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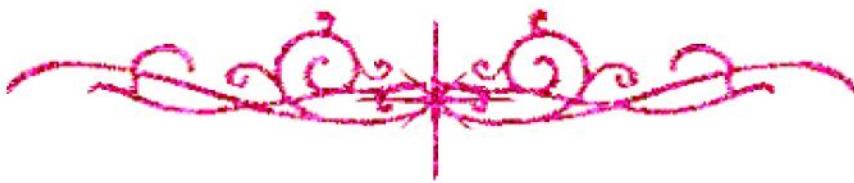
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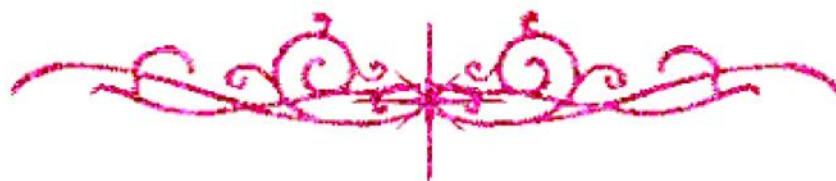


بعض الوثائق الأصلية تالفة





بالرسالة صفحات
لم ترد بالأصل





Negative Capability in Selected Poems by John Keats and Muhammad Abdulmu'ti Alhamshari: a Comparative Study

PhD Thesis

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Introduction

This study explores the connection between poetry and nature in an attempt to show that nature is a source of literary creativity that could help the receiver achieve self-realization, and also increase ecological awareness. Through an eco-critical reading, as well as the use of Jungian archetypal analysis, the study compares the Romantic poems of John Keats (1795-1821) and M. A. Alhamshari (1908-1938). Since the thesis is partly about an Egyptian poet, the need to use Arabic names, titles of poems and references has been necessary. Therefore, the study has followed the system of transliteration of Arabic words and names used by the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University. An attachment of it can be found at the end of the introduction.

The justification of the choice of Keats and Alhamshari among other Romantic poets lies in their unique poetic visions and techniques that characterize their poems with the quality of Negative Capability, which Keats has described as characteristic of “a man of Achievement especially in Literature”. Keats’s and Alhamshari’s nature poems focus on the minute details of concrete reality and the influence of those details on their inner beings and poetical creativity. For example, both of them used synaesthesia to depict a tableau of a natural scene that would also convey an inner meaning. In this connection W. J. Bate defines it as “the substantiation of one sense by another in order to give... additional dimension and depth” (Perkins 1119). It should also be noted here that synaesthesia is a representation of William Hazlitt’s notion of ‘Gusto’ (Italian for taste). Bate defines Gusto as an excitement of the imagination that allows an almost full perceptive identification with the object and in which “the living character of the object is caught and shared in its full diversity and given vital expression in art”. Thus by grasping the “over-all significance” of the object, the “power of passion” is able to conceive the object “with its various qualities coalescing into the vital unity that is the object itself”. One result of this unity according to Bate is that the qualities that we glean through our different senses are not presented separately, but “the impression made on one sense excites by affinity those of another”, hence synaesthesia (Bate 244).

An example of this could be traced in Alhamshari’s poem “Ah{la<m Alna<ri>nja Aldha<bila” (The Dreams of the Withering Bitter Orange Tree) in which he compares the ‘magical legends’ that the starling relates to the bitter orange tree to emanations of the ‘Narcissus’ imagination’. Line 44 goes: “It tells her a magical legend that emanates from the Narcissus’ imagination”. The speaker here appeals to the three

different senses of vision, hearing, and smelling to depict the concreteness of the intimacy between the starling and the tree. The aim of this intense image is not only to depict a beautiful natural tableau, but there is a deeper significance. How could a bird relate to a tree, magical imaginative legends that are likened to the fragrance of a flower? The starling, as a bird, stands for the aerial principle that aspires to reach a more mature stage of psychic growth; whereas the tree is a symbol of the chthonic principle that ties creatures to their corporeal reality, and it is itself an emblem of the whole process of psychic growth and self-realization. The intimacy between the starling and the tree, created, above all, through imagination, shows the speaker's striving to reach maturity through the union of the two opposites of the spiritual (represented by the bird) and the material (represented by the tree), especially if we learn that the speaker has identified himself with the withering tree from the very beginning of the poem. It is as though he is suffering by being unable to grow psychologically and is surrendering himself to dreams, as the title shows, but the starling's imaginative stories could help him complete his path instead of 'withering'.

As for Keats, he is well known for using the technique of synaesthesia. In his poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn" he personifies the urn by comparing it to a 'Sylvan historian' as lines 3 and 4 show: "Sylvan historian, who canst thus express/ A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme". How can a tale be 'flowery', and 'sweet', even sweeter than the 'rhyme' or the poem about the urn? The speaker appeals to the visionary, auditory, tactile and also gustatory senses to express the union of opposites which the urn stands for: it represents the fusion of all those senses. It is a 'flowery tale' that is sweeter than a rhyme. This fusion has a deeper significance as, by the end of the poem, the urn is presented as a "Cold Pastoral" that displays the 'visible' beautiful scenes that lack the liveliness of human conflict, and that can only acquire the 'invisible' meaning through human contemplation. Therefore, it is a union of opposites that stands for the harmony one feels on contemplating a 'beautiful' work of art, a union between the 'inner' and 'outer'; the 'ideal' and the 'realistic'. To achieve psychic maturity one needs such union of opposites that only contemplation can offer as will be shown through the explanation of Carl Jung's theory. The fusion of the senses stands for this 'invisible' union that characterizes psychic growth. It is as though the urn is offering its contemplator a chance for psychic growth.