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## A Symbolic Study of Mystical Love in Blake's *The Lamb* and Ibn al-Farid's *Khamriyya*

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### Abstract:

This study examines the symbolic representation of mystical love in William Blake's *The Lamb*, and Ibn al-Farid's *Khamriyya*, demonstrating how both poets, despite their different cultural backgrounds, employ symbolism to express divine love as a universal theme. Through a formalist theoretical framework drawing on Ransom, Richards, Brooks, Tyson, and Empson, the research analyzes how symbolic elements serve not merely as aesthetic devices but as sophisticated vehicles for conveying mystical experiences. Using qualitative textual analysis and close reading techniques, this study reveals how both poets craft their symbolic language to articulate the ineffable nature of mystical love. The findings highlight the shared patterns in their symbolic expression despite their distinct literary traditions, contributing to our understanding of mystical poetry's universal qualities.

**Key Words:** Mystical love, symbolism, formalist theory, William Blake, Ibn al-Farid.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mysticism refers to the spiritual pilgrimage, undertaken by Sufis toward the Beloved, which starts with the nakedness of the soul from earthly love, and ends with the quilt of the Divine Love. For Schimmel, Sufism refers to a personal connection between Lord and slave, Creator and created, God and human (As Through a Veil 15). This bond between the Divine and man is based on love; St. Catherine of Genoa says, " I wish not for anything that comes from Thee, but only for Thee, oh sweetest Love" (qtd. in Underhill 82). Mysticism is not confined to a particular culture, time or religion. It is a universal aspect

which is referred to as "the great spiritual current which goes through all religions" (qtd. In Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* 4). In this respect, Vaughan-Lee says, "The bond with the Beloved, born outside of time and space, knows no difference in culture or religion" (xii). Sufism has many traditions. Of these traditions is Sufi poetry which is, according to Carl Ernst (2016), the best well-known and most treasured (136). Such a kind of poetry, which is universal, revolves around many themes including the mystical love; Schimmel states that, "the feeling of all-embracing love is predominant, as is characteristic of mystical poetry all over the world" (*As Through a Veil* 9). For instance, Rabia, to whom the earliest mystical verses in Arabic mystical poetry are ascribed, sings of her love of God, a love which is absolute and does not grow or diminish by the thought of Paradise or Hell (17-18). Rabia says, "Two loves I give Thee: Love that yearns / And Love because Thy due is Love" (*Sufi Mystical Poetry* 3).

Mystical poetry serves as a vessel for the profound divine love that Sufis harbor for the Beloved, expressing this transcendent connection through rich symbolic language. In their poetic tradition, Sufis adopt what Schimmel identifies as the ghazal style, though their true subject remains "the Divine Love" (*As Through a Veil* 36). A distinctive feature of this tradition, particularly among Arab Sufis, is the sophisticated use of feminine names such as Salma or Laila to symbolize the Divine Beloved—a practice inherited from classical Arabic love poetry. This artistic convention reflects what Schimmel (1982) eloquently describes as "the feeling that the true lover sees only the Divine Beloved was poetically symbolized in images taken from traditional love stories" (26). This concept finds its quintessential expression in the verses of Majnun Laila:

I pass by the region, the dwelling place of Laila,  
And kiss this wall and that wall.  
Yet it's not love for the houses which enraptures my heart,  
But love of her who dwells in the houses. (26)

This study examines how two seminal works – Ibn al-Farid's *Khamriyya* and William Blake's *The Lamb* – employ symbolism to articulate mystical love. Both poets, despite their distinct cultural contexts, utilize symbolic language to convey their divine experiences. While Ibn al-Farid declares, "In memory of the Beloved we quaffed a vintage that made us drunk before the creation of the vine" (Nicholson 184), Blake crafts his spiritual message through natural imagery.

Through a formalist lens, this research investigates how these poets utilize symbols as vehicles for expressing mystical love. As Underhill notes, Symbols, which are like clothes that the spiritual borrows from the physical, are a means of artistic expression. (77). By examining these works through textual analysis, this study reveals how symbolic elements serve to bridge the earthly and the divine, demonstrating mystical love's universality across cultural and religious boundaries.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the symbolic representation of mystical love in William Blake's *The Lamb* and Ibn al-Farid's *Khamriyya*. As defined by Selinger and Shohamy, descriptive research includes a set of techniques that can be applied to identify and describe natural phenomena without experimental manipulation (qtd. in Munir 41). The research utilizes close reading as its primary analytical tool, with the researcher serving as the main instrument in identifying, collecting, and analyzing symbolic elements that reflect mystical love in both poems. Primary data were extracted from the two poems, while secondary data encompassed scholarly works including papers, theses, books, and articles that provided critical perspectives on the texts.

The methodological framework centers on textual analysis, which encompasses recognizing and interpreting a set of verbal and nonverbal signs (Vanderstoep and Johnston 210). This approach is

particularly suitable as it recognizes that "any object or verbal or visual text that carries symbolic meaning is a source of textual analysis" (213). Following Peirce's conception that a "sign compels you to think about something other than itself" (qtd. in Vanderstoep and Johnston 210), the analysis focuses on how symbolic elements in both poems serve as vehicles for expressing mystical love. The poems were systematically divided into sections, with particular attention paid to passages containing symbols relevant to mystical love, allowing for a detailed formalist analysis of how these elements contribute to the poems' spiritual dimensions.

### 3. DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Analysis of *Khamriyya's Structure and Language*

This poem which consists of 41 verses is said to "take the form of qasida (Dubois 32) despite the fact that the poet does not begin by mourning the absence of a lover at an abandoned dwelling as Dubois claims; yet, the poet does begin his poem by moaning the absence of a lover because he is in a state of separation and longing for the Beloved. Ibn al-Farid's mastery in employing the Arab poetic style for religious ends is obvious in his poems, particularly *Khamriyya* (32). In this poem, the poet describes the wine by following the qasida pattern of his time. The poet describes in great detail the experience of the indulgence in wine drinking: its appearance, its scent, its age and its effect on the boon companions. There is also a description of the cup-bearer who serves the wine, the singer who entertains the drinkers, and the flowers which decorates the tavern (16).

According to Ransom, the structure and texture of the poem create the universe of the poem. They promote the logical and discursive development of the poem universe; Ransom argues that, to explain the structure and style of poets, is to uncover poetic strategy, which is regarded as the last and most unique gift that poets possess (qtd. In Elliot 3). In other words, symbols or the experience of the poets are some gifts given to the poet to help create the rhetorical propositions of the poem. The integration of such elements encourages the poet to carry the ideas and attitudes to persuade the readers to involve into the universe of his poem.

Accordingly, looking at the text's structure, readers notice that in verses (1-4) Ibn al-Farid begins by introducing the place, the tavern, where Sufis gather to drink wine although time has left only its last breath in this material world. In the main section of the poem, the poet goes on to explain in what way the wine still exists and affects mankind at the present time. In verses (5-7), he points out how the utterance of the wine causes happiness in the human heart. He then in lines (8-20) presents an elaborate depiction of the wine's miraculous powers. In verses (21-35), the wine is further praised and discussed. These verses are regarded as the most personal part of the text because the poet talks about his own experience. In the concluding section (vv. 36-41) he gives instructions on how to seek the wine, and, in a passionate appeal, he implores readers not to miss what is essential in this life. These final lines again present the boon-companions gathered in the tavern where they drink wine and listen to music. The conclusion thus corresponds to the introduction and forms with it a sort of frame enclosing Ibn al-Farid's main subject, the narrative of wine's loss, its destruction through time. But as he says at the beginning and again at the end of *Khamriyya*, what has been lost can be regained (Dmitriev and Ruymbeke 296).

Furthermore, conditional statements dominate the poem where 14 lines out of 41 include conditional sentences, and this serves various purposes. Of these 14 verses only two lines differ in the type of conditional sentence, namely verse five which contains the zero type, and verse seven which includes type one. The rest, on the other hand, contain type three. The poet in verse five says, "If it be mentioned amongst the tribe, the tribesmen become intoxicated without incurring disgrace or committing sin", where he uses the zero type of conditional sentence whose function is to "express situations that are true and unchanging" (Al-Sharif 29). Therefore, the use of this type in line five reflects the immediate effect of the Divine Wine on the boon-companions who become inebriated not only when they sip at this wine, but also when its name is mentioned. Additionally, since the use of zero type refers to true

and unchanging situations, the poet draws on this aspect to affirm that remembering the Beloved intoxicates His lovers, which remains an unchanging situation as the zero type of conditionals suggests.

In verse seven, the poet says, “If it ever come into the mind of a man, joy will abide with him and grief will journey away”, where the conditional sentence of type one expresses a possible condition and its probable result, which is the reason behind its use here, i.e., to assure the listeners that sadness and grief will fade away as long as the lovers keep remembering the Beloved and tasting His Wine.

Type three in English language, on the other hand, is used to describe past events that did not happen, yet the situations involve real events. Besides, this type of conditional sentence is used to describe imaginary situations in the past (Al-Sharif 55). However, the purpose behind using them in this poem is to represent those situations as if they are unreal, yet they become real the moment the conditions are fulfilled. This type of conditionals uses the past perfect tense which suggest that such situations happened a longer time ago, which indicates that the speaker has already gone through such situations and has experienced the effect of the Divine Wine.

With regard to the language of *Khamriyya*, Ibn al-Farid makes use of the language and imagery of the bacchic poets; A.J. Arberry, cited by Dubois, notes that Ibn al-Farid uses a symbolism which he did not employ in his other poem; while his models for them came from the erotic and praise poetry, here he adopts the traditional language and imagery of the bacchic poets, particularly drawing inspiration from Abu Nuwas (33). Ibn al-Farid employs a symbolic language in this poem, and this is obvious from the first line where he says, in Nicholson's translation, "In memory of the beloved, we quaffed a vintage that made us drunk before the creation of the vine"(184). Here he uses the word "beloved" as a symbol to stand for God, and the word "wine" to represent the Divine Love, as Dubois declares when talking about Sufi poetry in general and *Khamriyya* in particular, that wine symbolically refers to the divine love and drunkenness indicates mystical inebriation (26). And since *Khamriyya* takes the form of the Arabic qasida, and the poet was influenced by the traditional Arabic poetry, there is no wonder to see as a language of love between a lover and his beloved; yet, the image of the lover and the beloved which is common in Sufi poetry usually depicts the human as a lover, and God as the beloved (Dubois 30-31).

### **3.2. Distribution and Description of Symbols in *Khamriyya***

According to Ransom, the poet creates his own way to distribute the symbols or other technical devices inside his text. The way of distribution creates a critical structure which is the individual strategic effectiveness that may lead into some particular insights. It is an attempt by the poet to demonstrate how these particular devices work together toward a poetic universe.

Having a look at the distribution of the symbols in *Khamriyya*, it is elicited that most of the verses include a symbol or more, and those lines which do not contain symbols revolve around and support the ones mentioned in the other verses. The third part of verses includes repeated symbols, which the poet has made use of to stress his message behind the employed symbols. To support what has been said so far, the first verse mentions, among many other symbols, the symbolism of the wine which the poet associates with the Divine Love. The rest of the ode also talks about the impact and effect of the Divine Wine on the boon-companions when they become drunk; they not only talk about the effect, but also refer to the miraculous power of the Divine Love. Moreover, going through the poem, readers easily can identify that almost all verses that follow verse one refer to this wine either by using the pronoun ‘it’ or by mentioning it directly, and only in line 33 the verb “drunk” is used to describe it.

In this ode, the poet not only uses a symbolic language to deliver his message, but also employs other symbols to describe symbols; in the first line the poet uses the wine as a symbol to indicate the Divine Love, and in the second verse he falls back upon other symbols, namely “the moon”, “the sun” and “the stars” to illustrate how the Divine Love is significant in the lovers' life, particularly during their spiritual journey toward the Beloved. It enlightens their path and helps them defeat the darkness of this material world the same way the sun, the moon and the stars do that without which humans would be lost in total

darkness, especially those nations who lived in the past whose main source for light during the day was the sun, and the moon and the stars during the night. In other words, the enlightenment that the Divine Love showers upon His lovers enables them to continue their pilgrimage. This enlightenment is similar to that of the moon and the North Star which is said to have helped the caravans of traders and travelers at night in the Arab Peninsula in the past.

### 3.3. Tense used in *Khamriyya*

The poem is mainly written in the past tense except for some lines written in the present tense. The significance of the past tense lies in what it indicates. That is to say, as Stefanie Warnke contends, if a poem is written in the past tense, it creates a sense of an experience that took place at some point in the past. This means that when the poet falls back upon the past tense, they want to tell the reader about an occurrence or an incident they made a longer time ago (Warnke). Ibn al-Farid, in *Khamriyya*, writes in the first verse, "In memory of the Beloved we quaffed a vintage that made us drunk before the creation of the vine" (Nicholson 184), where the past tense implies that the poet himself has experienced such a state of ecstasy, and the first-person plural pronoun 'we' supports this claim, which also can reflect a personal feeling and thoughts. Nonetheless, though the past tense is dominant, the meaning of the ode is still present, for the same result occurs whenever and wherever the boon-companions taste the Divine Wine; i.e., they feel intoxicated which is the same effect this wine leaves on the boon-companions.

The present tense, on the other hand, represents an immediacy of actions or states. And since the effect of the Divine Love on the lovers is similar, despite the fact that sometimes the lovers belong to different cultures and eras, as in the case of the two poets of the present study, the poet tends to use the present tense; the poet in verse 18 says, "It corrects the natures of the boon-companions, so that those who lack resolution are led by it to the path of resolution", where he uses the present tense to associate the result of drinking the Divine Wine with good behavior. The poet uses the present tense, for it is used in English to describe general truths. Accordingly, he takes advantage of this feature to draw the attention of the reader to a general truth of the Divine Wine, and to what it does to those who sip at it and become drunk.

In short, the poet mixes the two tenses of the present and the past to suggest that he had an experience of intoxication and drunkenness on the Divine Wine, and to indicate that the impact of the Divine Wine is factual and immediate. That is to say, no sooner do the lovers taste this wine, than they become rapt and ecstatic. Another reason why the poet employs the present tense is due to what this tense does, i.e., as Warnke argues, if a poem is written in the present tense, it creates a strong connection between the author and the reader, as the speaker articulates his/her feelings in a very intense manner.

Additionally, using different tenses to describe the wine in this poem serves various purposes; for example, in the first verse he uses the past tense to affirm that intoxication did not happen after the boon-companions had come into existence, but they were intoxicated by the Divine Love even before they were created. In the second verse, on the other hand, it is noticed that he uses the Arabic nominal sentence "*laha albadr ka's-un, wa hia shams-un* (Its cup is the full moon; itself a sun)" (Nicholson 184), which in Arabic language indicates constancy and continuity. In the same line the present tense is also used; the poet writes, "Its cup the full moon; itself a sun which a new moon causes to circle. When it is mingled (with water), how many stars appear!" (184). In Arabic language, the present tense implies movement. Thus, the poet mixes in this line the nominal clauses with the verbal clauses to equate between constancy and movement. That is to say, though the wine is served in different times and taverns, the effect is still the same. Similarly, and despite the fact that Sufis belong to different times and cultures, they have the same feeling toward the Beloved. That is, though Sufis' cultures and religions change according to the place and time they are born in, their feelings and affection for the Beloved stays unchanged, and this is what the nominal and verbal clauses imply in this verse in particular and in the poem as a whole in general.

### 3.4. Symbols Used in *Khamriyya*

The poem's title, *Khamriyya*, reveals that the poem is going to discuss an issue related to wine, yet it is not obvious what kind of wine it is going to be. However, the first verse indicates, to some extent, the kind of wine the persona speaks of. This is figured out through the use of the word "Beloved" which, when capitalized, is associated with God. Hence, readers can identify that the wine the poet refers to is different from the one the people are familiar with. Another formal element the opening line reveals is the point of view which is of the first person as the pronoun "we" suggests. The function of the first person is to indicate whether the speaker is an observer or a participant. The pronoun "we" then suggests that the speaker is a participant who experiences the state of drunkenness when mentioning the Beloved as the expression, "In memory of the Beloved" implies.

### **3.4.1. *The Wine as a Symbol for The Divine Love***

The opening verse provides readers with a context which is about a person who drinks wine with his friends as the plural pronoun "we" suggests, and this drinking is a celebration of love for the Beloved as the expression "In memory of the Beloved" indicates. Moreover, the wine the speaker refers to in this line is a symbol for something else; it is understood as a symbol by the use of the hyperbole mentioned in the same verse where the persona claims to be drunk on this vintage before even the creation of the vine. Therefore, the wine here is of divine nature since the context is about boon-companions who are drunk due to the remembrance of the Beloved (God). This opening line also introduces the point of view which is of the first person as the pronoun "we" indicates. It also reveals the tone of this poem, which shows that the speaker is ecstatic and rapturous as the adjective "drunk" suggests.

According to Tyson, the tension structures the poem as a whole (144). For New Criticism, as Tyson states, the meaning of the text is a product of four linguistic devices among which is the tension (138). Consequently, having a look at the poem, particularly the opening verse and the ending two lines, readers can notice that the tension of this poem revolves around two kinds of people: the first one who tastes this wine and becomes intoxicated and as a result enjoys a happy life unlike those who do not taste this wine whose life then becomes "joyless", and they also "miss the path of wisdom" as the speaker affirms. From what has been said so far, it can be hypothesized that the theme is about a love that a lover has for God, and the wine is the central symbol the poet employs to signify this kind of love.

Looking at the poem as a whole, readers recognize that the wine serves as a central symbol, for almost the whole poem talks explicitly or implicitly about it. The word "vintage" in verse one is illustrative of the explicit referencing, while verses (2-20) revolve around the effects of this wine on the boon-companions where the speaker refers to by representing the miraculous power of such a beverage on those who taste it.

### **3.4.2. *The Moon, the Sun, Water and the Stars***

Verse two reads: "Its cup the full moon; itself a sun which a new moon causes to circle. When it is mingled (with water), how many stars appear!" (Nicholson 184).

The poet here likens the wine (the love of God) to the moon, the sun and the stars. The moon symbolizes the enlightenment that the Beloved reveals to his lovers to show them the path to His kingdom. For El-Hage, this moon refers to the "radiant spirit of the pre-eternal creator", and its job is to spread God's wisdom and illumination among Sufis (God's lovers). "The moon" is used as the cup of the wine which symbolically indicates the insight that the Beloved grants His lovers with to defeat the darkness of this physical world, and which on the other hand opens a window for the soul toward the spiritual world.

The poet goes on, "itself a sun" where the wine is referred to as a sun which in turn symbolizes how the Divine Love shines upon and for those whose hearts are empty from any love but His love. Besides, the sun has a symbolic reference to the Divine illumination; the Divine Love causes among the mystics' "circle". This "sun" shines only for those lovers whose souls are in constant yearning for the Beloved.

Conventionally, "water" symbolizes rebirth, baptism, and life sustainer. It also represents the origin of life, and regeneration (Obasi 160). In *Khamriyya*, however, water functions as a personal symbol, and what makes readers grasp its meaning, according to New Critics, is the context provided by the text which helps in figuring out a symbol's meaning (Tyson 142). Accordingly, "water" in this ode can be identified as a symbol which represents the love of the mystics, and when this love is "mingled with" the Divine Wine, "stars appear" as the poet states.

Additionally, "water" stands for Sufis' affection to the Divine Reality, and when this water is "mingled with" the Divine Wine (Divine Love), "stars appear", which function as a guide for Sufis when undertaking the spiritual pilgrimage toward the Beloved. Symbolically "Stars" refer to the love of God that sparkles in the lover's soul to show her the path to the Divine Love, and which helps her not to go astray when voyaging toward the Beloved. Thus, the stars here can be just a symbol that indicates the Divine illumination the Beloved grants the mystics with in order to show them the way to Him through the darkness of this earthly world.

It is noticed here that the poet uses a symbolic language to demonstrate how God's enlightenment and wisdom are revealed to those intoxicated by the Divine Wine, which no sooner is it sipped by Sufis, than the path to the Beloved is lit.

### **3.4.3. *The Tribesmen***

In verse five the poet writes: "If it be mentioned amongst the tribe, the tribesmen become intoxicated without incurring disgrace or committing sin" (Nicholson 185).

In English language the zero conditional is used to describe facts; i.e., to describe things which are certain to occur provided that the condition is fulfilled. This is the reason behind using this type of conditional, for the speaker wants to reinforce the idea that the presence of the Divine Wine or mentioning it can make the boon-companions ecstatic and inebriated even if they do not taste it. The verb "become" also plays a significant role in amplifying and clarifying the situation the persona wants to draw. First, the verb is in active voice which echoes the state of "the tribesmen" after hearing the name of the Beloved. Second, this verb indicates a change of state; i.e., it reflects how the tribesmen's state change to the state of inebriation and ecstasy.

Besides, the wine here indicated by the pronoun "it" is used to symbolize the Beloved (God) who whenever and wherever is mentioned, those "tribesmen" who hear His name become rapturous. Nicholson refers to those tribesmen as "the mystics who are capable of receiving illumination". In this vein, Underhill states that the core of enlightenment lies in elevating awareness from a self-centered to a God-centered world (215). Hence, the mystic's soul feels an urgent and constant desire to depart the body (this material world), and join the Beloved in the spiritual world.

### **3.4.4. *"The water of the Beloved's teeth"***

In verse 36 the poet says: "Take it pure! But if thou wish to temper it, the worst wrong is thy turning aside from the water of the Beloved's teeth" (Nicholson 188).

In this line the speaker likens the taste of the Divine Wine to the taste of the mistress' saliva. This, though the language is of sensual love, can assert the idea that says lovers have to taste each other's love if they are truly in love. The same is also true with the mystic who is in love with the Beloved. The mystic needs to taste the Divine Wine as a sign of love, and as a reward for their undertaking this grueling journey which is full of suffering and pain. Sufis feel they are compelled to sip at this wine, for if not, they feel that they do "the worst wrong".

### **3.4.5. *The Tavern***



Line 37 reads: "Seek it in the tavern, and there to the accompaniment of tuneful notes bid it display itself, for by means of music it is made a prize" (Nicholson 188).

According to Tyson, when an image appears repeatedly in a text, it apparently holds symbolic significance (142). A case in point here is the word "tavern" which has been repeated more than once probably to serve a significant purpose. Thus, the tavern, which is a place where people go to drink wine, can function as a symbol in mystical poetry where poets employ to refer to the source of Divine inspiration (Saeed and Sabri 72). It symbolically exposes to the spiritual source of the Divine Love; Sufis gather in this tavern to drink a cup of the Divine Wine which makes them spiritually rapturous leading them to compose poems like *Khamriyya* through which they celebrate and sing of their mystical love of the Beloved.

#### **4. ANALYSIS OF THE LAMB**

##### ***4.1. The Lamb's Structure and Language***

Following the theory of formalism, structure of the text involves a great deal of artistic intervention which is very important in delivering the theme of the text. Blake intends to give his reader a favorable space to negotiate the most intending theme he wants to convey.

*The Lamb* consists of two stanzas, each made up of five rhymed couplets. The repetition of the first and the last couplets of each stanza forms a refrain, which adds to the poem's melodic and song-like rhythm (Songs of Innocence). The poem is written in rhymed couplets in a basic trochaic meter, commonly found in children's verse, which enhances the sense of simplicity. Besides, the employing of a spondee found in 'made thee' leads to the change of the opening and closing couplets which in turn makes them more emphatic and slows the reader's pace. Furthermore, the repeated yet varied pattern in these couplets, which frames the questions and answers, reinforces the assumption that this poem resembles a catechism or a child's riddle (Sinha).

With regard to its language, *The Lamb* is a lyric which takes the form of questions and answers (Songs of Innocence). The poem depends upon the repetition of the question and answer frame work, which echoes what the children in the church of England had to learn before confirmation. The poet uses the device of repeated rhetorical questions, which makes the poem appear to be associated with religious instructions as well as with the innocent pleasure of children asking riddles.

Additionally, the persona is a child and what makes the voice childlike is the accumulative effect of repeating words associated with gentleness such as "mead", "delight", "softest", "wooly", "tender", "meek" and "mild". And what reinforces the flowing and soft implications of the language is the preponderance of L and M sounds. This preponderance of L and M sounds also reinforces the impression of a child's voice and the softness of the lamb (Sinha).

Furthermore, the predominantly monosyllabic diction in *The Lamb* and the free use of trochaic meter enhances its musical quality. Additionally, the rhythmical variation in the poem, three-stress couplets at the beginning and end of each stanza and four stress couplets in the middle, effectively conveys the child's joy in asking questions and listing them (Sarker).

##### ***4.2. Distribution and Description of Symbols in The Lamb***

Looking at the language of the poem, readers can notice that it is rife with symbolism, for almost every verse contains a symbol which stands for the Beloved explicitly such as in lines (19-20) where the poet uses the term "God", or implicitly by using other symbols such as "the lamb" which in Christianity symbolizes the Beloved for He shares with the lamb some attributes like innocence and simplicity, and the "child" which can also be a symbol for Him as He holds pure love, like that of children, for humanity. The poet does not just employ symbols that directly refer to God, but he also applies some natural ones which implicitly allude to the Beloved such as "the stream" and "the mead" which indicate the two



essential things without which there is no life on this planet, namely water and food. Hence, the poet devotes this lyric to sing of his love to the Beloved and to attract humans' attention to His love. Moreover, the poet changes his language when talking about the Beloved; for instance, he refers to Him in some lines using the pronoun "who" which obliquely indicates the Beloved, and in other verses like in "Give thee life & bid thee feed"(3), " Give thee clothing of delight"(5), and "Give thee such a tender voice" (7), where he covertly talks about Him. Talking about the Beloved overtly and covertly means that God is everywhere and appears in various images. To support this, the poet falls back upon different symbols to refer to the same signified, here God.

Additionally, the symbols the poet resorts to while talking about the Divine Love are scattered all over the poem. For example, the poem begins with a symbol, namely the "lamb" and also ends with a symbol, and between the beginning and the end the poem is packed with symbols. This is done by the poet to serve a purpose; i.e., this way of distribution signifies that the speaker is obsessed with the Divine Love, for he talks about Him either directly or symbolically in all verses. It also helps him to amplify his message he wants to communicate. The use of various symbols all over the lyric enhances the idea that Blake as a mystical poet sees the Beloved in everything beautiful in the surrounding environment like the lamb, the child, the streams, the meads, the vales and the like. The poet's association of the Beloved with every beautiful creature reflects that he holds an immeasurable amount of affection for Him.

#### **4.3. Tense used in *The Lamb***

The poet in this poem resorts to the use of the present tense because this tense makes the writing more direct and more forceful ("Use the present tense"). He draws on this aspect, for he wants to ease the message for the audience to comprehend. The poet talks about the Beloved, and one of the features of the Beloved is simplicity which is implied by the symbolism of the lamb, and what enables him to communicate his message in a simple way is the present tense. Besides, the present tense helps writers make their points clearly ("Use the present tense"); hence the poet takes advantage of it. In other words, since the poem tackles the issue of a feeling of affection toward the Beloved, the poet believes that the language had better be simple. It is true that the poet applies a symbolic language while talking about the Beloved, but what the symbols signify is obvious since most of the symbols used in this poem are conventional and universal, which means that their signified is easily identified; hence the language of this poem is direct if not in itself, it is so in its connotation.

In summary, the poet refers to the use of symbols for they have, in addition to the beauty they add to literary works, the capacity to carry messages precisely and concisely. This is the reason why the present study focuses on the symbols which the poet relies on to deliver and enhance his message. In addition, what helps in deciphering those symbols is formalism whose job is to probe the internal workings of texts and their formal elements such as symbols, themes, plots and other textual aspects rather than the external ones.

#### **4.4. Symbols Used in *The Lamb***

Looking at *The Lamb*, readers recognize that it consists of two stanzas where the first one poses questions about one of the most controversial issues in the history of mankind which is about who is the creator of the universe, and the second stanza provides the answer. The first stanza also reveals two significant formal elements, namely, the tone and tension, which, in addition to other formal elements, contribute to the establishment of the theme and to the poem's meaning as a whole. The tone, to begin with, is gentle, soft and adorable (William Blake's "The Lamb"& "The Tyger"); this is elicited through the use of the word "lamb" which indicates innocence, goodness and peace and what enhances this is the word "little" which also suggests a young creature who has neither experience nor knowledge of who is the creator. Besides, the speaker is a child, which implies innocence and pure love, yet the speaker when answering the questions of the first stanza creates a complexity which, according to New Critics, adds to the text's value (Tyson 140), for how can a child know the answer. Thus, there is no

wonder to consider the persona to be the poet himself, and he speaks through the child's tongue to stress the text's mood of innocence and gentleness.

In the first stanza, the speaker's resorting to questions which enumerate the gifts of God that He showers His creation with such as "life", "feed", "the stream", "the mead" and "the clothing of delight" serves two purposes. First, the speaker, though asking questions, provides the answer indirectly, and this way appears to be more persuasive than the direct answer as it attracts the attention of the listener, and simplifies the message to be comprehensible, particularly by providing tangible examples. Second, the speaker by enumerating the gifts that God has granted His creatures with stresses how he is appreciative of God's gifts which can be drawn from the repetition of the verb "Give", and wants the lamb to join him and show gratitude to God.

Besides and according to New Critics, the presence of the speaker helps create tension and simultaneously helps control it (Elliot 10). In this poem, the presence of the speaker demonstrates this claim; the speaker creates tension in the opening two lines where he asks the lamb of who created it. These two verses then build the tension between a person who knows the creator of the lamb and a creature who is ignorant of this knowledge. The presence of the speaker in this poem does not only build the tension, but also controls it; i.e., the persona starts the tension in the first stanza, and controls it in the second one, particularly when he says, "Little lamb I'll tell thee" (11), which also indicates that the speaker is knowledgeable of what he claims to know.

#### **4.4.1. *The Lamb***

In Christian theology, Jesus Christ is referred to as a lamb; in John 1:29, it is written, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (qtd. In Eshtereh and Khalil, 38). Accordingly, the lamb is a symbol for the Beloved. It is, as Mulyati argues, just a symbol for God, which symbolizes peace and meekness (116).

Similarly, in this poem Blake applies, among other symbols, the symbolism of the lamb when speaking about the Beloved. The title of the poem (*The Lamb*), typifies the Divine Love, for in Christian theology God is referred to as a lamb; "In John 1:29 in the Bible, Jesus Christ is given the title 'Lamb of God'" ("The lamb: summary & analysis"). The speaker here draws on the symbolism of the "lamb", and other symbols such as "the stream", "the mead" and "the child" to convey to mankind that God is in everything and everywhere. The speaker's conversation with the lamb implies that God's love should be shared with His creatures. The lamb also refers to the Christian belief that God animates His creations, and when man loves creatures, he/she loves God, as God says to Michthild of Magdeburg, "whoso knows and loves the nobleness of my freedom cannot bear to love Me alone, he must love also Me in creatures" (qtd. in Underhill 169).

#### **4.4.2. *The Child***

According to New Critics, the organic unity is the criterion by which the quality of a literary work is judged, and if a text has this organic unity, then all its formal elements work together to establish the theme or the work's meaning as a whole (Tyson 138). A case in point is the use of a child as a persona in this poem, which, as a formal element, works with other ones to contribute to the structure of the text's theme. To elaborate, children are used in literature as a symbol of innocence, which is the case in this poem. The symbolism of the "child" in this lyric lies in the qualities a child is known for. In other words, a child is known for innocence and simplicity, which are believed to be the attributes of the Beloved in Christianity. In Matthew 18:2, it is written, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (qtd. In Eshtereh and Khalil 38). They go on to say that, "What Blake intends to say was Jesus Christ is tender and gentle on his people if they become as innocent as children since Heaven's gates only open for the pure" (38).

Furthermore, the speaker in line 16 says, "He became a child", where he applies the child as a symbol to stand for Jesus Christ, and the poet picks up on the symbolism of the child, for children's hearts are filled with innocence and love. This avers the Christian belief that God is love and He created the world to be loved. Additionally, "child" stands for the pure love which the Beloved casts into the hearts of His lovers. Besides, the child's heart means that it is the dwelling place of the Divine Love because it is purified by the Divine Love, and for it is also mixed with innocence. As a result, the love that the child has in his heart is the love that the mystics claim to have for the Beloved. In other words, mystics love the Beloved for love, and out of love, and seek no material gain in return, as St. Catherine of Genoa declares, I desire nothing that comes from you, but only you yourself, oh dearest "Love" (qtd. in Underhill 82). Being a Christian mystic, Blake draws on the symbolism of child to reflect how innocent and kind the Beloved is; "He is meek & he is mild, / He became a little child", says the speaker.

#### **4.4.3. *The Stream and the Mead***

Streams are small rivers, and in literature rivers symbolize fertility and life. In other words, and according to Tyson, a river can represent life because both are fluid and constantly moving forward; each with a beginning and an end. Moreover, a river sustains life; some creatures inhabit it; while others depend on it for drinking water (142). Thus, where there is a river, there is a life, for a river is a source of water which in turn is a source of life. In *The Lamb*, the speaker uses "the stream" to enumerate the gifts of God to the lamb in order to draw the attention to the fact that God is not only the giver of life, but also the provider of the means such as the food, the mead, the streams and the like that keep His creatures alive. Thus, the stream symbolically indicates how the Creator is generous toward His creation.

Moreover, this poem mentions the mead as a source of food for the lamb to reflect how God is loving and life-means provider. That is to say, He created the lamb, gave it a life, as well as provided it with food. Hence, the mead can be treated as a symbol which reflects one of the gifts that the Beloved showers upon His lovers.

Additionally, in mystical symbolism, the stream and meadow represent more than mere physical sustenance; they mirror the divine nourishment that sustains God's lovers on their spiritual journey. Just as water from the stream quenches physical thirst, God's love satisfies the soul's deepest yearnings. The meadow's abundance parallels how divine love nourishes the spirit, much as earthly food sustains the body. Together, these natural elements reveal a profound truth: as water and food maintain physical life, the Beloved's love maintains spiritual life, refreshing and strengthening those who seek union with the Divine.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

This analysis demonstrates how both Ibn al-Farid's *Khamriyya* and Blake's *The Lamb* employ rich symbolism to express mystical love, transcending cultural, religious, and temporal boundaries. Through a formalist analysis, this research reveals how both poets masterfully utilize symbols such as the wine, moon, and stars in *Khamriyya*, and the lamb, child, and stream in *The Lamb* to articulate their profound spiritual connection with the Divine. The study not only illuminates the universal nature of mystical love across Eastern and Western traditions but also highlights the effectiveness of formalism as a critical approach in understanding how symbolic language serves to convey deep spiritual truths. Structural and linguistic choices in both poems serve to reinforce their mystical themes. Ibn al-Farid's careful manipulation of tense and conditional statements creates a temporal transcendence that mirrors the eternal nature of divine love, while Blake's simple, song-like structure and childlike voice emphasize the pure, unmediated quality of mystical experience. Despite their distinct approaches, both poets achieve a remarkable unity between form and content that enhances their spiritual message.

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