which witnesses the suspension of linear temporality in the fairy land of the urn, Stillinger states that being one among "a great many images of midwayness" in Keats's poems, this "sacrificial procession is stopped forever midway between source and destination" and "[t]he 'space of life between'[116]…sometimes constitutes a third realm that a two-realm scheme does not sufficiently recognize" (*Romantic Complexity* 10-11). What is called by Stillinger "a third realm," a space standing beyond the recognition of "a two-realm scheme," is similarly addressed by Zeitlin with respect to the semantic in-betweenness embodied in the image of the heifer that creates an impasse for linearity by bringing together the sacred and the profane:

> …as the most richly imagined female emblem in the poem, the heifer is at the same time its most ambiguous sign. The head 'lowing to the skies' leads the eye (and thought) upward to spiritual realms, the 'silken flanks' downward to the lower part of the body. The sacrifice suggests the renunciation of the erotic in favor of a religious rite, but the image of the heifer, sensuously adorned, brings it back, thrusting it now into the foreground of consciousness. While the piety of ritual would seem furthest removed from the wild ecstasy of the first stanza

[116] (Keats uses this phrase "space of life between" in his preface to his poetic romance "Endymion," 62).

> and sacrificial death utterly antithetical to erotic passion, the heifer victim connects the two in an associative subliminal bond of potential violence to which the feminine body is perpetually subject. (289)

The archaic rite and the semantic complexity of the heifer image are charged with important social implications for the urn's and its figures' uneasy relationship with clock time and the Saussurean sign. I think that what is equally significant in this sacrificial scene set in an unknown town is the idea of putting faith in gods. As Shackford states, "Man in the early world recognized a duty to the shadowy gods who had created him; piety, gratitude, devotion, faith in invisible forces dimly conceived yet loyally worshipped characterized the Greeks" (11). The portrait of human figures believing in a sacrificial ritual performed to pay tribute to gods injects a sense of *jouissance* to the poetic persona, even if what these townspeople believe does not go beyond an assumption or an insane delusion.

Delving into the alternative space opened by the urn, the poetic persona experiences a transformation in his/her relation to empirical reality, similar to the poetic subject of the "Ode to a Nightingale" whose encounter with nature activates his/her nonhuman potential and initiates his/her move from Being to Becoming. Reflecting how his/her confrontation with the images on the urn activates his/her desire on the path of achieving *extimacy*, for instance, s/he states:

> O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
> Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
> With forest branches and the trodden weed;
> Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
> As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral! (41-45)

Thinking that these lines imply the urn's fall from favor, Hopkins underlines the change the poetic persona goes through in terms of his/her relation to the urn. As he states, the way that the poetic persona abandons such complimentary expressions as "unravished bride of quietness" and begins to use more realistic terms such as "Attic shape" or "Cold Pastoral" while addressing the urn gives insight into his/her disillusionment with it:

> Instead of an 'unravish'd bride of quietness,' the urn has become an 'Attic shape'; instead of a 'foster-child of silence and slow time,' a 'Fair attitude'—'with *brede*/Of *marble* men and maidens *overwrought*,' a reminder that the urn is only an artifact. It is not that here the object has been destroyed in the subject's fantasy, but that his illusion of it has been destroyed and has been replaced by *disillusion*, disillusion that will lead in the end to 'reality-acceptance' and a kind of reconciliation. That disillusionment is summed up in the phrase 'Cold Pastoral.'…because the urn has become the object of the speaker's…'disillusionment'; it has become *merely* an urn. (129-130)

Similarly, Mauro thinks that as evidenced by his/her anthropomorphic mention of the streets, the citadel, and the town to which s/he attributes such human feelings as suffering from loneliness and deafening silence, the poetic persona loses his/her former fascination with the urn, begins to regard it as merely an ordinary object, and even reduces its figures to "brede:" "The speaker's initial infatuation with the urn has become barely concealed contempt. He has awakened from his spell of the previous stanza with a vengeance, and he is intent upon making the urn a mere object again" (295). Contrary to Hopkins and Mauro, I take these lines as a kind of awakening not from the previous spell of the urn but from the spell of unity. Moreover, I do not think that the urn loses its former allure for the poetic persona. Rather, it still denies any attempt for depiction or easy capture. Accordingly, the oxymoronic term the poetic persona chooses to call the urn, "Cold Pastoral," does not imply its fall from grandeur but its resistance to colonization, as Scott similarly notes: "[o]ffering a scene of titillation, the urn nevertheless resists the efforts of the speaker to caress or 'know' it, remaining a stubborn virgin, a 'Cold Pastoral'" (174). Nor does the other term used by the poetic persona, "Attic shape," reflect the urn's conquest:

> The urn cannot be seduced (or ravished) by any of the poet's strategies, and neither sacrificial renunciation nor melancholy appeal will suffice. The final stanza therefore marks the lover's acknowledgment of his defeat and even suggests his reproach of the desired object and a rereading of his own desire. The urn is now addressed abstractly as a thing: 'O Attic shape! fair attitude' and as only a 'silent form.' (Zeitlin 291)

The poetic persona changes how s/he addresses the urn as his/her failure to "seduce" it irritates him/her, Zeitlin states. In this context, stating that with "[its] marble men

and maidens," "forest branches," and "trodden weed," the urn "teases [human subjects] out of thought," the poetic persona lays bare how s/he acknowledges the unique presence of the urn in the face of its resistance to codification. That is, s/he no longer looks at the world from a dualistic perspective but cherishes the multiple possibilities and potentials arising out of subject-object, human-nonhuman, or animate-inanimate intersections. In Shackford's words, also, s/he reflects how all mathematical reasoning or explanation goes bankrupt in the face of art for Keats:

> In the presence of art man gains a sublimation, a mystical illumination similar to that which eternity itself gives, when thought is superseded by immediate intuition. Eternity, Beauty, annul the merely logical in man and quicken in him that 'blessed mood' in which he 'sees into the life of things.' The great experiences of life bring some supersensuous wisdom that can never be reduced to formulae, but is a vital, active presence in the deepest elements of man's being, interpreting, transfiguring his existence. (11-12)

If we expand on Shackford's argument, we can state that through his/her spontaneous encounter with the urn in which premodern times reach an artful expression, the poetic persona goes through a sublime experience, thereby creating an impasse to any binary "formulae" of exactitude or accuracy. Having been teased out of his/her established binary thinking with the uncharted nature of the urn that resists symbolic codes in its story's artful articulation, the poetic persona psychically awakens to his/her fluidity. As Schrero similarly points out, the urn "has made him forget to be perfectly rational and logical and it has stirred his imagination to the point where it has seized an insight not accessible to reason" (80). The poetic persona's psychic translocation into an alternative spacetime with his/her confrontation with the urn becomes more obvious when s/he imagines it saying to human subjects: "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know'" (49-50).[117] In this way, s/he demonstrates "the power of the imagination to animate the hypostatic artefact to achieve the beauty of truth, and the truth of beauty" (Burwick, *A History of Romantic Literature* 365). For Heffernan, it

[117] T. S. Eliot thinks that this line brings the highly dense tone of the ode into disrepute: "on re-reading the whole Ode, this line strikes me as a serious blemish on a beautiful poem; and the reason must be either that I fail to understand it, or that it is a statement which is untrue" (270).

is only at this point when the urn begins to speak that the motion of verbal art merges with the stasis of visual art:

> In equating truth with beauty…the urn affirms what the poem has so far denied. By the very act of speaking, the urn crosses the line between visual and verbal representation, between the fixed, silent beauty of graphic stillness and the audible movement of speech. (114-115)

Contrary to Heffernan, I do not read the lines "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty"' (49) as signaling the point when the urn succeeds in crossing the boundary between the visual and the verbal because even while standing still as the "foster-child of Silence and slow Time" (2) before the formation of this expression, it speaks. Moreover, in its silence, it tells more than when it becomes audible. Instead of looking at these lines as the intersection of the visual and the verbal in an artwork, the urn, I contend that the urn's erasing the epistemic line between the true and the beautiful signals the moment when the poetic persona's topological dissolution reaches its culmination. In this respect, its beauty-truth equation unveils the poetic persona's *extimacy*—his/her objectification of a Moebius strip "connecting the interior (*I'intime*) to radical exteriority" (Lacan, *XVI* 243). Moreover, pushing the readers to think beyond the frame of binary linguistic codes, the words of the poetic persona point to an unnamable desire residing deep inside him/her.

Scott who likens the poetic persona to a kind of ventriloquist or "a voyeur, intent on ravishing this obscure object of desire" thinks that these lines about truth-beauty imply the abortiveness of the poetic persona's attempts to conquer the urn:

> Keats's final act of ventriloquism at least in part…becomes an assertion of control and assures the speaker's victory. The poet puts words into the urn's mouth, forcing it out of its embattled silence and into a medium that is alien to it. What at first seems like a generous act, a gesture worthy of 'a friend to man'… in the end becomes an act that is willful, deliberate, perhaps even violent. The speaker finally does ravish the urn and bring it into time (as the pun on 'brede' and the image of the 'trodden weed' would suggest), though he is no closer to an understanding of its mysteries than he was before. (170; 178)

As he further argues, in its resistance to definition, "[t]he urn reminds us also of the powerfully ambivalent figure of Medusa, whose writhing snake-hair combines with a placid mien to confuse the gaze of Shelley's poetic observer:" "As Athena at the end of the myth installs the image of Medusa on her shield—thereby taming it, turning it into an aesthetic icon—so Keats encapsulates the urn in an epigram, labeling it, naming it, and returning it to the poise and timeless calm of the museum;" however, he cannot manage to capture it in the full sense of the term (174; 179). Different from Scott, I don't think that imagining the urn equating truth with beauty, the poetic persona attempts to colonize it. As I have argued earlier, reflecting how it metamorphoses from a simple "object" position to the position of a substitute for "the Thing," an *extimate objet a*, addressed by Lacan as "a vacuole," as "what is nearest to us, while at the same time being outside us" (*S XVI* 219), the urn sparks the shift of the poetic persona from Platonic metaphors into an in-between space of post-Cartesian pluralities. What this sublime experience the poetic persona goes through by his/her imaginary relation to the urn reveals is the fact that the subject stands somewhere between the imaginary-symbolic, in a recreative state of constant *extimacy*.

To conclude, the poetic persona's encounter with the urn activates his/her psychic transposition from the confines of his/her physical surroundings into the blissful context of premodern times, portraying the symbolic-imaginary interpenetration. In the poetic persona's topologisation or shift from being to becoming *extimate*, the uncharted state of the urn and the ecstasy of the scattered images sculpted on it play a vital role. Inhabited by no time sequence and dominated by images, the urn voices the silenced of the visible history or the leftover of the neat narratives. "Apart from the chiming adjective 'Grecian', it is without context, history, origin, or destination. It is simply there" (Leighton 40). The notion of linearity goes bankrupt also in the fairy land of the images presented by the solid (!) urn. Accompanied by the unheard melodies of pipes and timbrels, the urn's images remain immersed in an ever-lasting springtime happiness: while the maiden always stays in the full bloom of her youth, the boughs of trees forever stay green, never shedding their leaves. Moreover, neither the deferral of the young lovers' kissing nor the town's lapse into silence and

desolation because of the sacrificial procession dispels the poetic persona's intoxication by these specular images. Rather, with the suspension of clock time, the more the figures' kissing, the arrival of the townspeople at their home, or the sacrifice of the beautiful heifer "lowing at the skies" (33) is deferred, the more *jouissance* is injected to the poetic persona. Bringing to mind that "[t]here is always something left to be desired" (Fink, *Lacan to the Letter* 23) through their denial of consummation, this continuous postponement that reaches an artful expression in the images sculpted on the urn sweeps away any blockages of desire or repairs the wounds in the Moebius strip of the poetic persona.

Considering the fact that it initiates the fluidity in the poetic persona, opening for him/her a path of access into an imaginary space where only images speak and in the face of which all human words go bankrupt, we can conclude that the urn takes on the role of an *extimate objet petit a*—with its *extimacy* being linked to not only its being "at the edge of ourselves" but also its being "the edge itself, the edge between our intimacy and an exteriority conceived as that which is excluded from our intimacy" (Pavón-Cuéllar 662). In this respect, the originary urn triggers the poetic persona's transformation by inviting him/her into an alternative space and awakening him/her to the continuum of imaginary-symbolic flows of energies. Thus, creating an impasse to hierarchized binaries with their simultaneous recreation of each other, the poetic persona-urn intersection gives an aesthetic expression to the narcissistic interplay between the imaginary and the symbolic. Aestheticized in a Keatsian manner, this imaginary-symbolic intertwinement reflects also the dynamic human-nonhuman or the subject-object interactions. Hence, the difficulty of finding from whose mouth the words "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" (49) spill out testifies to the human poetic persona's becoming unified with his/her nonhuman object partner, the urn, or the unknown urn's already standing at the very core of its human partner, the poetic persona.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In his poems where he artfully penetrates into the psychodynamics of subjective experience, Keats unveils post/non-anthropocentric subject positions and subject-object relations. Though translated into Keatsian words centuries ago, these alternative subject positions still speak to the unconscious of the contemporary readers as they relate to the interplay between the imaginary and the symbolic. Renegotiating the culture-nature or the subject-object continuum by the ever-shifting portrayal of nature—appearing in the form of empirical nature having a symbiotic tie with an individual, moving to a context where social markers are more intensely felt, and then taking the shape of an object—Keats acknowledges both the agency of the subject and the object that works on him/her in his poems. In this respect, while reflecting the irrepressible state of nature that lies at the core of subjective dynamism, he also asserts that being tied to each other with an ineradicable bond despite their hierarchical bipartition by the discourse of modernity, the subject and the object co-exist in the process of their recreation as active agents of life-zoe, which no wonder refutes the idea of Oneness or *the* Human. In "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December," the state of in-betweenness is reflected through the poetic personae's post/non-anthropocentric topologisation at the human-nature intersection. In these human subjects' topological dissolution into the continuum with nature, their nonhuman partners with whom they share their life play a vital role. Voicing the unvoiced of modernity, the triggering force behind the poetic personae's dissolution into asynchronous layers of nature in these poems becomes either a happy song sung by a nightingale or the happiness of a tree and a brook despite the coldness of December season. Regardless of their difference, each of these nonhuman agents evokes a sense of complementarity in the poetic personae as they echo the residues of the imaginary and act as a kind of substitute for the lost thing. The poetic personae's shift from the binary codes into nature which is

dominated not by words but by images activates, in this context, the nonhuman potential in them. Different from the earlier group of poems, "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December" where the poetic personae stretch from the symbolic into the imaginary through empirical nature and become nomads in a Borromean fashion, "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil," "Lamia," and "La Belle Dame sans Mercy" aestheticize threshold positions on the subjective level through the psychotic dissociation of their poetic personae. With the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father in the case of Isabella, Lycius, and the lovesick knight, what spills over into the poetic universe of Keats becomes either a basil-man (Lorenzo), a snake-woman (Lamia), or a monster-woman (La Belle Dame sans Mercy). Though presenting them within a psychotic context, Keats reveals the seeds of postmetaphysical subjectivity through these threshold, ineffable subjects that create an impasse to binary mode of thinking through their denial of totalization or symmetrical depiction. The final poem of discussion, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," gives insight into the erasure of the epistemic boundaries through reflecting how a human subject's encounter with an urn initiates his/her becoming *extimate*. Confronted with his/her nonhuman object partner, the *extimate* urn, which presents an imaginary space of pre-modernity, the poetic persona shifts from the confines of his/her physical surroundings into an alternative space in a topological manner. In this way, s/he both throws into doubt the idea of fixity and reflects the subject-object interpenetration.

In "Ode to a Nightingale" and "In drear nighted December," Keats decenters the Anthropos and offers non-unitary, open-ended subject positions as an alternative to the ideal subject of Humanism, renegotiating nature-culture continuum through the symbiotic bond between empirical nature and the individual. Dispelling the illusion of Cartesian subjectivity built upon the phantasy of Oneness, the poetic personae in these poems reflect human subjects' fluidity and interconnectedness with nature. Although the humanist discourse configures the subject as a fixed totality, assuming the presence of a one-to-one correspondence between self and other, the subject is too elusive and multilayered to be put into a symmetrical frame or depicted by mathematical reasoning. Behind the complexity of subjectivity lies the inextricable

knotting of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. In other words, though assumed to be totalized with his/her entrance into the symbolic, the human subject involves the intertwinement of diverse energies. Besides, the pre-symbolic energies of the imaginary-real constantly manifest themselves in the symbolic in ways other than verbal. For the continuous flow of these presymbolic energies into the symbolic, the human subject cannot be homogenized or given closure. What is more important, it is this perpetual transition of energies along the Borromean knotting of the real-imaginary-symbolic that helps one reach subjective consistency. The poems discussed also testify to the subject's constant sliding along the axis of these three psychic realms. When we look at the way how their encounter with their nonhuman others in nature affects them, we can see better this human-nonhuman or the symbolic-imaginary relationality. The poetic personae's entry into nature dissolves them along the porosity of borders and evokes in them a sense of wholeness as in the Arcadian days of pre-symbolization. With their awakening to their vital part that stands at the core of their subjectivity, they feel intoxicated. As evidenced by this feeling of intoxication that it evokes in its human partners, nature takes on the role of the object *a*. This *object petit a* takes a different shape in each poem: it is embodied in a nightingale, a sod, a happy tree, a babbling brook, and even in tired birds retiring into solitude in the shadow of trees. However, no matter how much it changes its shape, what is voiced by each of these nonhuman agents becomes the lost thing of a human subject—that is, a sense of complementarity. So, after their awakening to their imaginary self or nonhuman dimension of life (*zoe*) through their encounter with their naturalized others, the poetic personae complement their song with the songs of nature and untie the knots in desire. From this moment on, neither the human poetic personae nor their nonhuman partners stay the same: while the poetic personae shift from Being to Becoming animal or plant, the nonhuman agents in nature too begin to speak to them no longer as their inferior others but as their extension standing on the same Moebius surface with them. In this respect, collapsing the idea of species hierarchy, Keats reflects that the requiem of the nightingale, the serenity of the imago-like moon, and the December happiness of the tree and the babbling brook participate in the harmonization and evolution of the human subject.

In “Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil,” “Lamia,” and “La Belle Dame sans Mercy,” the myth of totality is shattered by the resurfacing of the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the-Father in the real. Different from “Ode to a Nightingale” and “In drear nighted December” which invite readers to post/non-anthropocentric threshold and constantly alternating subject positions within the context of a dynamically functioning Borromean knot, these poems reflect alternative subject positions within the context of a psychotic irruption. With these poems, we move from the empirical nature-culture symbiosis to a context where nature makes itself felt in a more social context: posing a challenge to binary mode of thinking with their asymmetry, the threshold figures of these poems put on stage nature-culture continuum within the context of a world where social markers are still visible. The resurfacing of the foreclosed signifier of the Name-of-the Father in the real is given aesthetic expression in the poems in the embodiment of the post/non-Cartesian subjects named Lorenzo, Lamia, and La Belle Dame sans Mercy. As the foreclosed Name-of-the-Father incarnates, these threshold poetic subjects stand at the human-nonhuman, death-life, or disgusting-alluring intersection and push the readers to rethink human-nature interaction. Reflecting different species’ non-dualistic continuity and transition, these nonsymbolized signifiers constantly metamorphose into beings other than themselves and resist their formulation by binary thinking. Thus, no matter how much the humanist discourse attempts to erase them or deny them visibility for taking them as a threat to the operation of its totalizing ideals, they continue to manifest themselves outside the symbolic codes. That is, rather than bending to their homogenization into a certain epistemic category as either a human or a human subject’s naturalized other, they stand at the human-nonhuman intersection: the decomposing body of Lorenzo recomposes in the form of a plant (basil); Lamia puts the human and the nonhuman together, standing as a serpent-woman; and La Belle Dame sans Mercy blurs the boundaries between monstrosity and saintliness with her monster-woman state. To put it more explicitly, of these threshold figures, Lorenzo becomes an extension of the soil into which he is buried after his murder by Isabella’s brothers. After his transposition from a wide into a miniaturized nature staged in Isabella’s pot, he dissolves into the continuum of earth and regenerates in the form of basil. With his transcorporeality or transition along different ontologies,

thus, he poses a challenge to the stasis of the teleological drive. In a similar way to Lorenzo, Lamia nullifies Apollonius's attempts to put an end to her because of her unfathomable nature's disturbance to his almighty (!) state. To elude the grasp of Apollo who attempts to erase her from Corinth with his gaze, this serpent-woman melts. Yet, this melting does not annihilate her, given that she experiences intense *jouissance* through this process, implying her potential to be reborn. Furthermore, Apollonius's familiarity with her even before seeing her hints at the idea of her constant intrusion into Corinth as the psychotic material. In this respect, through her melting and human-nonhuman state, she does not bend to the will of this primordial father who wants to exclude her from his territory but bends the humanist discourse to point to the deceptiveness of its unitary ideals of finalization or closure. Resurfacing in the real as a result of a knight's psychotic dissociation, La Belle Dame sans Mercy also poses a threat to the ideals of Oneness by her refusal to take part in familial sexuality. Rather than letting the knight fit her into his own ideals as an all-embracing saintly mother at his disposal, she stands as an amalgam of a monster-fairy, and resists her articulation as the Woman.

It is worth underlining that Keats's choice of these nonsymbolized or unbuttoned signifiers in his portrayal of constantly alternating subject positions incited by diverse flows of energies at the bios-zoe intersection is no coincidence. What he does, in this respect, amounts to saying that in the same way as a psychotic subject cannot understand the foreclosed signifier when it reappears in the real, the humanist discourse cannot come to terms with the notions of fluidity, heterogeneity, or non-dualistic continuity due to lack of words at its disposal to depict them. Unsurprisingly, this explains both the reason why these figures evoke a sense of threat when they spill over into the symbolic world and why they are attempted to be erased from the surface level to be swept back into darkness. In this sense, I would conclude, with their state of in-betweenness, these figures take on the role of an unbuttoned signifier also for the logocentric thinking that stumbles over their complexity.

In the same way as the previously discussed poems, “Ode on a Grecian Urn” invites us to a reconsideration of human-nature relation. In “Ode to a Nightingale” and “In Drear nighted December,” the illusion of metaphysical totality is dispelled by the human subjects’ encounter with their nonhuman animal (nightingale), plant (tree), or brook partners which trigger their dissolution into the continuum with nature, activating their nonhuman potential. Similarly, the idea of Oneness collapses in “Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil,” “Lamia,” and “La Belle Dame sans Mercy” through the intertwinement of the human with the other-than-human ontologies of a snake, a basil, and a monster embodied in the poetic figures of Lorenzo, Lamia, and La Belle Dame sans Mercy. However, in “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” this simultaneity of different ontologies is reflected through a human poetic persona’s interaction not with his/her empirically-grounded nonhuman animal or plant partners but with an object, a Grecian urn. With his/her confrontation with this urn about which nothing is known for sure apart from the blissful context of the images sculpted on it, the poetic persona stretches from the confines of his/her physical surroundings to the times of premodernity, experiencing a state of *extimacy*—that is, the imaginary-symbolic simultaneity. Behind the poetic persona’s psychic translocation from being fixed to becoming *extimate* lies the uncharted state of the urn. Wrapped up in a transgressive silence, the urn portrays an imaginary world where not words but images speak: marked by no time sequence and linguistic codes, the urn tells a story unheard or denied to be heard by the written history. As such, it takes on the role of “a sylvian historian” for narrating the repressed of the humanist history. In this unheard story told by the nonverbal semiotic of the images on the urn, the idea of linearity does not function. Immersed in an ever-lasting springtime happiness by the unheard melodies of the pipes and the timbrels, the young maiden always stays young and the boughs of the trees remain green forever. The teleological drive is dethroned also during the sacrificial procession which unveils the archaic man’s resistance to linear flow of time. This suspension of linearity voiced by the premodern images on the urn echoes the prehuman times before symbolization to the poetic persona. So, moved by such a blissful context of life promised by the urn, the poetic persona is freed from the blockages in his/her desire and turns into a Moebius strip.

With the role that it takes in triggering the fluidity of the poetic persona, the urn serves as an object *a*. So, though appearing to be his/her excluded or silenced other on the surface level, it turns out to be at the very core of his/her subjectivity. In the same way as the urn that stands *extimate* with regard to the human poetic persona, the poetic persona also becomes *extimate* for his/her standing on the same surface with the urn. Through this subject-object or the human-nonhuman interaction on the same Moebius surface, the dynamic interplay between the imaginary and the symbolic is aestheticized in a Keatsian manner. What is more important, it is reflected that though coming from different ontologies, the object (that is given in the image of an ambivalent urn) and the subject (embodied in the poetic persona) are interdependent. This non-hierarchical subject-object interaction, thus, sheds light on what or who they are outside the frame of their epistemic categorizations: they are none other than each other's extension, reconstituting each other with a dynamic transition between the imaginary-symbolic flows and energies, marked by just a twist on their Moebius strip.

So far, I have focused on the post/non-anthropocentric, alternative subject positions and subject-object relations in Keats's selected poems, drawing on the Lacanian and Braidottian epistemologies. The question of what is told by all these constantly-alternating subjects or subject-object alliances that find a poetic expression in the threshold spaces opened in Keats's poetry has occupied my mind from the very beginning of the dissertation, bringing with it many other questions: In delving into the unruly layers of nature, does Keats detach himself from the social realities of his time? Does he simply aim to embed a parodic overtone in his poems through his undervaluation of the classical sublime rhetoric? How can he still appeal to the contemporary readers with his poetic figures transposed into Keatsian words centuries earlier? Where can we locate the subject in a Keatsian context? How can the discourse of modernity asserting the myth of one-to-one correspondence between self and other explain the psychic transpositions taken by the song of a nightingale, *extimate* becomings triggered by a silent urn, or the metamorphoses of selves in the in-between ontologies of animal/basil-human? Having thought over these issues through the lens of Lacan and Braidotti who have helped me reach new

hermeneutical pathways for the reconsideration of subjectivity as a continuing process arising out of the psychic-material reality or the imaginary-symbolic energy intersection, I can now safely argue that countering the discourse of modernity that has left an ineradicable mark on the unconscious of the human subject by exposing him/her to the traumatizing human/nature or subject/object epistemic divides, Keats makes an ideological statement: in his presentation of threshold subject positions and subject-object relationalities as an alternative to the totalized model of the Cartesian *I*, he dislocates the traumatizing periphery/centre, nature/human, or object/subject demarcation and acknowledges the agency of both the subject and the object in an aestheticized frame. In this way of responding to the trauma of the human subject's disconnection from nature, he rails against the common assumption of Romantic isolation or lack of interest in social realities, as well. What he does in his poetry, I would sum up, is to give an aesthetic response to the discourse of modernity by reflecting that neither nature nor nature's tie with the human being can be eradicated.

Though having no aim to give closure to my study, I would like to underline, as my final words, that as a Romantic writer, Keats offers fertile ground to be read from a contemporary perspective. With his poems revealing the earlier traces of postmodernity, Keats has potential to open up a path of access to alternative ontological sites marked by subject-object or culture-nature relationality in a posthumanist fashion. At this point arises the question: 'What is the thing that makes Keats unique among the other Romantic writers and that helps us study him against the background of contemporary theories?' We can trace Keats's potential to be studied from a contemporary perspective to his notion of negative capability. What Ihab Hassan notes in "Beyond Postmodernism: Toward an Aesthetic of Trust" gives invaluable insight into the significance of reading Keats today. Asking what lies beyond postmodernism, Hassan states that "postmodernism expands into geopolitical postmodernity while seeking to become a postmodernism not of suspicion but of trust" (67). Thinking that the postmodern repudiation of truth itself will bring out limitlessness and thus a tone culminating in a sense of indifference towards the others or disrespect for difference, he calls for what he terms "fiduciary realism, a postmodern aesthetic of trust," which "would assume 'negative capability' (Keats),

but would go farther than self-emptying; as in Shakespeare, Kafka, or Beckett, it would become acquainted with Silence, with the Void" (ibid. 77). Stressing the need for a "postmodern aesthetic of trust," Hassan talks in similar terms to Keats who puts emphasis on the state of being disinterested or non-egotistical as a necessary step for a creative process. In this respect, when Hassan talks of "trust as a quality of attention to others, to the created world, to something not in ourselves" (ibid. 76), we can hear in his words what Keats had already suggested centuries earlier with his emphasis on empathetic selflessness to hear other(ized) multiple others with no preconceived truths or ready-made humanist assumptions. Seen in this light, the potential of Keats, as a Romantic poet, for a contemporary hearing is unveiled: similar to Hassan who suggests reviving the concepts of truth and trust under the name of "fiduciary realism," Keats shifts the emphasis from self/other dichotomy to interdependence with different forms of being with a tone of respect for peripheral other voices.

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APPENDICES

A. CURRICULUM VITAE

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Academic Degrees

2015-2022	Middle East Technical University English Literature PhD
2011-2014	Ankara University English Language and Literature MA

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

İnsanın doğanın bir parçası olduğu gerçeğini hiçe sayan modernite diskuru, ben ve öteki hiyerarşik ikili karşıtlığı üzerinden insan/doğa ya da özne/nesne epistemik kopukluklarını oluşturmuştur. Modernite, bu şekilde, ideal öznenin kendini imgesel-gerçek alanından yalıtmış ve tamamen sembolik kodlar ya da bilinçli zihin tarafından yönetilen ve sayısal formüllerle açıklanabilen bir yapı olduğu mitini kolektif düzlemde de bilinçaltına işlemiştir. Ancak, modernitenin bu illüzyonu bilinçaltına işlerken unuttuğu şey şüphesiz ki öznenin dilin mantığını içselleştirerek semboliğe girişinin doğadan ya da doğanın dil-öncesi imgesel-gerçek enerjilerinden tamamen kopmak anlamına gelmediğidir. Keats'in şiirlerinde gözlemlenen de dile giren öznenin aynı zamanda sürekli olarak dil-öncesi enerjiler tarafından şekillendiği için lineer bir düzlemde düşünülemeyeceğidir. Bu tez, Keats şiirlerinin modernite söyleminin üzerine kurulu olduğu, insanı travmatize eden doğa/insan ya da nesne/özne epistemolojik kopukluklarına yanıt barındırdığını ileri sürmektedir. Keats post/non-antroposentrik şiir kişileri ya da karakterleri ile, öznenin lineer açıklamalara indirgenemeyecek kadar heterojen bir yapıya sahip olduğunu gösterir. Keats şiirleri, bu bağlamda, doğadan koparılan ya da uygarlık adı altında doğadan kopmuş olması gerektiğine inandırılan öznenin travmasının estetize edilmiş bir şekilde dışa vurumu olarak da okunabilir. Keats'in şiirlerinde gerçekleştirmiş olduğu şey, insan/doğa kopukluğu travmasını sanatın dili ile aşmaktır. Sorgulanmadan kabul edilmiş ikili zıtlıklar ötesinde yeni varlık alanlarının olduğunu ve öznenin bu farklı varlık alanları ile karşılıklı bir iletişimde bulunduğunu okuyucuda süblime bir etki yaratarak belirten Keats, böylelikle Romantik şairlerin dönemlerindeki gerçeklerle ilgili olmadıkları yanılgısını da yıkarken aynı şekilde Romantik dönemde yazmış olmasına rağmen posthumanist bir potansiyele sahip olduğunu gösterir.

Keats şiirlerindeki alternatif özne konumlarını ve özne-nesne ilişkilerini inceleyen bu tez, Lacan ve Braidotti fikirlerinden yararlanmıştır. İlk bölümdeki "Bülbüle Ağıt" ve "Kasvetli Aralık'ta" şiirleri ile son kısımdaki "Grek Urn'üne Ağıt" şiirinde Lacanyen topoloji gözlemlenirken, Mobieus şeridinin kırık olduğu ikinci kısımdaki "Isabella ya

da Fesleğen Saksısı," "Lamia," ve "Acımasız Güzel Kadın" şiirlerinde topografik uzam modeli görülür. Topolojik ve topografik uzam arasındaki geçişlerin nasıl yaşandığını karakterlerinin psişik gerçekleriyle şiirselleştirmesi ve simgeselde imgeselin dili ile konuşması açısından Keats, Lacan ile aynı dili konuşuyor gibidir. Farklı zamanlardan gelen iki yazarı kesiştiren bu çalışma, Braidotti epistemolojisinden de yararlanarak Keats, Lacan, Braidotti arasında bir diyalog kurmuştur. İlk analiz bölümünde yer alan "Bülbüle Ağıt" ve "Kasvetli Aralık'ta" şiirleri ekopsikoloji çerçevesinde okunmuştur. Psikoloji ve ekolojiyi bir araya getiren disiplinler arası bir teori olan ekopsikoloji, insanın doğa ile etkileşim içerisinde olması gerektiğini vurgular. Bu açıdan insan-merkezci yaklaşımdan uzaklaşarak, insan-doğa birlikteliğini savunur. İnsanın ideal bir egoya göre şekillenmesini savunan egopsikolojiye karşı çıkan ekopsikoloji, Birlik mitinin ardına saklı korporel enerjilerin baskılanmasını öngören düşünceyi sorunsallaştırır. Roszak'ın ifade ettiği gibi, '"asıl suç' tarih öncesindeki babaya edilen ihanet değil, anneyi, Anne/Doğa'yı, yarı yolda bırakmaktır" (*Dünyanın Sesi* 83). Başka bir ifade ile, insanın işlemiş olduğu asıl suç anne ile birlikte olup babaya ihanet etmek değil, anneden kopuştur. Burada bahsi geçen anne ile birliktelik anlayışının psikozda yaşanılan topografik bir şekilde imgesele çöküş anlamına gelmediğinin altını çizmek gerekir. Özne, anne ya da doğa ile olan bağını canlı tutmalıdır diyen ekopsikologlar, öznenin tanımlanışında gönderme noktası olarak sadece aklı almayıp, öznenin aynı zamanda korporel enerjilerden ya da bedenden de oluştuğunu ve öznesel potansiyelin gerçekleşmesinin yalnızca doğaya yeniden dönüşle mümkün olabileceğini ileri sürer. Formüllerle açıklanabilir Kartezyen özne kavramına alternatif olarak karşımıza çıkan bu özneyi, Lacan'ın arzulayan öznesi ve Braidotti'nin göçebe öznesinin arasında bir yerde konumlandırabiliriz.

Ekopsikolojide sıklıkla vurgulanan doğa kavramı, Lacan epistemolojisinde imgesel-gerçek alanını ifade ederken, Braidotti kuramında ise Avrupa Merkezli ikili hiyerarşik sistemde çoğunluğun ötekisi konumuna itilen "cinsiyetlendirilmiş öteki (kadın)", "ırksallaştırılmış öteki (yerli)" ya da "doğallaştırılmış öteki (hayvanlar, çevre, ya da doğa)" (*The Posthuman* 27) gibi azınlıkları temsil eder. Lacan özneyi psişik gerçekliğe vurgu yaparak tartışırken, Braidotti öznenin materyal gerçekliğine

ve her şeyin merkezinde yer aldığına inanılan 'İnsan' idealinin tarihsel süreçte, kendi ötekilerini yaratarak nasıl işlediğine değinir. Ancak, özneye farklı perspektiflerden bakmalarına rağmen hem Lacan'ın hem de Braidotti'nin vurguladığı şey, bastırılan ya da öteki konumuna hapsedilen alan olmuştur. Her ikisi de Kartezyen düşünce sisteminden ayrılan Lacan ve Braidotti şu açılardan kesişmektedir: gözenekli sınırlarda çözülüm, afektif etkileşim ve Spinozacı bir arzu. Lacan'ın *sinthome* ve bilinçaltı kavramlarında ve Braidotti'nin Becoming (Oluş) kavramında öznenin gözenekli sınırlarda çözülümü ile neyin ifade edildiği sorusuna yanıt bulabiliriz.

Öznelliği psişik gerçekliği ile yorumlayan Lacan'a göre, arzulayan özne konumuna erişim, gerçek-imgesel-sembolik alanların birbirlerinin içinde erimedikleri ancak kendi eşsiz varlıklarını koruyarak ahenkli bir birliktelik oluşturdukları Borromean düğümü ile mümkündür. Gerçek-imgesel-sembolik arasında hiyerarşik sınırların olmadığını ancak gözenekli bir yapının olduğunu ileri süren Lacan, imgesel ve simgesel arasındaki karşılıklı etkileşim ile sürekli olarak yeniden var olan ya da yeni varlık alanları keşfeden öznenin, modernite diskurunun ileri sürdüğü Kartezyen benlik algısına sığamayacak kadar akışkan ve dinamik bir yapıya sahip olduğunu düşünür. Bu bağlamda, gerçek-imgesel-sembolik Borromean düğümünün tamamlanmasında ya da öznenin uyumlu bir harmoniye erişiminde rol alan unsur *sinthome'*dur. *Sinthome* kavramını James Joyce üzerinden okuyan Lacan'a göre, psikotik bir çözülmeye eğilimi olan Joyce için yazma eylemi *sinthome* görevini üstlenmiştir (*S XXIII* 77). Öznenin imgesel tarafından yutulduğu psikotik bir evrene çöküşünü engellemesi açısından *sinthome* için aynı zamanda bir kapitone noktası gibi de işlev görmektedir diyebiliriz. Gerçek, imgesel ve sembolik arasındaki hiyerarşik duvarların olmadığını ve aksine öznenin arzulayan bir özne konumuna ancak bu üç psişik alanın da birbiri ile kesiştiği Borromean düğümünü oluşturarak erişebileceğini öne süren Lacan, bilinçaltını konumlandırışı açısından da öznenin salt rasyonel akıldan ibaret olmadığını vurgular. Lacan'a göre, bilinçaltı kapalı bir yapı değil delikli bir yapıdır ve yazılı tarih tarafından her ne kadar bastırılsa da kendini çeşitli şekillerde ifade eder (*S XI* 143-144; *Écrits* 38). Bilinçaltı ve bilinç arasındaki sürekli bir enerji akımının olduğunu ima eden Lacan, öznenin neden bitirilemeyeceğine de bu şekilde açıklık getirir niteliktedir. Lacan'a benzer şekilde,

Becoming kavramı ile Braidotti de çoğunluk/azınlık ikili zıtlığını yıkarak, öznenin sabit olmadığını ve sürekli bir devinim halinde olduğunu ifade eder. Lacan ve Braidotti'ye göre, akışkan özne aynı zamanda aktif/pasif ya da etken/edilgen ikiliklerinin ötesinde, doğa ile hiyerarşik olmayan afektif bir etkileşim içindedir. Lacan, gerçek, imgesel ve semboliğin ayrılmaz düğümlenişiyle ve afekt kavramına yaptığı vurgu ile bu etkileşime dikkat çeker. Lacan'ın ifade ettiği gibi, imgesel dönemde imgeler konuşur ve çocuk ayna imgesi ile kurduğu narsistik özdeşleşme kapsamında kendini bütün olarak hisseder. Yasanın girişi ile anne-çocuk simbiyotik ilişkisi kırılırken, imgeselin kalıntıları sürekli olarak simgeselde hissedilir: *imago*ların "iç dünya ve dış dünya arasında" bağ kurduğunu (*Écrits* 3) söylerken Lacan'ın ifade etmeye çalıştığı şey, imgesel ve simgeselin iç içe oluşudur. Lacan, benzer şekilde afektin bastırılmaz olduğunu ve gerçeğin kendini simgeselde afekt şeklinde konuşabildiğini gösterir. Bu bağlamda ne gerçek ne de imgesel, simgeselin ötekileri olarak konumlandırılabilir. Aksine, her üç psişik alan, öznenin oluşumunda afektif bir etkileşim içinde yer almaktadır. Lacan'ın Borromean düğümünün bir zincirinin kesildiğinde diğer halkaların da kendiliğinden kopacağını (*S XXIII* 20) söylemesi bu nedenledir. Halkalar arasındaki etken/edilgen sınırlarının kırılışını somutlaştıran Borromean düğümü bu açıdan öznenin afektif bir etkileşimle var olduğunu kanıtlar niteliktedir. Aktif/pasif epistemolojik kategorilerinden afektif bir düzleme geçiş Braidotti' de ise farklılıkların kucaklanışı ile gözlemlenir. Braidotti'ye göre, farklılıklar olumsuz değil olumludur çünkü yalnızca farklı olarak tanımlan ile ilişkisellik kurulduğunda Varlıktan (Being) Oluş (Becoming) pozisyonuna geçebiliriz. Lacan ve Braidotti'nin kesiştikleri bir diğer nokta ise sundukları özne kavramında Spinozacı bir arzuyu öne çıkarmalarıdır. Ekopsikolojik kuramın ima ettiği şekilde, Lacan ve Braidotti epistemolojilerinde öznenin potansiyelini gerçekleştirebilmesi için arzu ile dinamik bir ilişki içinde olması gerektiğine inanılır. Saussure'den gösteren ve gösterilen kavramlarını alan Lacan, Saussure'ün bu kavramlar arasında kurduğu hiyerarşik ilişkiyi tersine çevirerek, gösterene aktif bir rol yükler. Bu kapsamda, gösteren ve gösterilen arasında bire bir uyum olduğunu varsayan Platonik düşünce sistemine de başkaldırıda bulunur. Lacan'ın ifade ettiği gibi, gösteren ve gösterilen arasında hiçbir zaman simetri bulunmadığı gibi, anlam da simetrik formulasyonların ötesinde yer alır. Başka bir ifade ile söylemek gerekirse,

anlam gösterilenin gösterenden üstün tutulduğu ve gösteren ve gösterilenin tek bir göstergede simetrik bir şekilde buluştuğu belirli sınırları olan bir yapı değil gösterenin başka bir gösterenle kurduğu zincir ile sürekli olarak değişen, akışkan, uçucu ve çok katmanlı bir kavramdır. Anlam belirli kalıplara sığdırılamayacağı gibi, özne de belirli kalıplara sığdırılamaz çünkü özne sadece bilinç ya da rasyonaliteden değil aynı zamanda bilinçaltı ve korporel bir yapıdan da oluşmaktadır. Üstelik, özne ancak açılan kesikle ya da eksiklik duygusu ile arzulayan bir varlık konumuna erişebilir ve ne bilinçaltının yok varsayılmasından ne de bilicin bilinçaltına tamamen hükmünden bahsedilebilir. Bunun nedeni şüphesiz ki bilinçdışından sürekli olarak bilince akan kalıntıların olmasıdır. Lacan'ın göstereni ön plana çıkarışı, imgeselden simgesele girişte de çok önemli bir rol oynar. Öznelliğe ulaşma sürecinde, özne onu imlem zincirine entegre edecek ve diğer gösterenlerle anlamlı bir ilişki kurmasını sağlayacak olan belirli gösterenlere bağlanmak zorundadır (Sarup 53-4). Ancak gösterenlerle ilişki kurması onu belirli kalıplarda dondurmadığı gibi, bilinci ile bire bir örtüşen bir varlığa da dönüştürmez. Aksine, öznenin rastlantısal karşılaşmalar ile ortaya çıktığı gerçeğini daha da pekiştirir. Lacan epistemolojisinde öznenin *objet petit a* ile olan ilişkisi de bu rastlantısallığa vurgu yapar niteliktedir. Özne Yasanın imgesele girişi ile birlikte onu tüm yaşamı boyunca etkileyecek olan temel kaybını, fallus kaybını, yaşar. Bu kayıpla birlikte öznede açılan boşluk ya da eksiklik hissi ise, travmatik olmaktan öte özne için yapıcı bir rol üstlenir; çünkü, eksiğin eksikliğinde arzudan bahsedilemez. Maruz kaldığı eksiklik hissini kapatmak için, bu doğrultuda, özne fallik nesnelerin peşine düşer. Kaybedilen gerçek fallusa hiçbir zaman erişilemese de onun yokluğunun yarattığı eksiklik hissi *objet petit a* ile telafi edilir. *Objet petit a*'nın öznenin açık uçlu ve dinamik yapısına dair bizlere anlattığı ise şüphesiz ki, ardında saklı motive edici gücün esasında dil-öncesi imgeselde yaşanılan bütünlük hissinin olmasıdır. Daha açık bir şekilde ifade etmek gerekirse, öznenin simgeselde dinamik bir şekilde konumlanabilmesinin yegâne yolu imgesel ile olan ilişkisini *objet petit a*'lar vasıtası ile yaşayabilmesidir. Eksikliğin yapıcı etkisi işte tam da burada açığa çıkar: eksiklik duygusu arzuyu doğururken, arzunun doyumsuzluğu ise öznenin sürekli olarak yeniden doğuşuna neden olur; çünkü, sürekli olarak yeni fallik nesnelere anlam yükleyen özne, teleolojik varsayımlardan

sıyrılarak rastlantısal karşılaşmalarla dönüşen aktif bir varlığa dönüşür. Braidotti'nin arzuya olumlu bir anlam yükleyişi de bu durumla ilintilidir, şüphesiz ki.

"Isabella; ya da Fesleğen Saksısı," "Lamia" ve "Acımasız Güzel Kadın" şiirlerindeki alternatif özne konumları Lacan'ın psikoz ve kadına dair düşünceleri çerçevesinde analiz edilir. Lacan'ın belirttiği gibi, psikoz Babanın Adı ana göstereninin özne tarafından reddedilmesi ile açığa çıkar. Reddedilen Babanın Adı göstereni, gerçekte çeşitli görsel ya da sesli halüsinasyonlar şeklinde tekrar belirerek öznenin imgesel tarafından yutulmasına neden olur. Bu durumdaki özne, imleyen zincirinde açılan boşlukla diğer gösterenlerle de anlamlı bir ilişki kuramaz ve açılan boşluğu imgesel düzlemde kendi gerçekliğini kurarak telafi etmeye çalışır. Psikotik öznelerle ilgili vurgulanması gereken, reddedilen Babanın Adı göstereni ile karşılaşana kadar diğer özneler gibi bir hayat sürebilecekleridir. Ancak, her ne kadar boşluğu imgeselde yeniden kurdukları gerçek ile telafi etseler de psikotik özneler için işleyen bir Yasa'dan bahsedilemez. Yasanın psikotik özne için ne anlama geldiğini Lacan'ın nevroz ve psikoz arasındaki ayrıma dikkat çekişinde açıkça gözlemlenebilir: nevrotik özne yaşadığı bir travma nedeni ile gerçekle olan ilişkisinde belirli kopukluklar yaşasa da, Babanın Adını kabul ettiği için topografik anlamda bir imgesel çöküş yaşamaz; ancak, psikotik özne ile gerçek arasında zaten bir kopukluk mevcuttur ve arzu kurulumu gerçekleşmediği için imgesel tarafından yutulma yaşanır (*S III* 44-45). Daha evvel belirttiğim gibi, şiirlerdeki kadın karakterler için tezde aynı zamanda Lacan'ın kadınla ilgili devrim niteliğindeki sözlerine değinilir. Lacan "cinsel ilişki diye bir şey yoktur" (*S XX* 57) derken gösteren ve gösterilen arasında herhangi bir simetri bulunmadığı gibi, kadın ve erkek arasında da simetrik bir ilişki olmadığını ifade eder. Benzer şekilde, Lacan'ın bu oldukça ilginç argüman ile eleştirdiği şey, kadının erkek karşısında bastırılarak, değersiz görüldüğü aile yapısıdır. Belirli feminist çevreler tarafından yanlış anlaşılarak yoğun olumsuz eleştirile maruz kalmasına neden olan "Kadın yoktur" (*S XX* 7) ifadesi ile de Lacan, kadının bir epistemolojik kategori olarak var olmadığını vurgular: Lacan'a göre *jouissance*'sı çeşitli olan kadın çok katmanlıdır.

Son bölümdeki "Grek Urn'üne Ağıt" isimli şiirdeki alternatif özne-nesne ilişkisi Lacan'ın *extimacy* kavramı çerçevesinde irdelenir. *Extimacy* kavramı ile Lacan uzamın topografik değil topolojik olduğunu ileri sürer. Psişik gerçekliğe gönderme yapmak için Borromean düğümü, Klein şişesi ya da Moebius şeridi gibi topolojik yüzeylere değinen Lacan'a göre, özne simgeseldeyken imgesel ya da gerçekten tam anlamı ile kopuk değildir. Yasanın anne-çocuk arasındaki dil-öncesi imgesel ilişkisine girişi ile açılan oluşan kesik, Moebius düğümünde gözlemlendiği gibi bir büküm ile yeniden birleştirilir. Bu kapsamda, Moebius düğümünün bir yüzeyinde bulunan bir kişi aynı zamanda diğer yüzeyini de tecrübe edecektir. Herhangi bir başlangıç ya da son noktasının bulunmadığı Moebius düğümü, bu yönü ile, öznenin çok katmanlılığına ve akışkanlığına vurgu yapar. Lacanyen bilinçaltı-bilinç, *moi* (imgesel benlik)-*je* (simgesel benlik), *lalangue*-dil, ya da *jouissance* kavramında gözlemlendiği üzere haz-acı kesişiminde iç-dış birlikteliğine dikkat çekilerek öznenin imgesel-simgesel sürekliliğinde devamlı olarak doğa-insan olarak var olan açık uçlu dinamik yapısı gözler önüne serilir.

Keats'in "Bülbüle Ağıt" ve "Kasvetli Aralık'ta" şiirlerindeki post/non-antroposentrik, alternatif özne konumları, şiir kişilerinin insanolmayan bülbül, ağaç, ya da dere ile karşılaşması ile açığa çıkar. Şiir kişilerinin insanolmayan bu "doğallaştırılmış ötekiler" ile olan keşimi onlardaki insan-olmayan potansiyeli aktifleştir ve bu doğrultuda, şiir kişileri insan-insanolmayan, simgesel-imgesel, kültür-doğa ve *je-moi* kesişiminde yeniden konumlanırlar. Şiir kişilerinde gözlemlenen bu metamorfozlar ve değişkenlikler, öznenin Birlik metafiziksel illüzyonunu yıkarak simgesel-öncesi imgesel-gerçek ve simgesel enerjilerin kesişiminde yer aldığını kanıtlar. Şiirlerdeki post/non-antroposentrik özne konumları, Lacan'ın arzu, *sinthome*, afekt, imgesel, *imago, lalangue* ve *objet petit a* kavramları ile Braidotti'nin Oluş (Becoming) ve göçebelik kavramları doğrultusunda tartışılmıştır.

"Bülbüle Ağıt" şiirinin ilk mısraları modernite diskurundan pre-moderniteye geçmek üzere olan şiir kişisi ile karşılar okuyucuyu. Şiir kişisi adını koyamadığı bir acıdan yakınmaktadır: "Kalbim ağrır ve sersem edici bir hissizlik acıtır/ Aklımı, baldıran

zehri içmişçesine/ Ya da giderlerine ağır bir afyon boşaltılmışçasına" (1-3). Bülbül ile karşılaşması ile yaşayacağı dönüşümü ya da ego bütünselliğinin çözüleceğini ifade edercesine söylediği bu sözler şiir kişisinin salt rasyonel akılla yönetildiği illüzyonundan uzaklaşmaya ilk adımlarını atışının da göstergesi niteliğindedir. Yaşadığı belirsizlik hali ise yaşadığı dönüşüm için ödemesi gereken bedeli ifade ederken aynı zamanda da onu *jouissance* ile kuşatışına da ışık tutar. Aniden beliren bülbül ise modernite diskurunun üzerine kurulu olduğu büyük anlatıları delercesine, ona lineer ya da doğrusal zamanın dışında kim olduğunu hatırlatır. Onu *objet petit a* görevini üstelenen şarkısı ile topolojik bir çerçevede imgesele çekerek kültür-doğa ya da simgesel-imgesel kesişiminde bir yere konumlandırır. Bu bağlamda, Dolar'ın "yaşamın ilk evrelerinin büyük bir kısmını şekillendiren ve göbek kordonunun yerini alan manevi bağ" olarak nitelendirdiği anne sesi (39) ile benzer şekilde bülbülün yaz şarkısı şiir kişisinde ekolojik bir bütünlük hissi yaşatır. İnsanlardan farklı olarak, imgesel doğanın derinliğinde uçan bir gösterge gibi sürekli devinim halinde olan bülbül doğrusal değil holistik bir zaman algısındadır. Belirli bir merkezin olmadığı ve gösterenlerin dans alanına dönüşen gökyüzündeki bülbül, bu bağlamda, Saussure'cü göstergeye de bir başkaldırı sunar. Yunan mitolojisindeki sanat ile kendi eylemliliğini kanıtlayan Philomela karakteri gibi, bülbül de, söylediği şarkılarla aşkınsal kategorilere karşı çıkar. Bülbülün bu özgürlüğünden etkilenen şiir kişisi arzusu ile daha aktif bir bağ kurmaya başlar. Bu bağlamda, şiir kişisinin imgesel ile simgesel arasındaki blokajlarını süpürerek Borromean düğümünü onarmadaki rolü düşünüldüğünde, bülbülün şarkısının *sinthome* görevini üstlendiği de söylenebilir. Şiir kişisinin bilinçaltına, sözel olmayan, insanolmayan ve kültür öncesi derinliklerden seslenen bülbül, *lalangue* olarak da ifade edebileceğimiz imgesel dili ile, logosentrik düşünceden non-Platonik düşünceye geçişi sağlar. Bülbülün şarkısında estetize edilen *lalangue* ile şiir kişisinin şarap içmişçesine kendinden geçişi ve her şeyi geride bırakarak, bülbül ile ormanın derinliklerine doğru kaybolmak isteyişi bu nedenledir, şüphesiz ki: ormanda logos işlemediği için, şiir kişisi insanolmayan ya da logos-öncesi benliği ile yeniden birleşmek adına onda çeşitli afektif reaksiyonlar yaratarak, imgeseldeki gibi bir bütünlük sözü vadeden orman(l)a çözülmeyi ve yeniden doğmayı arzular. Şiir kişisinin insan ontolojisinden insan-insanolmayan ontolojiye geçişi Braidotti epistemolojisinde bios ve

sorgulanmaksızın onun bastırılanı olarak kabul edilmiş olan zoe'nin yüzleşmesi olarak okunabilir. Lineer zaman algısından bihaber şarkılarını söyleyen bülbül zoe'ye aitken, şiir kişisi bios'da konumlanmıştır; ancak, her ikisinin de ormanda birbirinin içinde erimeleriyle bios/zoe epistemolojik ikili zıtlığı kaybolarak, Spinozacı bir sevince dönüşmenin yalnızca yaşamın bios-zoe arasında tecrübe edilişi ile mümkün kılınacağı gösterilir. Başka bir ifade ile söylemek gerekirse, bu yüzleşmeden sonra ne şiir kişisi sadece bios'a ne de bülbül sadece zoe'ye konumlanır. Bunun yerine insanolmayan bülbül ve insan özne, ikili zıtlıkların ötesindeki bios-zoe kesişiminde birbirlerini hiyerarşik olmayan bir şekilde tamamlarlar. Bu birliktelikte gözlemlenen Spinozacı gerçek ise yücenin aşkın bir uzamda değil doğada içkin oluşu ve sevince dönüşümün aşkınsallık üzerine değil içkinlik üzerine kurulu oluşudur.

Şiir kişisinin doğanın dinamikliği ile kendinden geçişi dördüncü ve beşinci kıtalarda daha da belirginleşir. Öyle ki, bülbüle uçmayı ve tüm bildiklerini Lethe ırmağına batmışçasına unutmayı arzular. Bu arzusunun uyanışında, karanlıkta tasvir edilen ormanın imgesel bir sahneye dönüşümü de büyük bir rol oynar. Karanlıkta ışıldayan Kraliçe-Ay mandala şekli ile şiir kişinin bilinçaltına *imago* olarak konuşurken, imgelerin dili ile konuşan doğadaki diğer tüm insanolmayan canlılar da şiir kişisi ve bülbül arasındaki söze sığmayan imgesel-gerçek enerji akışına katkıda bulunur. Üstelik şiir kişisi karanlıkta etrafının ne ile çevrili olduğunu göremese de hiçbir korku hissi duymaz. Aksine, görsel keskinliğe erişemediği için anne kokusuyla ya da sesi ile dışsal dünyayı algılayan yeni doğmuş bir bebekmişçesine, modernitenin ikili zıtlıklarından sıyrılarak doğanın sunduğu zaman-uzamında bütünselliğe erişir. Bu doğrultuda, imgeselin yeniden oynandığı bir sahneye dönüşen doğada, şiir kişinin bülbül-oluşundan, bülbülün ise insan-oluşundan bahsedilebilir. Kendi özgün benliklerini kaybetmeden birbirlerini deneyimledikleri bu oyun alanında, böylece, hümanist söylemle güçlendirilen insanı travmatize edici Birlik illüzyonunun gerisine saklanmış olan insan-doğa ya da simgesel-imgesel birlikteliği de açığa çıkar. Şiir kişisinin bir sonraki kıtada ölümü bir son ya da bitiş olarak görmeyip bedenler arası bir geçiş olarak yorumlamaya başlayışı da doğanın sahibi olduğu yanılgısını terk ederek doğa-insan kesişiminde yer alışının farkına vardığını gösterir. Şiir kişisinin

ölümü sevinçle karşılayışındaki semantik sapma, şüphesiz ki, ölüm/yaşam ikili zıtlığını yıkan Lacan'ın ya da Braidotti'nin ölüm üzerine düşünceleri ile netlik kazanır. Lacan *lamella* mitinden yola çıkarak, tüm insanlarda cinsiyetleştirilmeden önceki yaşama dönme arzusunun olduğunu ve bu "doğuşumuzla birlikte kaybettiğimiz ebedi yaşama [*lamella*'ya]" (Jaanus 131) geri dönüşün yalnızca ölüm ile tekrar deneyimlenebileceğini ifade ederken, benzer şekilde Braidotti de ölümü teleolojik bir düzleme oturtmayıp türler arası bir yer değiştiriş olarak düşünür. Ancak, burada vurgulanması gereken nokta tabii ki de şiir kişisinin dönüşüm yaşaması ya da doğa-insan'a geçişi için biyolojik bir ölüm tecrübe etmesi gerekmediğidir. Doğa ile kurduğu imgesel ilişki ile de şiir kişisi bir anlamda ölümü tadar: bu ölüm modernite söylemi tarafından ona dayatılan Kartezyen benlik algısının ya da doğaya karşı sömürgeci olarak konumlandırıldığı antropos kimliğinin ölümünü simgelerken, insan-doğa olarak yeniden doğuşuna da göndermede bulunur. Son kıtalarda, bülbülün şiir kişisini ormanda yalnız bıraktığı ima edilir; ancak, bülbülün şiir kişisinde uyandırdığı imgeselde yaşanılana benzer bütünlük hissi o kadar etkili olur ki bülbülü artık göremese de şiir kişisi insan-doğa alternatif ontolojisinde yaşamaya devam eder. Bülbülün gidişi, şiir kişisinde eksiklik hissi oluşturarak beraberinde sürekli olarak bülbülü ya da bülbülün onda uyandırdığı bütünlük hissini arayış ihtiyacını da doğuracağından, arzunun canlı tutulması açısından çok önemli bir rol üstlenmiş olur.

"Bülbüle Ağıt" şiirindeki bülbüle benzer şekilde "Kasvetli Aralık'ta" şiirindeki insanolmayan ağaç ve dere de şiir kişisinde bütünlük hissi yaşatarak, Birlik mitini yıkar. İnsan öznelerden farklı olarak, şiirdeki ağaç ve dere herhangi bir hafıza taşımaz. Geçmiş, şimdiki zaman ya da geleceğin arasındaki sınırların çözüldüğü doğadaki ağaç için işlevsel bir doğrusal zamandan da bahsedilemez. Şiir kişisinin aktardığı üzere, Aralık ayında olmasına rağmen, ağaç hep bir mutluluk halindedir ve dallarının yeşil olduğu zamanları ya da yaz mevsimini hatırlamadığı için geçmişe dair herhangi bir üzüntü duymaz. Aksine, ebedi şimdide yaşayarak, holistik bir düzlemde sevince dönüşmüştür adeta. Üstelik, ampirik gerçekliğe meydan okurcasına, Aralık soğuğunda bile tomurcuklanmaktan vazgeçmez. Benzer şekilde, dere de dondurucu zamanların mutluğuna ket vurmasına izin vermeyerek, Oluşuna

sürekli olarak devam eder. Şiir kişisi, lineer zaman algısının çalışmadığı ve ikili zıtlıkların ötesindeki doğadaki bu ağaç ve dere ile karşılaşmasında, topolojik olarak simgeselden imgesele kayar. Bastırdığı korporel gerçekliğin aslında tam da içinde bulunduğunun farkına vararak ise insanın imgesel-simgesel arasında bir yerde olduğunu açığa çıkarır.

Keats'in "Isabella; ya da Fesleğen Saksısı," "Lamia" ve "Acımasız Güzel Kadın" şiirleri psikotiğin simgesele topografik anlamda girişini estetize ederek post/non-antroposentrik özne konumları sergiler. Psikozun birey düzeyinde gözlemlendiği diğer "Isabella; ya da Fesleğen Saksısı" ve "Acımasız Güzel Kadın" şiirlerinden farklı olarak, "Lamia" şiirindeki psikoz hem bireysel hem de kolektif düzeyde görülür. Lorenzo, Lamia ve Acımasız Güzel Kadın gibi insan-insanolmayan, güzel-tiksindirici, gerçek-fantastik aralığında kalarak, ikili zıtlıklara meydan okuyan psikotik karakterler, üçüncü bir varlık alanı açarak Birlik fantezisini yıkarlar. Post-antroposentrik Lacancı bir perspektif ile yaklaşılan şiirlerin tartışılmasında Lacan'ın psikoz, Babanın Adı metaforu ve üstü çizili ~~Kadın~~ konseptlerinden yararlanılmıştır.

"Isabella; ya da Fesleğen Saksısı" şiirindeki Lorenzo'nun kesik başında estetik bir ifadeye bürünen reddedilmiş Babanın Adı göstereni, ikili zıtlıkların üzerine kurulu baskın söylemin kodlarını imgesel öteki/simgesel Öteki, bitki/insan ve ölüm/yaşam hiyerarşilerini yıkarak okuyucuları post/non-antroposentrik özne konumları ile buluşturur. Psikotik bir bağlamda sunulmasına rağmen imgesel ve simgesel arasındaki modernitenin varsaydığı duvarları da yıkması açısından Lorenzo büyük anlatılara karşı transgresif bir rol üstenir. Reddedilen Babanı Adı göstereninin gerçekte yeniden belirişini ifade eden Lorenzo'nun kesik başı Isabella'nın onun ölümü ile açığa çıkan psikotik çözülüşünün ürünüdür. Isabella Lorenzo'yu o kadar çok sever ki onu adeta narsistik benliğini güçlendirecek bir ayna imgesi gibi görür. Isabella'nın Lorenzo ile kurduğu imgesel anlatı ne yazık ki dış dünyanın saldırısına uğrar. Isabella'nın fakir Lorenzo ile değil zengin bir erkekle evlenmesini isteyen erkek kardeşleri, Lorenzo'yu öldürerek ormana gömerler. Onun çok uzak diyarlara gittiği yalanı ile de Isabella'yı kandırırlar. Isabella'nın psikozunun açığa çıkışı işte tam da erkek kardeşlerinin ona Lorenzo'yu unutturmaya çalıştıkları ana rastlar.

Lorenzo'nun yokluğu gerçeğini kabullenemeyen Isabella, tüm gün boyunca ağlar ve reddedilen ana gösterenin gerçekte yeniden vücut bulduğunu gösteren halüsinasyonlara maruz kalır. Bu halüsinasyonların ikincisinde, Lorenzo ona nasıl bıçaklanarak öldürüldüğünü anlatır. Bunun üzerine ormanda Lorenzo'nun cansız bedenine ulaşan Isabella, bu ölümü kabullenmek yerine, kendi gerçekliğini yeniden kurar: Lorenzo'nun başını kesip onu bir fesleğen saksına eker. Isabella'nın Lorenzo'nun ölümünü kabullenmek istemez; çünkü, bu ölümü ya da Lorenzo'nun ondan ayrılışını Yasa'nın imgesele girerek onu simgesel düzene entegre etmeye çalışması olarak okur. Başka bir deyişle, simgesele giriş için Yasanın imgesel düzendeki anne-çocuk simbiyotik ilişkisinin arasına girmesi gerekir. Isabella Lorenzo ile imgesel bir ilişki içerisinde olduğu için onun ölümünü Yasanın aralarına girişi ve dolayısı ile simgeselden gelen bir tehdit olarak algılar. Bunun yanı sıra, simgesel Öteki onun için hiçbir anlam ifade etmediği için Lorenzo ya da kendisinin simgeselleştirilişini kabul etmeyip, gerçeği kendi imgeselinde yeniden inşa eder. Lorenzo'nun başını kesip fesleğen saksısına ekişi ile öteki/Öteki hiyerarşilerinin yıkıldığı yeni bir Oedipal oyun sergiler. Öncelikle Lorenzo, kastrasyonu andıran kafasının kesilişi ile simgesele girmeyip imgesele çöker ve Isabella için yeniden imgesel öteki konumunu alır. Rasyonaliteyi temsil eden başın kesimi bu anlamda Lorenzo'nun yeniden doğumunun rasyonelden irrasyonele kayış ile mümkün kılınacağını belirtir. Kastrasyonu tersinden okuyan Isabella'nın bu oyunda pasif değil aktif bir role bürünüşü ise kadını 'erkek olmayan' olarak tanımlayan baskın söylemin kabullenilmiş yargılarını nasıl aştığının göstergesidir.

Lorenzo insanın insanolmayana karşı öncelendiği insan-merkezli düşünce sistemini aynı zamanda insan-insanolmayan arasında yer alışı ile yıkar. Reddettiği Babanın Adı göstereni ile simgeselde açılan boşluğu imgesel düzlemde konuşarak telafi etmeye çalışan Isabella, Lorenzo'nun başını keserek ve onu saksıya ekerek kendine bir düşsel tutunma noktası yaratır. Bu düşün yaratımında rol oynayan Lorenzo'nun kesik başı ise, saksıya ekildikten sonra verdiği fesleğen filizleri ile insan ontolojisinden insan-bitki ontolojisine geçer. Farklı varlık alanlarını tanımlayan Lorenzo psikotik bir özne olmasına rağmen, metaforik anlamda öznenin durağan olmayıp imgesel-simgesel ya da insanolmayan-insan kesişiminde yer aldığını ve

dilsel-dilöncesi enerjilerin sürekli akışı ile salt rasyonel akla indirgenemeyeceğini gösterir. Lorenzo'nun Isabella'nın anlatısında sadece insan ya da sadece bitki olarak var olmayıp insan-bitkiye dönüşümü benzer şekilde Braidotti'nin düşüncesi ile Varlıktan (Being) Oluşa (Becoming) geçilen transkorporel süreçlerin de temsili niteliğindedir. Lorenzo'nun kesik başında sanatsal bir ifadeye ulaşan Isabella'nın psikozu, teleolojik düzleme oturtulan hümanist söylemin ölüm anlayışını da yıkarak ölüm/yaşam hiyerarşik ayrımını yıkar. Isabella'nın erkek kardeşleri tarafından öldürüldükten sonra sonlanmayıp fesleğen saksısında insan-bitki olarak yaşamına devam edişi bunun göstergesidir. Çürüyen insan bedeninin bitki bedeninde yeniden oluşması ile Lorenzo, telosun olmadığı ya da işlevsiz kaldığı doğanın sürekli yeni bir yaratım halinde bulunduğunu gösterir. Dolayısı ile, doğanın bir parçası olan insan öznesinin de sabitliğinden ya da sonluluğundan bahsedilemez. Lacancı anlamda bu sürekli devinim hali, şüphesiz ki, bizlere arzunun doyurulamaz oluşu ile devamlı olarak yolda olmanın ya da eylemliliğin gerekliliğini anımsatır.

İnsan-hayvan, başlangıç-bitiş, kadın-erkek, güzel-tiksindirici ve güvenilir-tehdit edici kesişiminde yer alan Lamia da Lorenzo'ya benzer şekilde reddedilen Babanın Adı göstereninin enkarnasyonu olarak modernite diskuruna başkaldırır. Lycius'un kastrasyonu kabul etmeyişi ile gerçekte yeniden beliren psikotik figür Lamia, kördüğüm şekli ile de derinleşen arada kalmışlık hali ile moderniteye ait epistemolojik kategorilerin doğruluğunu sorgulatır. Bir yılanın başına ve boğazına sahipken aynı zamanda ağzı kadın ağzıdır. Üstelik, insan ve insanolmayanın bir araya geldiği yılan-kadın bedeni ile ikili zıtlıklar arasında olduğu varsayılan ayrımı yıkarken, aynı zamanda birçok hayvana dair özelliği de barındırışı ile iyice karmaşıklaşır. Zebra gibi çizgilere, panter gibi çillere ve tavuskuşu gibi gözlere sahiptir. "Bürlesk bir dansçıyı anımsatan" (Perkins 267) bu hali ile Lamia Kartezyen benlik algısını ya da insan istisnailiği düşüncesini yerer. Başka bir deyişle hem insan hem de çeşitli hayvan özelliklerini tek bir vücutta sergileyerek, insan-insanolmayan sürekliliğine vurgu yapar ve türler hiyerarşisi ile alay eder. Çözümlenmesi mümkün olmayan kördüğüm formundan dolayı Lacanyen anlamda Moebius şeridini somutlaştırdığını söyleyebileceğimiz Lamia bu bağlamda iç-dış birlikteliğine vurgu yaparak insan öznesinin *extimate* oluşuna da göndermede bulunur.

Hermes'in yardımı ile tekrar kadın görünümüne erişip Korint'e geçiş yapan Lamia benzer şekilde onu tanımlayıcı herhangi bir kimlik belirtecinden yoksunluğu ile de simgesel kodlara tehdit oluşturur. Simgeselleştirilmemiş gösterenin gerçekte yeniden açığa vurumunu estetize eden Lamia'nın ismine, ailesine, ya da cinsiyetine dair hiçbir kesin bulunmaz. Ontolojik olarak var olmasına rağmen epistemolojik olarak tanımlanamayan Lamia bu müphemliği ile hem Apollonius'ın hem de Lycius'ın otoritesini tehlikeye atar. Lycius'un kendi psikozunun dışa vurumu olarak gerçekte tekrar beliren Lamia karşısındaki çaresizliği ise şiire trajikomik bir ton katar. Hiçbir kimliksel tanımlamaya sığmayan Lamia, ya Havva ya da Meryem ile eşleştirilen bilindik kadın mitini çarpıtarak da baskın söylemi altüst eder. Bu bağlamda, bir orman perisini görünmez kılarak özgürlüğüne eriştirirken, Korint'e girebilmek için Hermes'den yardım dilenen yine Lamia'dır. Benzer şekilde, Lycius'a aşkını dile getirirken düğün anında eriyerek bu aşkı evlilikle taçlandırmayışı da Braidotti'nin sözleri ile "heteroseksüel, ailesel ya da reprodüktif cinselliğe" ("İnsansonrası Feminist Kuram" 690) bir başkaldırı olarak düşünülebilir.

Simgeselin imgesel tarafından yutuluşunu şiirselleştiren "Isabella; ya da Fesleğen Saksısı" ve "Lamia" şiirlerindeki gibi "Acımasız Güzel Kadın" şiirinde de psikotik olan, egemenliğini ilan ederek gerçekliği imgeselde yeniden kurar. Bir şövalyenin psikotik çözülümü ile gerçekte yeniden beliren dizginsiz gösterenin enkarnasyonu Acımasız Güzel Kadın bütün Saussurecü bilindik gerçekleri yıkarak baskın söylemi işlevsiz hale getirir. Acımasız Güzel Kadının standardize edilmiş kategorileri ya da Platonik metaforları yıkışında ölçülemezliği ya da müphemliği rol oynar: insan-insanolmayan ve kutsal görünümlü peri kadın-şeytanımsı canavar kadın eşiğinde bulunan Acımaz Güzel Kadın bu arada kalmışlığı ile ikiliklerin ötesindeki üçüncü bir varlık alanın münkünlüğünü ima eder.

"Acımasız Güzel Kadın" hiçbir kuşun şarkı söylemediği ıssız bir tepede acınası bir halde tek başına dolaşan bir şövalyenin portesi ile karşılar bizleri. Şiirde belirtildiği üzere, şövalye söze aktaramadığı bir acıdan yakınmaktadır. Yaşadığı acının nedeni aşk acısı gibi görünse de şiirde söylenmeyenler ışığında açığa çıkan aslında Acımasız Güzel Kadının aniden kayboluşu ile yaşadığı şey, imgeselde yarattığı halüsinasyonel

gerçekliğin sekteye uğrayışıdır. Eksik gösterenle karşılaştıktan sonra gerçekliği imgesel düzlemde yeniden kuran şövalye, halüsinasyon olarak gerçekte yeniden beliren Acımasız Güzel Kadın ile kendine bir tutunma noktası yaratır. Müphemliği ile hümanist söyleme tehdit oluşturan bu kadın hiçbir tanımlamaya uymazken, şövalye onu kendi bencil isteklerinin tatmini için şekillendirmeye çalışır. Ancak, bir erkeği tamamlayıcı ayna unsuru olmayı reddeden kadın, tüm kadınlar adına konuşurcasına, onu bencilce istekleri ile yalnız bırakır. Bu terkediliş ile tıpkı kırık bir ayna ile baş başa kalmışçasına hisseden şövalye ise anlam zincirindeki boşluğu doldurmak adına psikotik bir figür olarak yeniden beliren kadının da gidişi ile bedbahtlığa gömülür.

Bitki-insan Lorenzo ve Yılan-kadın Lamia'ya benzer bir şekilde, Acımasız Güzel Kadın arada kalmışlığı ile psikotik bir çerçevede olsa da türler arası hiyerarşiyi yıkar. Öncelikle, şarkılar söyleyişiyle ve başındaki çiçekten taç ile tıpkı bilindik bir peri portresi sergilerken aynı zamanda da fallik annenin metaforik uzantısı olarak sessizliği gerisinde saklı kurnazlıkla örülü bir bilinmezlik barındırır. Kadının tüm bu müphemliği karşısında kelimesiz kalan şövalyenin, onu peri mağarasında öptükten sonra daldığı uykuda gördüğü rüya şiirinin ilk satırlarında resmedilen üzgünlüğünü açıklar niteliktedir. Kadının etkisinden sıyrılmak için gözlerini kapatan şövalye rüyasında birçok kral, prens ve silahşor tarafından kadından uzak durmasına dair uyarılır. Bu doğrultuda, kadının ayrılışı kendi isteği ile gerçekleşen bir başkaldırı olarak okunabileceği gibi aynı zamanda şövalyenin de onun arada kalmışlığı ile başa çıkamayınca ondan kurtulmak ya da onu yok etmek isteyişini ifade eder. Başka bir deyişle, modernitenin ikili zıtlıklar etrafında şekillenen epistemik kategorilere uymayanı yok saydığı gibi, şövalye de gittiğini söylediği kadını esasında belirli bir tanıma uyduramadığı için kendi elleri ile yok saymış ya da bastırmıştır. Böylelikle, gördüğü rüya da kendi başarısızlığını örtmek için takındığı bir savunma mekanizması olarak okunabilir.

"Grek Urn'üne Ağıt" şiirinde "Bülbüle Ağıt" ve "Kasvetli Aralık'ta" şiirlerine benzer bir şekilde öznenin simgeselden imgesele topolojik aktarımı gözlemlenir. Şiir kişisi ampirik gerçeklikten dili aşan ya da dil-öncesi imgesele topolojik olarak kayışı

ile iç-dış eş zamanlılığını sergiler. Beklenmedik bir şekilde beliriveren vazo, yüzeyindeki imgeler ve onlara ait anlatılmamış hikayeler ile şiir kişisine epifanik bir deneyim yaşatır. Vazonun sergilediği imgesel uzamın bilinçaltına konuşması ile şiir kişisi psişik olarak yeniden konumlanır ve içsel/dışsal ayrımının yıkıldığı Moebius şeridine dönüşür. Şiirdeki özne-nesne, insan-insanolmayan birlikteliği Lacan'ın *extimacy* kavramı ışığında tartışılır ve öznenin sabit bir varlık olmayıp imgesel-simgesel enerjilerin birlikteliği ile sürekli dinamik olan topolojik bir yapıya sahip olduğuna değinilir.

Şiir kişini vazonun imgesel alanına çeken ilk olarak onun tanımlanamazlığı ya da matematiksel formüllere sığmayışı olur. Swanson'un belirttiği gibi "vazo orantı açısından simetriktir;" ancak, "asimetrik olanı sembolize eder" (303). Aynı zamanda, transgresif bir rol üstelenen vazonun sessizliği de şiir kişisini etkiler çünkü bu sessizlik hiçbir dile sığmayışı ile nesnenin dil ile kısıtlanamayacağının göstergesidir. Bu noktada, yazılı tarihe geçmemiş gerçekleri anlatışı ile şiir kişisi vazoyu doğa tarihçisine benzetir. Bilindik tarihçilerden farklı olarak, vazo sebep ve sonuç arasındaki simetriyi yıkarak lineer düşünce sistemine tehdit oluşturur. Bu tehdidin nedeni şüphesiz ki, anlattıklarının büyük anlatıların dışında kalışı ile sorgulanmaksızın kabul edilen bütün gerçeklerin güvenilirliğini sorgulatışındandır. Üstelik belirli bir tarihsel süreci anlatmayıp, karşılaştığı her öznenin hayal gücüne göre anlatısının sürekli olarak değişim gösterir.

Vazonun üzerindeki sahnelerden birinde iki genç aşıktan bahsedilir. Aşıklar sürekli olarak yeşil kalan ağacın altında imgeseldeki gibi bir bütünlük hissi ile çevrilerek şarkılarını söylerler. Birbirlerini öpmeye çok yakın bir konumdayken birbirlerini hiç öpemeyecek oluşları şiire patetik bir ton katıyormuş gibi görünse de aslında arzunun doyumsuzluğunu teşvik edeceği için bu kavuşamama aralarındaki ilişkinin de daima dinamik kalacağının göstergesidir. Başka bir değişle genç kız bilinmez kalacağı için sevgilisine haz nesnesi olarak değil arzu nesnesi olarak hitap etmeye devam edecektir. Aşık çift imgesinin arzuyu böylesine canlı kılışları şiir kişisini etkileyerek onu simgeselden imgesele uzatır. Aşıklara benzer şekilde, vazo üzerindeki pastoral imgeler de lineer zamanın dışında kaldıkları için daima canlıdırlar ve sürekli olarak

yeniden var olurcasına holistik bir şekilde hep şimdide yaşarlar. İmgelerin yaşamındaki bu sevinç, şiir kişisinin de simgesel-öncesi imgesel uzamda yaşanana benzer bir bütünlük hissine erişmesini sağlayarak *extimate* oluşuna yol açar. Genç aşıklar ve mutlu doğa ile bütünselliğe erişen şiir kişisi daha sonra ise vazonun uzamında sergilenen yavru bir ineğin kurban edildiği tören sahnesi ile karşılaşır. Aşıkların öpüşmesinin askıya alınışı gibi bu sahnede de yavru ineğin kurban edilişi sürekli olarak ertelenir. Bu tamamlanmamışlık hissi ilginç bir şekilde şiir kişinde *jouissance* dolu hisler uyandırır. Şiirin son kıtasına gelindiğinde ise ne insan öznesi olduğu ima edilen şiir kişinin ne de insanolmayan nesnenin aynı kalışından söz edebiliriz. Sergilediği imgelerin *imago*ya dönüşü ile vazo basit bir nesneden *extimate objet petit a* konumuna evrilirken, şiir kişisi ise nesne ile yeniden kurduğu imgesel bağ ile *extimate* bir Oluşa dönüşür ya da zaten *extimate* oluşuna uyanır.

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