

I Have Never Touched Her:
The Body in Al-Ghazal Al-‘Udhrī

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To my husband Altayeb, my children Khuzama and Ibrahim, and my sister Zina.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis, which is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy and entitled “I Have Never Touched Her: The Body in Al-Ghazal Al-‘Udhrī”, represents my own work and has not been previously submitted to any other institution for any other degree or professional qualification.



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Abstract

Al-ghazal al-‘udhrī emerged as a remarkable literary genre in Arabic literature during the Umayyad period (7th-8th centuries CE). The leaders of this genre are famous poet-lovers who were known for their dramatic love stories and unique poetry, such as Majnūn Laylā, Qays Lubnā and Jamīl Buthaynah. There is a common presumption of the absence of the concept of the body in *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī*; most scholars to date have only reproduced commonly- held ideas about the purity of ‘*udhrī*’ love without doubting its supposed chastity. This thesis, however, argues that the body has a privileged position in *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī*. It shows that the body’s presence is represented, realistically or allegorically, in various ways, both in anecdotes ascribed to ‘*udhrī*’ poets as well as in their poetry. Although some critics have discussed the theme of the ‘depiction of the beloved’s body’, it is the contribution of this study to illuminate the ‘ethereal nature of beauty’ in this depiction. Moreover, this thesis provides a discussion about the symbolic body in ‘*udhrī*’ poetry. It provides a departure from the prevailing views on the ‘*udhrī*’ phenomenon in studies of classical Arabic literature. It opens the door to new discussions on the relationship between love poetry and Arab society in the classical age. It is also a contribution to literary studies of representations of the body.

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Introduction: A Critical Reappraisal of Scholarship in the ‘*Udhri* Tradition

‘*Udhri*, or chaste love poetry celebrates the lofty union of souls between a man and a woman that endures despite societal obstacles and legal limits, eternal beyond even death. ‘*Udhri* poetry turns the unattainability of physical union with the beloved into a spur to virtue, high devotion, and chivalry in the life of the lover, who ultimately dies as a martyr to love¹.

This citation, from a popular website, exemplifies certain typical ideas about ‘*udhri* love and poetry, which I intend to explore in this study. In both popular and academic views, ‘*udhri* love is nearly always considered as chaste love. In contemporary Arab society people still call chaste love “‘*udhri* love”. This popular understanding assumes that the concept of *the body* is absent from the ‘*udhri* tradition, and likewise, most scholars who have addressed this tradition have simply reiterated these commonly-held ideas about its virtue.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it will provide a comprehensive appraisal of the subject of the ‘*udhri* tradition. The term “ ‘*udhri* tradition” consists not only of ‘*udhri* poets and poetry but also the stories told about them. These poets lived in the 7th and 8th centuries, and about two centuries later, their poetry and love stories were collected and retold. This thesis aims to study the reconstructions of the ‘*udhri* tradition. In my reading, the human body is a vital feature of ‘*udhri* love and poetry. We can observe its presence, whether physically or allegorically, in a variety of ways, both in the anecdotes ascribed to ‘*udhri* poets as well as in the poetry itself. In fact, I would argue that some aspect of the body lies at the heart of even the most “chaste” ‘*udhri* verses. Descriptions of the actual body of the beloved or else its representation symbolically, in its presence or conversely in its

¹ <http://muslimwakeup.com/sex>, 5 April. 2006.

absence, along with depictions of the emaciating and suffering body of the lover-poet are all crucial aspects of the ‘*udhrī*’ tradition, as my study intends to show.

The stories and poetry of ‘*udhrī*’ lovers were circulated from the end of the seventh century onwards, appearing in collections by numerous authors. The earliest extant version of the romance is to be found in an anthology of Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889), who collected the works of major Arab poets in his book *al-Shi‘r wa al-shu‘ara*². Shortly after Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn Da‘ūd (d. 297/910) included in his *Kitāb al-zahrah* some fragments ascribed to ‘*udhrī*’ poets. Then, al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/976) presented in his famous work *al-Aghānī*, a collection of numerous anecdotes and poetic fragments, which were either ascribed to ‘*udhrī*’ poets like Jamīl and Majnūn, or referred to them³. His work is like a ‘mosaic put together out of shards of prose and fragments of poetry’⁴.

Al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1332), who relates various ‘*udhrī*’ love stories in his encyclopaedia *Nihāyat al-Arab*, states that the ‘*udhrī*’ martyrs of love were too many to count⁵. In any case, the ‘*udhrī*’ love stories--in more or less detail--appear in many classical literary works such as, *Maṣāri‘ al-‘ushshāq* by Abū Ja‘far al-Sarrāj (d. 500/1106), *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 769/1349) and, *Tazyīn al-aswāq* by Daūd al-Anṭākī (d. 1008/1599) where ‘*udhrī*’ poets are

² Dols observes that ‘Curiously the *rāwīs* seem to have done far more in this instance than simply develop a romance’, Michael Dols, *Majnūn: the Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 322. Also, Khairallah notes that ‘Ibn Qutaybah presents us with the basic elements of [Majnūn’s] legend. These elements were later expanded and retold in different variations, but the figure of Majnun was unmistakably drawn by Ibn Qutaybah’. Asad Khairallah, *Love, Madness, and poetry: An interpretation of the Magnum legend* (Beirut: Orient-institut der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft, 1980), p. 50.

³ This work by al-Iṣfahānī will be the main source of narratives told about ‘*udhrī*’ poets and discussed in this thesis. Its authenticity will be discussed later in this chapter; see pp 17-35. The structure of *al-Aghānī* will be discussed in the second chapter.

⁴ Khairallah, p. 51.

⁵ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (Cairo: al-Mu‘asasah al-Miṣriyah al-‘ammah li al-ta’līf wa al-tarjamah wa al-tibā‘ah wa al-nashr, n.d), vol. 2, p. 184.

transformed into the heroes of romantic stories. During the early ‘Abbasid period, ‘*udhrī* romances were very popular, numerous verses having been set to music⁶.

Modern scholarly approaches to the subject tend to fall into the following broad categories: some focus on the aesthetic side of ‘*udhrī* love, whilst the majority address its historical and psychological dimensions. Other studies concentrate on one particular poet of this genre⁷. However, to the best of my knowledge, no studies have been undertaken on the depiction of the body in ‘*udhrī* poetry or on the themes of sensuality contained within it⁸. This issue has only partially been investigated through a small number of general studies, and even then mostly from a limited perspective. Hence, it is hoped that this study will form a more comprehensive appraisal of the subject. It will consider two specific points which have not previously been given the attention they deserve; how the attitude of the poet towards the body of the beloved is expressed, either literally or allegorically, in the ‘*udhrī* tradition, and how the effect of ardent love on the lover’s own body is depicted. Particularly careful consideration will be given to the attitude toward love and the body in Arab Islamic culture and its influence on the ‘*udhrī* tradition. Another main concern of this study is to reconstruct the ‘*udhrī* tradition. This is the first study devoted to the ‘*udhrī* tradition to be written in English and the first to focus entirely on the presence of the body in the ‘*udhrī* tradition in either Arabic or English. Previous thematic studies, as will be discussed, either overlook the subject or address only one particular poet of this genre.

⁶ As observed in classic sources such as, Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut: Dar iḥyā’ al-turāth al-‘arabī, 1997),

⁷ These studies will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

⁸ Except for one study which deals with secrecy and sexuality in the romance of Majnūn Laylā, a poet in the ‘*udhrī* school. The author of this study is Ruqayya Khan and we shall discuss her work later in the introduction.

1.1 *Al-Ghazal al-'Udhri*: a Brief Historical and Aesthetic Approach

*Al-Ghazal*⁹ al-'*udhri*' is named after the '*Udhrah*¹⁰ tribe which supplied this poetical tradition with many of its leading poets. Members of this tribe were generally said to have tender hearts and to seek after a true love that usually led to death¹¹. The '*udhri*' poet Jamīl b. 'Abdallāh b. Ma'mar, better known as Jamīl Buthaynah (d.82\701), who is considered the leading light of this genre, was from the "'*Udhrah*'" tribe . Nevertheless, there were '*udhri*' poets from other tribes, such as Majnūn Laylā, who belonged to the Banū 'Āmir. As one scholar has observed, 'the term '*udhri*' was then used more broadly for a whole school of self-immolating poets of the central Arabian desert'¹².

'*Udhri*' love is a fatal love that leads to death. The '*udhri*' loves only one woman, devoting his life and poetry to her; only rarely composing verses in another genre, such as praise (*madh*) or satire (*hija'*). The beloved is portrayed in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* as an ideal woman, and her poet lover as a martyr of love. The recurring

⁹ *Ghazal*: song, elegy of love, often also the erotic-elegiac genre. The term is Arabic, but passed into Persian, Turkish and Urdu and acquired a special sense in these languages. A. Bausani, EI, vol. 2, 4th impression, "*Ghazal*" (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), p. 1028.

¹⁰ 'A nomadic Arabian tribe of the Quḍā'a federation. Its pedigree is: 'Udhra b. Sa'd Hudhaym b. Zayd b. Layth. The 'Udhra were the central group among the descendants of Sa'd Hudhaym, and they incorporated several brother-clans such as the Harith b. Sa'd Hudhaym and Salmān b. Sa'd Hudhaym. These 'Udhra are not to be confused with the 'Udhra of Kalb b. Wabara, i.e. 'Udhra b. Zayd Allat b. Rufayda b. Thawr b. Kalb. One of the latter 'Udhra was the genealogist Ibn al-Kalbī, who described the 'Udhra b. Zayd Allat at length. The 'Udhra lived in the area of Ashraf/Masharīf al-Shām, which in this context refers to the northern Hījaz They were particularly linked with Wādī Al-Qurā'. Michael Lecker, *People, tribes, and society in Arabia around the time of Muhammad* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 91.

¹¹ See the references on the subject in Dā'ūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq fī akhbār al-'ushshaq* (Beirut: Dār al-biḥār, 2003), p. 19, and Ja'far b. Aḥmad al-Sarrāj: *Maṣari' al-'ushshaq* (Beirut : Dār ṣadir, 1958), vol. 1, p. 37.

¹² Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: the Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 115.

theme of suffering and torment in love is strong in the ‘*udhrī*’ tradition. Another characteristic of *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī* is the use of certain symbolic conventions and imagery.

The most important figures of ‘*udhrī*’ love are ‘Urwah b. Ḥizām (d.30\650), Majnūn Laylā (d.c.68\688), Qays b. Dhariḥ (d.68\688), Jamīl Buthaynah (d.82\701), and Kuthayyir ‘Azzah (d.105\723). However, some scholars include other poets in the *udhrī* school such as Dhū al-Rummah (d.117\735)¹³ and ‘Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf (d.188\804)¹⁴. But the question of how to categorize these poets is still under debate: for example, not all scholars accept Kuthayyir ‘Azzah as an ‘*udhrī*’ poet¹⁵. In addition, one may argue that Dhū al-Rummah, in spite of his body of love poetry dedicated to his beloved Mayy, is concerned with different themes from the ones usually popular with ‘*udhrī*’ poets and, moreover, his love story differs from ‘*udhrī*’ love stories. Going further, while ‘Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf composes beautiful love poetry for his beloved Fawz¹⁶, and while in many respects, some of his themes are similar to ‘*udhrī*’ themes¹⁷, there is also a description of an orgy with singing girls in his poetry, which would be an unimaginable subject in ‘*udhrī*’ poetry. Moreover, al-‘Abbās’s cultural environment was completely different from the ‘*udhrī*’ environment and his poetry is closer to the manner of courtly love poetry. Given the controversies

¹³ Dhū al-Rummah is perceived as an ‘*udhrī*’ poet by Yūsuf al-Yūsuf, see his study: *Al-Ghazal al-‘udhrī dirāsah fī al-ḥubb al-maqmū’* (Damascus: Manshūrāt itihād al-kuttāb al-‘Arab, 1978).

¹⁴ Zakī Mubārak studies him with Jamīl and Kuthayyir, see his book: *al-‘ushshaq al-thalāthah* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-ma‘arif wa-maktabatuḥā, 1945). Shawqī Dayf, likewise, perceives him as an ‘*udhrī*’ poet, see his book: *al-ḥubb al-‘udhrī ‘ind al-‘Arab* (Cairo: al-Dār al-miṣryyah al-lubnanyyah, 1999).

¹⁵ This pretence can be traced back to the classical source *al-Aghānī*, where Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d.967/356) quotes anecdotes that show that Kuthayyir was not an honest lover like the other ‘*udhrī*’ lovers, but that he just tried to imitate them. However, in my understanding, Kuthayyir’s love story and his poetry would indicate that he is a true ‘*udhrī*’ poet.

¹⁶ This name is a pseudonym to conceal her true identity and protect her reputation.

¹⁷ Among these themes are the suffering lover, the longing for an aloof beloved, and the death-wish.

over whether some of these poets should be considered as part of this genre, I will focus only on those who are unambiguously considered to be ‘*udhri*’ poets.

Scholars do not differ sharply in historical detail about the ‘*udhri*’ poets, but they are at variance in their interpretations of these details, which I intend to deal with later. I am not concerned here with citing anecdotes about the ‘*udhri*’ romances, as these can very easily be found in classical Arabic books such as *al-Aghānī* and *Maṣāri‘ al-‘ushshaq*. Rather, I intend to show briefly the common tropes present in these love stories. A considerable number of scholars have observed the striking similarities between the romances of various ‘*udhri*’ poets — to explain this, Jayyusi suggests that:

The pattern of the ‘*udhri*’ love poetry and love tale was set early in pre-Islamic times. The earliest ‘*udhri*’ love poet in the Umayyad age was ‘Urwah b. Ḥizām, and his tragic love story sets the pattern for the numerous love stories of the Umayyad period¹⁸.

‘Urwah b. Ḥizām, in fact, lived before the Umayyad period and died during the caliphate of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān. However, Jayyusi is correct about ‘the pattern of the ‘*udhri*’ love poetry and love tale’, which was set in pre-Islamic times. In pre-Islamic poetry we have the stories of ‘Abdallah b. ‘Ajlan, Hind’s lover, and al-Muraqqash al-Akbar, ‘Asma’s lover, both of whom suffered love unto death. Nevertheless, al-Baṭal points out that in *al-ghazal al-‘udhri*, new elements were introduced to the pre-Islamic stories to express the greater complexity of the new Islamic society, such as people’s rejection of new social roles set by the Umayyad authorities¹⁹. This may explain why ‘*udhri*’ love stories revolve around the same themes. The typical

¹⁸ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, “Umayyad poetry”, in *Arabic literature to the end of the Umayyad period*. ed. A.F.I.Beeston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 424.

¹⁹ For more details see: ‘Ali al-Baṭal, “*al-Ghazal al-‘udhri* wa iḍṭirab al-waqi’” in *Fuṣūl* 4/2 (Cairo: 1984), p. 182.

components of the '*udhri*' poets' sentimental tales are²⁰: the lover meets his beloved either during their childhood when they used to tend their families' flocks of sheep in the desert, or they meet as adults in a sudden encounter. They fall deeply into a love which continues until death and the lover consequently composes poetry describing his fatal love for his beloved. However, his beloved's parents turn down his marriage proposal, due to the disgrace that his verses have brought upon both their daughter and themselves -- this, in spite of the fact that they are from the same tribe and sometimes from the same family. In some cases, demand for an exorbitant dowry prevents the marriage, so the lover goes to seek wealth while the parents force their daughter to marry another man, who generally has fewer good qualities than her lover. Then, the beloved travels away with her husband. Her marriage intensifies her lover's passion, so the brokenhearted poet chases his beloved and recites beautiful poetry which circulates far and wide, describing her beauty and his suffering. He continues in his endeavours to visit her after her marriage and they remain faithful to each other until death. As a result of the poet's insistence on seeing his beloved and composing poetry about her, her parents complain to the ruler who decrees that killing him is permissible. The ruler exiles him and the exiled poet wanders in the desert. In some accounts, his passion leads him into madness, but whenever he remembers his beloved, poetic inspiration comes. Eventually, the lovers die soon after one another and--in some accounts--are buried next to each other.

These episodes are motifs that are found in a number of '*udhri*' romances. It is irrelevant for this study to review the minor differences between these stories.

Instead, it is important to bear in mind the wider lines that constitute the essential

²⁰ It is in no way intended that these literary works should be reduced to simple formulae; however, I have tried to highlight some of their key unifying components.

framework of the love story, at the same time noting the way the structure is dependent upon symbolism. The legendary tropes in these stories can be observed through certain common features, namely, as al-Baṭal notes, the ambiguity surrounding the identity of the composers of these romances, and the repeated motifs within every single story which make all the ‘*udhri*’ stories concentrate on one theme, regardless of the minor differences in details²¹. As I have mentioned, these stories were collected and retold about one and a half centuries after the ‘*udhri* poets’ deaths. In the second chapter, I shall discuss the documentation that was particularly notable in the Abbasid era. The necessity to reconstruct the past, as we will see, was due to several factors and manifested in many aspects. However, at this point, it is hard to separate the poetry and the narratives attached to it as it appeared in classical Arabic sources, especially in *al-Aghani*. The narratives serve to elucidate the poetry, creating appropriate contexts, while the poetry illuminates the stories.

As one can see, the main characteristic of the plot is the poet's total devotion to love, this sentiment infusing all ‘*udhri*’ stories and poetry. The lovers are depicted purely as idols of love so the reader knows nothing of their lives beyond this passion. The sentiments of love and the accompanying agony are told in ‘*udhri*’ poetry in a myriad ways. The lovers ‘did not want to get rid of their pain, because pain is the only genuine criterion of true love’²².

The beloved becomes the ideal of a timeless woman and seems to be almost immortal. ‘Time cannot touch her, nor can her beauty and perception change’²³. Her depiction in ‘*udhri*’ poetry reminds us of the *houri* who never ages, as described in the

²¹ Al-Baṭal, p. 181.

²² Ahmad Khaldun Kinany, *The Development of Gazal in Arabic Literature (Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Periods)* (Damascus: Syrian University Press, 1951). p. 258.

²³ Jauyysi, p. 426.

Qur'an²⁴. Although houris are not described as passionate or even as lovers in the Qur'an, their eternal youth and beauty inspire the 'udhrī poet who insists on drawing an out-of-time image for his beloved. The desert, being spacious and still, provides an appropriate setting for the unfolding of 'udhrī love stories. This vast tranquil space implies stability, which is compatible with the concept of unchanging time in 'udhrī poetry. So the desert is an ideal backdrop symbolizing immutability and timelessness. The reader of 'udhrī stories and poetry loses all sense of time within the events of the love stories. Time seems to stop for the lovers as their passion tends to be detached and unaffected by temporality. Jacobi notes: 'Whereas the poet of the Djāhilyyā [sic] abandons a futile love-affair of the past, the 'udhrī poet perseveres in the face of hopelessness and despair. His love is preordained by fate and transcends death'²⁵.

As their poetry shows, the 'udhrī poets, Kinany notes 'were so possessed by their delirious passion that they came to believe that life without the beloved was meaningless'²⁶. Majnūn, when he lost his beloved, Felt:

As if the mountain-roads were the circle of rings
Around me, never increasing in length or breadth²⁷ [1]

The intimate relationship between love and death is a crucial element of the 'udhrī experience. Most of the lovers die because of their fatal love and so their poetry is

²⁴ For example, in Sura al-Wāqī'ah, the verses describing the situation in heaven read: 'And on couches or thrones, raised high. Verily, We have created them (maidens) of special creation. And made them virgins. Loving (their husbands only), (and) of equal age. For those on the Right Hand'. Al- Wāqī'ah (56: 34-38).

²⁵ Renate Jacobi, EI, vol. 2, "Udhrī", p. 775.

²⁶ Kinany, p. 266.

²⁷ Majnūn Laylā, *Diwān Majnūn Laylā*, sharḥ 'Adnān Zakī Darwish, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 2003), p. 134, trans. Ruqayya Yasmine Khan, *Sexuality and Secrecy in the Medieval Arabic Romance of Majnūn Laylā* (a dissertation in the department of Asian and Middle Eastern studies, The University of Pennsylvania, 1997), p. 188.

full of references to death²⁸. ‘Such love is almost of necessity tragic. And its tragedy is a symbol of the incompatibility of the absolute and the concrete, of the ideal and the real life’²⁹.

As we have seen from the components of their tales, any love adventure needs the involvement of secondary characters to be foils for the main characters. A passionate love adventure could not be narrated without obstacles being created by others. These obstacles enliven the story, and also help to make it eternal. The existence of others is the best guarantee for an everlasting and infinite love³⁰. In ‘*udhrī*’ stories the central theme is that the obstacles cannot be overcome, and neither can the love be given up. Jacobi suggests that ‘the conflict is obviously situated between generations: the parents represent the tribal community, against which the implicit polemics of the ‘*udhrī*’ model are directed’³¹. It is noteworthy that in ‘*udhrī*’ stories the lovers are rejected in one way or another by society, thus they are expelled out of society to the world of the desert, which symbolises their exclusion. Therefore, the figure of the blamer is a familiar figure in *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī*³². The function of the blamer is to persuade the lover-poet to be more moderate or—in other words—‘to prevent the protagonist from making the heroic gestures’³³. But, for these poets, love was their chief object, it was a way of life and gave purpose to life³⁴.

²⁸ As we shall examine in the last chapter of this thesis.

²⁹ J.C. Bürgel, “Love, Lust, and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam as Reflected in Literary Sources”, in Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid-Marsot (ed.), *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam* (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1977), p. 92.

³⁰ See Miquel’s discussion of similar ideas in: Andre Miquel, *Majnun Layla wa Tristan*, trans. Ghassan al-Sayyid (Damascus: Dar al-awa’il, 1998), pp. 81-89.

³¹ Renate Jacobi, *Die Udhra: Liebe und Tod in der Umayyadenzeit*.

³² See, for example, Majnun, pp. 179, 184, 190.

³³ Andras Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), p.40.

³⁴ Majnun says: ‘they said that I could forget her if I wanted to; I answered them that I did not really want to’. Cited and translated by Kinany, p. 276.

The ‘*udhri*’ poet does not want any woman other than his beloved, as she is preferable to any other creature and the lover’s passion surpasses that of all other lovers, his beloved surpassing all other women. He would be pleased with very little from her³⁵ and she is both the cause of and the only cure for the poet’s misery³⁶. Intensity, despair and faithfulness are central to the love stories of the ‘*udhri*’ poets³⁷. Their poetry concerns itself with the description of the lovers’ suffering and yearning, and it also portrays their unattainable love as well as expressing their wishes and hopes for the future³⁸. Although it is true that the beloved in ‘*udhri*’ poetry is typically portrayed as an aloof and inaccessible woman, nevertheless, I disagree with Kinany and Jayyusi who claim that ‘*udhri*’ love is an unrequited love³⁹. I would argue that the portrayal of the beloved as an aloof woman (*bakhilāh*) is rather a convention of classical Arabic poetry. Further chapters in this study will discuss this point in detail, and meanwhile, I will provide one example from Jamīl’s poetry on Buthaynah that shows the two lovers involved in passion:

We were both on the point of crying for each other,
And her tears were quicker than mine⁴⁰

[2]

³⁵ Note, for instance, Jamīl’s verses:

I am pleased with very little things accorded to me by Buthaynah
They are so insignificant
that if they were known by the man (who spies us)
he would not be annoyed with my love
I am pleased even when she says: “no” or “I cannot”
And when she makes me live on promises
promises hoped for, but always disappointing
I am pleased with a quick glance to her,
and even with spending a whole year without our meeting-
neither at the beginning nor at the end

Jamīl b. Mu‘mar, *Diwān Jamīl Buthaynah: Jamīl b. Mu‘mar*, ed. Fawzī ‘Aṭawī (Beirut: Dār ṣa‘b, 1980), p. 83, trans. Kinany, p. 180, and see also Kuthayyir ‘Azzah, *Diwān Kuthayyir ‘Azzah*, sharḥ Majīd Ṭarād (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-‘arabi, 2004), p. 55.

³⁶ Majnūn, for instance, says: ‘I cured my suffering from missing Laylā by remembering her, just as a drunkard who has no other cure, for his pain, but drink’. Majnūn, p. 120, trans. Kinany, p. 281.

³⁷ Kinany, p. 253.

³⁸ Kinany, p. 278.

³⁹ See Kinany, p. 257 and Jayyusi, p. 425.

⁴⁰ Jamīl, p. 73, trans. Kinany, p. 289.

1.2 The Causes of the Emergence of *al-Ghazal al-‘Udhri*

Al-Ghazal al-‘udhri, like any other literary phenomenon, is complex and does not exist in a vacuum, being a result of many interrelated factors: religious, political, psychological, literary and historical. In Ṭaha Ḥusayn’s view, this phenomenon is best explained by the sudden rise of languorous opulence in Mecca and Medina, cities that had lost their political weight in spite of having grown rich. Hence, the wealthy poets in urban areas pursued profane love poetry, and the hopelessly poor poets in Bedouin tribes pursued ‘*udhri*’ poetry⁴¹. Clearly, Ḥusayn relies on a vaguely formulated sociology of rising expectations and another scholar, Labīb al-Ṭāhir, has further developed Ḥusayn’s argument by linking the socio-economic factors of the tribe ‘*udhrah*’ with the emergence of ‘*udhri*’ love⁴². However, the examples al-Ṭāhir uses of poets who do not belong to this tribe, like Majnūn, who is from Banū ‘Āmir, make the link between this poetry and the specific economic situation of the Banū ‘*udhrah*’ rather weak. Moreover, social factors may have played a part in the emergence of these tales, but on the other hand we should be careful not to try to explain everything simply by the social environment.

To explain its emergence, Kinany associates *al-ghazal al-‘udhri* with Islamic monotheism, eschatology and ethics⁴³. He, for example, says: ‘The Muslim religion had a bearing on all the aspects of ‘*udhri*’ love which we have studied so far, namely chastity, faithfulness, despair, resignation, the personification of love and the

⁴¹ Ṭaha Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-‘arabi‘ā*, 12th edition (Cairo: Dār al-ma‘ārif, 1976), p. 109. However, see al-Ḥufī’s arguments that attempt to controvert Ḥusayn’s views, pp. 153-158.

⁴² Al-Ṭāhir Labīb, *Susyūljya al-ghazal al-‘arabi: al-shi‘r al-‘udhri namūdhajan*, trans. Muṣṭafā al-Misnawī (Beirut: Dār al-ṭali‘ah, 1988), pp. 132-137.

⁴³ Kinany, p. 262

conception of an eternal passion'⁴⁴. Shukrī Fayṣal also emphasises the religious factor in the emergence of the 'udhrī phenomenon, as Islam purified people's souls'⁴⁵.

Fayṣal says:

From the chastity that was driven by religion and the love that was driven by desire emerged the 'udhrī love. It was necessary for devout Muslims who were not so successful in their love to express this failure in one way or another. Subsequently, they found solace in poetry, a verbal art, a leeway to express their emotions; because 'udhrī love mirrored chaste and desirous love at the same time. So, this compensatory type of poetry was there to suppress the heat of emotions and elevate the desires.⁴⁶

Dayf, likewise, argues that following the ethical basis of Islam, 'udhrī poetry is characterised by chastity and perfection'⁴⁷. However, in spite of the popularity of Fayṣal's argument among contemporary scholars'⁴⁸, his limitation of the circumstances that led to the emergence of 'udhrī love to Islamic and societal factors opens a door to further discussion. There is no evidence that the Bedouin poets were more influenced by the moral teaching of Islam than other poets. In fact, to say that the Islamic influence was stronger on the Bedouin tribes than on the urban tribes is misleading for two reasons. Firstly, the Bedouin tribes are described in the Qur'an as hypocritical and unrighteous'⁴⁹. Secondly, during the Umayyad era there were unquestionably more religious men in Makkah and Madinah than among the Bedouin tribes (*al-fuqaha'* *al-shu'ara'*); religious poets such as 'Urwah b. Udhaynah and 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Quss lived in Madinah, not in the Bedouin desert. Moreover,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Shukrī Fayṣal, *Taṭawwur al-ghazal bayna al-Jahiliyah wa al-Islam* (Beirut: Dār al-'ilm li al-malāyīn, 1986), p. 235.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

⁴⁷ Dayf, *al-ḥbb al-'udhrī 'ind al-'Arab*, p. 20.

⁴⁸ See examples of a similar attitude in Iḥsān al-Naṣṣ, *al-Ghazal fī 'aṣr banī Umayyiah* (Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 1976), p. 23. And 'Abbas Ṣādiq, *Al-Ghazal al-'udhrī* (Amman: Dār 'alam al-thaqāfah, 2002), p. 10.

⁴⁹ Al-Tawbah (9: 97).

many elements in the anecdotes ascribed to ‘*udhri*’ poets present elements contradictory to what are predominantly considered the ethical principles of Islam⁵⁰.

In any case, I would argue that the influence of Islam on *al-ghazal al-‘udhri* did go beyond the poetic images and structures, but the influence did not include the Islamic model of the relationship between man and woman. Thus, it may be wrong to assume that the influence of Islam helped distinguish the ‘*udhri*’ experience from other forms of Arabic poetry. Furthermore, the ‘*udhri*’ poets’ use of religious language is meant to express the extent of their devotion. Thus for Jamīl, those who die of love are martyrs, no less than those who fall in the jihad. At prayer, moreover, Majnūn, instead of orienting himself towards Mecca, faces the place where Laylā lives⁵¹.

Several scholars emphasise the poor and sad quality of life in the desert along with a feeling of helplessness, and the strict Bedouin manners as factors in the emergence of *al-ghazal al-‘udhri*⁵². Both Yūsuf al- Yūsuf and ‘Alī al- Baṭāl use a stratified social explanation to account for the ‘*udhri*’ phenomenon. Al-Yūsuf’s analysis combines the social and psychological readings of the ‘*udhri*’ phenomenon. On the other hand, al- Baṭāl views the ‘*udhri*’ stories as legends and analyses them symbolically. Al- Yūsuf’s interpretation considers the political subjugation practiced by the Umayyads and the social oppression that resulted from the increasing dominance of particular social values as the basis for his interpretation of the ‘*udhri*’

⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion on this matter see ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Qiṭṭ, *Fī al-shi‘r al-Islāmī wa al-Umawī* (Beirut, Dar al-nahḍah al-‘Arabyyah, 1987), p. 79.

⁵¹ A. Hamori, “Love Poetry (*Ghazal*)”, in Julia Ashtiany, T.M. Johnstone, J.D.Latham, R.B.Serjeant and G.Rex Smith (editors), *Abbasid Belles-Lettres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 206.

⁵² Al-Qiṭṭ, for instance, argues that religious chastity cannot stand as the only factor to explain the emergence of the ‘*udhri*’ phenomenon. He takes into consideration social and political factors ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Qiṭṭ, p. 109. See also his argument on p.130, For similar ideas see also Yūsuf Khulayf, *al-Hubb al-mithalī ‘ind al-‘Arab* (Cairo: Dar quba‘, 1997), p. 7.

tradition. The experience of intense oppression leads to a loss of identity which is compensated for through the writing of poetry⁵³. Al- Baṭal expresses a similar idea; arguing that the ‘*udhri*’ phenomenon, which circulated in the Hijaz desert, reflects the experiences of desert dwellers in the particular period of history of that State during the time the poems were written. It also expresses the Bedouins’ views on the political injustice of their leaders. Since freedom of expression was restricted, they referred to this injustice allegorically⁵⁴.

However, the anecdotes told about ‘*udhri*’ poets and even their poetry indicate that they were not poor at all; the main reason that Qays was forced to divorce his beloved wife Lubnā was to insure that the wealth of his family remained within the family. Jamīl, in addition, is depicted as a handsome man who wears expensive clothes. In one of his verses he says:

I go amongst beggars and ask her family for hospitality,
While my own wealthy and generous relatives are within reach⁵⁵ [3]

Furthermore, we should take many other considerations into account: the poets were not contemporaries, and they were not without their own social and political ambitions; Kuthayyir ‘Azzah, for example, although conforming to the policy of dissimulation, eulogized the Umayyads. Therefore, the explanation that the rapid development of love poetry in the Hijaz was simply because the people of this region were not involved in politics is a fallacy⁵⁶. In the Umayyad period, not only the Hijaz but the whole Arab world was interested in the theme of love. It was a major theme

⁵³ Yūsuf al-Yūsuf, *al-Ghazal al-‘udhri dirāsah fī al-ḥubb al-maqmū’* (Damascus: Manshūrāt ittīḥād al-kuttāb al-‘Arab, 1978), p. 66.

⁵⁴ Al-Baṭal, p. 181.

⁵⁵ Jamīl, p. 73, trans. Kinany, p. 289.

⁵⁶ Jayyusi, p. 419.

in the poetry of many famous poets such as Dhū al-Rummaḥ and Walīd b. Yazīd⁵⁷. To provide an explanation for the phenomenon of love poetry in the Hijaz, Jayyusi suggests that the poets in the Hijaz had more leisure time than those in the new provinces and could more happily turn their attention to that genre. In addition, the Hijaz's loss of its former status as the centre of Arabia must have caused a reaction which might have been expressed by amatory romanticism. Also, the long-urbanized society of the Hijaz spread its style of living to all regions. Finally, Jayyusi suggests the possibility of the emergence of a poetic vogue which simply caught on, arguing that it has an element of excellence which transcends environmental and historical conditions⁵⁸.

1.3 The Development of the 'Udhri Phenomenon as a Literary Tradition

As we have shown⁵⁹, during the early Abbasid period in the late ninth century 'udhri poets were transformed into the heroes of romantic stories that became very popular. Majnūn, in particular, attracted the attention of writers on the theory of love, and his verses were eventually included in anthologies of poems by poet-lovers and martyrs of love. The figure of Majnūn also attracted mystics because Majnūn's rapture was analogous to their own ecstatic states⁶⁰.

Hence, in the words of one scholar, 'It is appropriate to think that the appearance of such stories as Majnūn's, though based on an existing tradition, started a fashion a genre of love literature that proved to be enormously popular'⁶¹. The 'udhri concept of love 'was imbued with a courtly flavour and projected back into an

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ See p. 2 of this chapter.

⁶⁰ Dols, pp. 321-322.

⁶¹ Jayyusi, p. 421.

idealised Bedouin past. As a consequence, the biographies of poets reckoned among the ‘*udhrīs*’ are embellished with legendary details’⁶². In modern Arabic literature, Majnūn’s character has been a source of inspiration for many poets and authors including Aḥmad Shawqī and his poetic play; *Majnūn Laylā*, which was first published in 1933. Except for a few scenes, *al-Aghānī*’s version of the story is replicated in Shawqī’s play. In 1996, the Arab poet Qāsim Ḥaddād published a collection of poetry entitled ‘*Akhbār Majnūn Laylā*’, in which he renders a new reading of the old legend -- it is remarkable that, in Ḥaddād’s interpretation, the lovers are explicitly described as having a physical relationship⁶³.

In Persian literature, Majnūn’s love for Laylā is treated as a kind of adoration similar to the one reserved for God, and the legend was adopted by sufis. The first adaptation of the Arabic fragments of the legend into Persian can be found in Nizami’s *Laylī and Majnūn* (composed 118/584). Dols notes that Nizami’s adaptation has the advantage of being consistent with the earlier accounts as well as being a fuller and more detailed narrative. Indeed, Nizami’s style is characterised by an intense use of imagery⁶⁴. In addition, the symbolic potential in the Arabic version of Majnūn’s story reaches its zenith with the Persian sufi poet Jāmi (d.1492/898). Jāmi’s *Laylī and Majnūn* is a representation of the sufi quest with a creative use of convention that is remarkable⁶⁵. Inspired by Nizami, the Majnūn legend has remained very popular with Turkish poets until modern times. The most famous

⁶² Renate Jacobi, EI2, “*Udhrī*”, p. 775.

⁶³ In an interview, the poet declares: ‘When I wrote Majnūn’s anecdotes I wrote my own anecdotes. The old story does not matter to me as the legend is much more beautiful than the history. Majnūn is me, is “us” now. I read Majnūn within my contemporary views’. <http://www.alwaqt.com/art.php?aid=108245>, 11 July 2008.

⁶⁴ Dols, p. 331.

⁶⁵ See Khairallah’s discussion of Jāmi’s work on pp. 97-133.

adaptation of the story was by Fuzuli in 942/1535-6⁶⁶. Farther East, the romance was embraced in Urdu literature⁶⁷. In the West, the Banū ‘Udhrah, who die of love, appeared in European literature with Stendhal’s treatise *De l’amour* (1822), also inspiring Romantics such as Heine with his poem *Der Asra* that was set to music by Carl Lowe⁶⁸.

1.4 The Authenticity of the ‘*Udhri* Tradition

The authenticity of the ‘*udhri* tradition has always been considered suspect by certain scholars and has been the subject of much debate concerning the authenticity of the poetry and stories. These scholars start with the influential classical source *al-Aghānī*, casting doubts not just on the poetry ascribed to Majnūn, but also on his actual existence. Al-Iṣfahānī (d.967/356), who devoted around sixty pages of *al-Aghānī* to Majnūn Laylā, discusses the contradictory anecdotes that either confirm Majnūn’s existence and poetry or indicate that he is an imaginary persona. According to *al-Aghānī*, some reciters (*rawāh*) claimed that when they had asked members of Majnūn’s tribe Banū ‘Āmir about him, they denied that he had ever existed, some of them saying: ‘Absolutely not, Banū ‘Āmir are much more serious [than Majnun]!’⁶⁹. Al-Iṣfahānī also quotes al-Jāhīz saying: ‘People claim that every anonymous poem about Laylā should be attributed to Majnūn’⁷⁰. However, many others confirmed that they had met Majnūn and heard the poems being recited from his own tongue.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Dols, p. 324.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Renate Jacobi, EI2, “*Udhri*”, p. 775.

⁶⁹ Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, vol. 2, p. 330.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 333.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

The debate about the authenticity of ‘*udhrī*’ poetry in general (and Majnūn’s existence and the authorship of his poetry in particular), continues among modern scholars. I have no intention of reviewing all their points of view. Instead, I would like to briefly mention the major contributions relevant to the subject under discussion.

Ṭaha Ḥusayn in *Ḥadīth al-‘arbi‘ā’* casts doubts on Majnūn’s poetry and his existence, which in conclusion, he denies completely⁷². On the other hand, the Russian scholar Kratchkovsky has argued for the real historical existence of Majnūn by relying on historical methodology⁷³. However, Ghunaymī Hilāl in his book *Al-Ḥayāh al-‘atīfīyyah bayn al-‘udhryyiah wa’l-ṣūfīyyiah* examines the different opinions, and surmises that if we postulate that some of Majnūn’s fragments are fake, that does not mean that he did not exist at all⁷⁴. ‘Abd Al-Qādir al-Qiṭṭ, likewise, has traced various examples of the same verses sometimes ascribed to Majnūn, and at other times ascribed to Tawbah, Naṣīb or Qays⁷⁵. However, as al-Jawārī has observed, seeking credibility in ‘*udhrī*’ stories is a difficult task, due to the fact that they were mainly circulated orally. Moreover, the comic and adventurous nature of these anecdotes made them more likely to be embellished with imaginary details. However, al-Jawārī also demonstrates that modern scholars who have criticised this literary phenomenon may have failed to view it within its own historical context. They have criticised the ‘*udhrī*’ tradition according to

⁷² Ṭaha Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-‘arbi‘ā’*, p.190.

⁷³ Al-Baṭāl, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Muḥammad Ghunaymī Hilāl, *Al-Ḥayāh al-‘atīfīyyah bayna al-‘udhryyiah wa al-ṣūfīyyiah: dirāsāt naqd wa muqarānah ḥawla mawdu‘ Laylā wa al-Majnūn fī al-adabayn al-‘arabi wa al-fārisī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-anjlu al-Miṣryyiah, 1960), p. 49.

⁷⁵ Al-Qiṭṭ, p.109.

contemporary norms where such anecdotes would hardly be made⁷⁶. Hamori also alludes to the oral tradition, arguing that:

It has been suggested that ‘*udhri*’ poetry is the product not of Bedouin Arabia, but of Empire sophistication; that it is the romantic creation of the early ‘Abbasid age, projected backwards in history at a time when biographies of Bedouin poets-lovers were a popular form of entertainment literature in Baghdad. But already the earliest ‘Abbasid poets knew of these ‘*udhri*’ poets, and it is hardly likely that their romance-biographies (for which the *kitab al-Aghani* is now our principle source) did not from the first contain a core of poetry⁷⁷.

In any case, these kinds of discussions are numerous and protracted. I would like to make it clear from the outset that the issue of authenticity of any particular ‘*udhri*’ anecdote or verse is not something that I will be concerned with in this study. How much of these stories and poetry is genuine and how much is the work of reciters, is largely irrelevant here. The phenomenon is generally authentic in its being a product of a particular time and place, and it does not matter if some ‘*udhri*’ verses are wrongly attributed or fabricated, or if some poets’ stories are exaggerated. In fact, some degree of fabrication is inevitable when such romances grow into legends. As Khairallah has noted:

Should a legend be realistic? Or is it rather the task of the critic to attempt an interpretation of a literary work that fascinated people’s imagination? Is it sufficient to dismiss the love story of Majnun, because when compared with the love stories of Jamil and Kuthayyir, it appears to Husain to be “the most insane and exaggerated among them, and the least meaningful”? Thus, by insisting on the necessity of realism, Husain denies the legend the benefit of the doubt, thereby missing the symbolism it may contain⁷⁸.

Thus, I would agree with the scholars who focus on the questions of composition and structure, rather than the question of authenticity. Moreover, as has been stated in the text quoted earlier, the ‘*udhri*’ romances incline towards legend, hence it is quite

⁷⁶ ‘Abd al-Sattar al-Jawari, *al-Hubb al-‘udhri nash’atuhu wa ta’awwuruhu* (Beirut: al-mu’asasah al-‘Arabyyah li al-dirasat wa al-nashr, 2006), p. 76.

⁷⁷ A. Hamori, “Love Poetry (*Ghazal*)”, p. 205.

⁷⁸ Khairallah, p. 93.

natural for exaggeration to take place. *Kitāb al-aghānī* is the main source of such romances and I would agree with Suzanne Stetkevych that the poems and the anecdotes in this book

have generally been either misused - that is, taken to be factual history in the modern sense - or else discarded because of their questionable historicity or obvious folkloric nature. But however unreliable they may be as a basis for factual literary biography, they nevertheless offer a rich vein of largely un-mined mythic /folkloric gold. For however far back the association of the *akhbar* with the poetry goes and whatever its nature, this association, I would argue, is not arbitrary but semantic. That is, the anecdotes somehow reflect, reinforce, or compliment the meaning of the poems or the archetypal image of the poet. Furthermore, the explication of the structure and the symbolism of the many variant stories and anecdotes juxtaposed in the *kitāb al-aghānī* narrative reveals that even apparently divergent or contradictory versions often yield what might be called the same mythic message⁷⁹.

Moreover, al-Isfahānī in *al-Aghānī* presents many different and inharmonious anecdotes, giving the responsibility to (*al-rawāh*) the storytellers themselves.

Contemporary scholars may then decide, according to their own criteria, which of these anecdotes are valid, and which are not. Therefore, one ‘*udhri*’ story may appear in one scholar’s opinion as an authentic story that fits with Jamīl’s character, while other scholars declare it to be a ridiculous fake. For example, the story that Ibn Qutaybah cites of Jamīl and Kuthayyir’s meeting, which resulted in the sending of Kuthayyir as a messenger to Buthaynah to make an appointment for Jamīl⁸⁰, is described by Ḥatūm as ‘the most honest story ever told about Jamīl and his love for Buthaynah’⁸¹. Hence, he concludes from this story that their love is chaste and virtuous. On the other hand, Ṭaha Ḥusayn mentions the same story so as to refer to the silliness of the anecdotes told about Jamīl. He even goes beyond that and ends up

⁷⁹ Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 93.

⁸⁰ ‘Abdallah b. Muslim b. Qutaybah, *al-Shi‘r wa al-shu‘arā’*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr (Cairo: Dar al-ma‘ārif, 1958), p. 436.

⁸¹ ‘Afīf Ḥaṭūm, *Al-ghazal fī al-‘aṣr al-Umawī* (Beirut: Dar al-ṣadr, 1997), p. 163.

saying: 'This story is among the jokes that people used to mock the Bedouins with'⁸². This kind of contradiction supports my point of view regarding the matter of authenticity in *al-ghazal al-'udhri*. Questioning the authenticity of these works should not concern us much here since there is no way to prove whether every single anecdote is valid or not.

1.5 A Critical Examination of the Scholarly Field Concerning the 'Udhri Tradition

Over the last century, a considerable literature has been produced concerning the 'udhri tradition, with several attempts to analyze this tradition from a variety of perspectives. Some of the studies focus on the tradition in general while the others concentrate on one 'udhri poet, most often Jamil or Majnun. Since the heightened interest in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* from the early twentieth century, there have been very few studies on the major aspects of this literary form, namely, its origin, its characteristics and related scholarship. It should be noted first that there are no English-language books devoted entirely to the 'udhri tradition, though there are some studies of Majnun Layla, which will be discussed later. However, many studies have been written in Arabic, which include in their titles the phrase *al-ghazal al-'udhri*, *al-Hubb al-'udhri* or *al-Shi'r al-'udhri*. Nevertheless, few of these studies add anything new to the current level of knowledge. There are an even larger number of books that simply reproduce what is already common knowledge by expansion, stereotyping or going into verbose detail. Many of these works are based on a historical narrative approach, devoting much attention to relating stories about 'udhri

⁸² Husayn, p. 201.

poets and including examples of their poetry without making any real effort to analyze this information⁸³. Despite their increasing number, these studies make little attempt to address the subject of how the body is presented in the ‘*udhri*’ tradition, if they admit to its presence at all, and so bear little immediate relevance to my study. Therefore, in the following pages, I will focus on the themes of desire, ‘*iffah*’ (chastity) and sexuality in the ‘*udhri*’ tradition from a scholarly perspective. It should be noted, however, that the issues addressed here are to be reiterated and discussed at greater length in the following chapters.

In the *Encyclopedia of Arabic literature*, Jacobi considers chastity among the main elements of ‘*udhri*’ love, a notion which, as mentioned earlier, I intend to subject to question. Jacobi sees ‘*udhri*’ love as an ‘elegiac counterpart to the frivolous eroticism of the *Hijāzī ghazal*, represented by ‘Umar b. Abī Rabi‘ah’⁸⁴. Gibb, likewise, in his early study, *Arabic Literature: An Introduction*, views *al-ghazal al-*

⁸³ Examples of these studies that tend to follow a repetitive pattern in handling *al-ghazal al-‘udhri* are: Mukhtar, *Jamil Buthaynah wa al-Ḥubb al-‘udhri* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Shuruq, 1983).

Ṣādiq, *Al-Ghazal al-‘udhri* (Amman: Dar ‘alam al-thaqafah, 2002).

Qulaymah, *Jamil Buthaynah ra‘id al-ghazal al-‘afif* (Beirut: Dar al-fikr al-lubnānī, 2004).

Khristu Najm, *Jamil Buthaynah wa al-ḥubb al-‘udhri* (Beirut: Dar al-ra‘id al-‘arabi, 1982).

Aḥmad Ḥasan Ṣabrah, *al-Ghazal al-‘udhri fī al-‘aṣr al-umawī* (al-Ṣādiqān li al-nashr wa al-i‘lān, 2001).

Al-Shībī, *al-Ghazal al-‘udhri wa makanatuhu al-fikriyyah wa al-dīniyyah fī al-‘aṣr al-umawī* (Beirut: Dar al-manāhil, 1997).

Dayf, *al-Ḥubb al-‘udhri* (Cairo: al-Dār al-miṣriyyah al-lubnāniyyah, 1999).

Al-Ramadī, *Jamil b. Ma‘ma shā‘ir al-ḥubb wa ‘ashiq Buthaynah* (Cairo: al-Hay‘ah al-miṣriyyah al-‘ammah li al-kitāb, 1976).

Bashir ‘Ayyad, *Jamil Buthaynah imām al-muḥbīn wa al-Majānīn: qirā‘ah mughayirah* (Cairo, Dar al-Aḥmadī li al-nashr, 2000).

The structure of these works comprises the following:

- A) A general introduction to ‘*udhri*’ love.
- B) Stories about ‘*udhri*’ poets with special reference to their descent and character.
- C) Inclusion of extracts from their poetry, usually without any commentary.

In the prelude of these books, the authors discuss love in general: its roots in Arabic literature or, sometimes, world literature, and its characteristics. This is a very generalised and repetitive approach.

⁸⁴ R. Jacobi, “*udhri* poetry”, *Encyclopedia of Arabic literature*, 2, (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 790.

'*udhri*' as distinct from 'Umar and the other Makkan poets. He observes that 'from the moment of its creation, it achieved a great and growing popularity'⁸⁵.

Hamori, in a chapter on love poetry in the Abbasid period in *Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, notes--as several scholars do⁸⁶--that in the Umayyad period, the love-poem became independent and the *ghazal* emerged as a distinct genre. He states that whether the Hijāzī love-poems are chaste or licentious has less to do perhaps with the poet's experience than with audience's expectations⁸⁷. However, his chapter shows very little interest in the '*udhri*' tradition.

In *Ḥadīth al-arbi'a*, first published 1924, Ṭaha Ḥusayn distinguishes between urban erotic poetry in the Hijaz and chaste Bedouin love poetry in the desert. He also notes the exaggeration found in the '*udhri*' stories and ridicules the extreme behavior of the lovers⁸⁸. Clearly, Ḥusayn judges the phenomenon aside from its legendary dimension and overlooks the aesthetics of its literary side. Making the same distinction between erotic and chaste *ghazal* in Hijaz during the Umayyad period, Iḥsān al-Naṣṣ, in his study, *al-Ghazal fī 'asr banī Umayyah* [The *Ghazal* in the Era of the Umayyad Dynasty], published 1976, suggests that the difference between the closed society of the Bedouin and the open society of the cities resulted in two types of *ghazal*: '*udhri*' and sensual. Therefore, the '*udhri*' poet's chastity is not the result of his inability to fulfill his heart's desire, but a genuine chastity firmly rooted in the Bedouin's strict code of behaviour⁸⁹. However, one should bear in mind

⁸⁵ H. A. R. Gibb, *Arabic literature: an introduction*, 2nd. rev. ed, (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 45.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Renate Jacobi, "Time and Reality in Nāsīb and *Ghazal*", *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol.16 (1985), p. 1.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 205.

⁸⁸ Ṭaha Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-arbi'a*, p. 190.

⁸⁹ Iḥsān al-Naṣṣ, *al-Ghazal fī 'asr banī Umayyah* (Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 1976), p. 23.

that al-Jāhiz̄ has another view of the issue, for he points out that men and women in Arabia would see and talk to one another freely⁹⁰.

Dealing with the themes of physicality and sexuality (or its absence) in al-*ghazal al-‘udhrī*, we shall focus on two main studies, for they seem to have had a decisive impact on the others: Mūsā Sulaymān: *al-Ḥubb al-‘udhrī* [‘*udhrī* Love], first published in 1947; and Aḥmad al-Jawārī: *al-Ḥubb al-‘udhrī nash’atuhu wa taṭawwurhu* [‘*udhrī* Love: Its Origin and Progression] first published in 1948. First, it should be observed that both studies are entitled *al-Ḥubb al-‘udhrī*, not *al-Ghazal al-‘udhrī* or *al-Shi‘r al-‘udhrī*. Does it mean, therefore, that the early studies regarded ‘*udhrī*’ love as a separate phenomenon? For they give less attention to ‘*udhrī*’ poetry and more to the essence of love itself. It is clear that this concern led both scholars to define “love” in general and ‘*udhrī*’ love in particular. However, Sulaymān and Al-Jawārī differ over the matter that is paramount in this thesis: the physical presence in ‘*udhrī*’ love. Al-Jawārī defines ‘*udhrī*’ love as an elevated aspect of love, which rises above sensual desire and physical lust⁹¹. Sulaymān, on the other hand, casts doubt on the "purified" nature of ‘*udhrī*’ love. It is interesting to note that both of these early studies – concerning the presence or absence of the physical element in ‘*udhrī*’ love – have had a strong influence on later studies. Many scholars on both sides of the argument have copied their ideas, even quoting their exact words⁹². However, it is difficult to give wholehearted support to al-Jawārī’s argument in

⁹⁰ For further details, see al-Jāhiz̄, *Kitāb al-Qiyān (Rasā’il al-Jāhiz̄)*, vol.2, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Ḥarūn (Cairo: Maṭaba‘at al-Khanjī, 1965), p. 149.

⁹¹ Al-Jawārī, p. 51.

⁹² It is interesting to see that in his article about ‘*udhrī*’ love, al-Ladhiqī quotes the exact words of Sulaymān and al-‘Azam without any acknowledgement of their source: al-Ladhiqī, *al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ*, 19 September 2003.

favour of the sublimation of ‘*udhri*’ love⁹³, since the ideas that he presents on the subject are extremely confused.

Sulaymān’s allusions to physicality in ‘*udhri*’ love can be considered as very early hints of a discussion of this topic in the corpus of *al-ghazal al-‘udhri*. According to Sulaymān, ‘‘*udhri*’ poets were not angels.... The sorrow resulting from the lack of sexual relations with their beloveds and their sensual beauty is not entirely absent from ‘*udhri*’ poetry’⁹⁴. In his view, what we should understand about ‘*udhri*’ poets is their struggle for love and their making every effort for its sake, rather than their rising above or disapproval of physical desires. He argues that there are many verses describing the beloved’s body and the poet’s lust for it. Although Sulaymān’s contribution is useful as an early source raising the question of the body in ‘*udhri*’ love, he gives readers only a few hints without providing any serious analysis of this issue, especially as it concerns ‘*udhri*’ poetry.

Does literary creativity spring from desire? Ṣādiq Jalāl al-‘Aẓm’s book *Fī al-ḥubb wa al-ḥubb al-‘udhari* (1968), contains an important discussion of this idea. He puts forward many genuine and daring perspectives, maintaining that ‘*udhri*’ love is in fact a sensual love, of which physical attraction is a part⁹⁵. However, he argues, no physical contact actually takes place because the lover chooses to keep both his love and poetic inspiration alive by creating more obstacles between him and the object of his desire. Yet, al-‘Aẓm’s discussion is limited to the prose material and does not address the poetry accompanying these prose fragments. He is not concerned with the interpretation of ‘*udhri*’ verses, which could be considered as

⁹³ Al-Jawārī’s argument appears in several places in his book, for instance, see pp.13, 64 and 74.

⁹⁴ Sulaymān, p.101.

⁹⁵ Al-‘Aẓm, Ṣādiq Jalāl. *Fī al-ḥubb wa al-ḥubb al-‘udhari* (Beirut: Manshurāt Nizar Qabbānī, 1968), p. 81.

essential for understanding the ‘*udhri*’ tradition. Moreover, his view of the ‘*udhri*’ poets as being masochistic, is open to criticism.

On the other hand, both Muṣṭafā al-Shak‘ah in *Rihlat al-shi‘r min al-umawiyyah ilā al-‘Abbasīyyah* [Poetry from the Umayyad Era to the Abbasyad Era] and ‘Afīf Ḥaṭūm in *al-Ghazal fī al-‘asr al-umawī* [*Ghazal* in the Umayyad Period] proclaim that Jamīl celebrates the chaste love which spread across the Bedouin desert after promiscuity was forbidden by Islam. They argue that no one can question the chastity and virtue of Jamīl, Majnūn and the other ‘*udhri*’ poets⁹⁶. Ḥaṭūm tends to generalise and make judgmental comments though, rather than presenting a critical analysis⁹⁷. However, when Ḥaṭūm addresses the question of “physical innuendo in Jamīl’s poetry”, he explains that this type of verse is merely an effort to imitate the other famous poets like ‘Umar b. Abī Rabi‘ah. Therefore, he emphasises that we should not doubt Jamīl’s chastity and pure saintly love for Buthaynah merely from a reading of these incidental verses⁹⁸. Yūsuf Bakkar, likewise, observes that although ‘*udhri*’ poetry includes many physical innuendos, he stresses that we should not question *al-ghazal al-‘udhri* and the implied chastity of its poets⁹⁹. It is clear, however, that Jamīl and the other ‘*udhri*’ poets indicate more than these scholars wish to see.

⁹⁶ Muṣṭafā al-Shak‘ah in *Rihlat al-shi‘r min al-umawiyyah ilā al-‘Abbasīyyah* (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-kutub, 1979) and ‘Afīf Ḥaṭūm, *al-Ghazal fī al-‘asr al-Umawī* (Beirut: Dār al-ṣadr, 1997).

⁹⁷ For instance, he describes Jamīl as ‘the leader of romantic poets, not just in his era, but in every era until our modern times. He describes Jamīl’s verse:

Conversation in their company
Brings joy,
But each man who dies in their midst
Is a martyr

as the most romantic stanza by an Arab poet, Ḥaṭūm, p. 165.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161; see also some similar ideas on pp. 166 & 196.

⁹⁹ Yūsuf Ḥusayn Bakkar, *Ittijāhāt al-ghazāl fī al-qarn al-thānī al-hijrī*, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus), p. 55.

The subject of *'iffah* (chastity) is also approached by al-Ṭahir Labīb Jadīdī in his study *Susyūlujiyā al-ghazal al-'Arabi: al-shi'r al-'udhri namudhajan*¹⁰⁰. He presents a new view of *'udhri* poetry by relying on structuralist theories in discussing topics such as the relationship between the Arabic language and sexual life, Islamic monotheism, and the adoration of a single beloved in *'udhri* poetry. The contributors discussed above have emphasised the social and political factors in the *'udhri* phenomenon, whereas Labīb brings to light economic factors as well, drawing on Marxist theory. He attempts to engage the question of the chastity of these poets: Is it an aspect of poetic imagination or does it reflect reality? In Labīb's opinion, the attitude of the *'udhri* poets towards sexual life differs sharply from that of Islamic tradition.

Nevertheless, in my view, the signs of physical presence in *'udhri* poetry and anecdotes should not be ignored. Idealising the beloved does not mean that desire is absent. On the contrary, it is always there, depicted by the *'udhri* poets in several ways. Is it worth distinguishing between the presence of the desire and the impossibility of satisfying it? Moreover, as Labīb himself notes, there are many erotic descriptions of the beloved's body within *'udhri* poetry.

The subject of *'udhri* love is also briefly addressed by J.C. Bürgel in his article "Love, Lust, and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam as Reflected in Literary Sources". He classifies *'udhri* love as one of the major types of erotic love. Although

¹⁰⁰ Al-Ṭahir Labīb Jadīdī, *Susyūlujiyā al-ghazal al-'arabi: al-shi'r al-'udhri namudhajan*, trans. Muṣṭafā al-Misnawī, (Beirut: Dar al-ṭali'ah, 1988).

he sees Jamīl as active and cunning in terms of sensuality, he then says that he intends not to question the value of ‘udhrite love¹⁰¹.

Are ‘*udhri*’ love stories ultimately about literary creativity? Al-‘Aqqād¹⁰², studies Jamīl from the psychological angle by examining the narratives about the poet, and trying to examine the balance between his love and his literary creativity. He concludes that Jamīl and the other ‘*udhri*’ poets are the natural product of their era. That era itself is analysed in several chapters. Al-‘Aqqād tackles the inconsistency between the ‘*udhri*’ ideal of immortality and chastity on the one hand, and the ‘*udhri*’ verses mentioning physical contact, on the other. Here, the author sees a link between what people wish to be and what they are in reality as human beings.

Likewise, in *Love, Madness and Poetry: An Interpretation of the Majnūn Legend*, As‘ad E. Khairallah suggests that Majnūn is torn between writing poetry and keeping his love secret, and therefore, by breaking the covenant of secrecy, Majnūn has lost his blessed union with Laylā. Khairallah emphasises the three dimensions of Majnūn’s character: love, madness and poetry. He is concerned with the link between the legend of Majnūn and its mystical dimension, highlighting the significance of insanity as both a stigma and, in contrast, a sign of rebellion. This purity of vision and the courage to express it make the madman almost a poetic ideal. Khairallah discusses this significant question: Are love and madness prerequisites for poetry? He concludes that Majnūn seeks to satisfy his passion in a dream world – through poetry and insanity. Nevertheless, the author offers no explanation of the distinction between the omnipresence of Laylā in nature and in the mind of Majnūn,

¹⁰¹ Bürgel, “Love, Lust, and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam as Reflected in Literary Sources”, p. 94.

¹⁰² ‘Abbas Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād, *Jamīl Buthaynah* (Cairo: Dār al-ma‘ārif, 1967).

and her physical presence in his poetry. He just mentions in passing that his insanity is another necessary means of communication with his beloved. Hence, the erotic dimensions are absent from Khairallah's study and one might question his mystical interpretations of the manifestations of insanity. However, what is particularly interesting in his analysis of Majnūn's insanity is his hint of the physical condition of Majnūn, which becomes his distinguishing mark as the incarnation of the lovesick poet, in contrast with other heroes from this type of romance. A similar idea is expounded well in Michael Dols' book *Majnūn: The Madman in the Medieval Islamic World*, which is a thorough examination of the subject of insanity in Medieval Islamic society¹⁰³. This study is useful particularly for its interest in the physical description of Majnūn's madness and the causes of love.

Andre Miquel's comparison of Majnūn and Tristan is concerned with the themes of society's norms, the tragic ends of the lovers and eternal love¹⁰⁴. The comparison between tragedy in Arabic love stories and Western literature is also the main concern of Manzalaouni's articles entitled: "Tragic Ends of Lovers: Medieval Islam and the Latin West" and "Swooning Lovers: a Theme in Arab and European Romance". In spite of his important comments on the role of tragedy in love stories, the role of sexuality within the tragedy in these stories is not discussed.

Ruqayya Yasmine Khan's *Sexuality and Secrecy in the Medieval Arabic Romance of Majnūn Layla*¹⁰⁵ is another valuable contribution to the subject of Majnūn's romance. Khan argues that Majnūn's romance is scarcely chaste and that it is about the competing models of courtship and marriage. She also maintains that a

¹⁰³ Dols considers the early Arabic version of Majnūn's romance as well as Nizami's version.

¹⁰⁴ Andre Miquel, *Majnūn Layla wa Tristan*, trans. Ghassan al-Sayyid (Damascus: Dar al-awa'il, 1998).

¹⁰⁵ Ruqayya Yasmine Khan, *Sexuality and Secrecy in the Medieval Arabic Romance of Majnūn Layla* (a dissertation in the department of Asian and Middle Eastern studies, The University of Pennsylvania, 1997).

crucial component of the romance is the semiotics of secrecy. So, it is the inability of desire to remain hidden and its proclivity to express itself in and through language that cause the tragedy. Therefore, there is a conflict between individual expression and social mandates. Khan also addresses the question of Islamic influence on this romance, yet, unlike other scholars, she emphasises the social conflict between the old Bedouin order and the new Islamic order. She sees Majnūn as an Anti-Type of the Prophet and the Bedouin Wild Man as the embodiment of the Bedouin social order that opposes the Islamic one. In her analysis of “secrecy” in this romance, Khan concentrates on the fact that the revelation of desire is followed by the concealment of the desired object. Furthermore, by mentioning that the beloved is the subject of gossip, the poet belies the image of the chaste maiden. The language itself engenders his desire. However, one should question Khan’s view of Laylā in particular. Is Laylā really victimised by both her love and society, and, moreover, does Majnūn really make her a public disgrace? Despite the extensive range of this study, it focuses only on Majnūn, whereas I intend to study the entire ‘*udhri*’ tradition, concentrating especially on its elements of physical presence.

Bouhdiba’s work *Sexuality in Islam*¹⁰⁶ offers a significant contribution to the subject of sexuality in Medieval Islamic communities¹⁰⁷. Bouhdiba asserts that in the practice of love, the Qur’an prescribes a balanced approach, but argues that this has not been translated into social practice. What was unified in revelation fell apart at the historical level. Themes like sexual practice and prohibitions in Islam, the frontier of the sexes, the sexual and the sacral are discussed in detail in his study.

¹⁰⁶ Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, *Sexuality in Islam*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

¹⁰⁷ It was first published in French in 1975, and then translated by Alan Sheridan and published in English in London in 1985. The Arabic translation by Hala al-Ouri appeared first in Cairo in 1986 and then in Beirut in 2001.

Bouhdiba also addresses the subject of variations on eroticism: misogyny, mysticism and *mujūn*, maintaining that they are three ways of dealing with the single problem; misogyny encloses Muslims in their own empire, *mujūn* releases their inhibitions, and mysticism sublimates them¹⁰⁸. The sensuality of Paradise is also discussed in his chapter “The Infinite Orgasm”, where Bouhdiba argues that the sensual nature of paradisiacal pleasures in the Qur’an indicates the wholesomeness of physical desire. The author quotes from Islamic texts that describe infinite pleasure with hours¹⁰⁹.

Joseph Massad, in his study *Desiring Arabs*, examines the linking of the concepts of sex and civilization in the modern Arab world. He sees the concept of homosexuality as a product of the colonial experience. His book traces the history of the unfolding of the concepts of culture and civilization in the contemporary Arab world. It is an intellectual history of the representation of sexual desire in and about the Arab world. He argues that it was within the context of ‘ethnopornography’ that Arab readers began to read orientalist accounts which emphasised Arab sexual life, often in a moralising manner. Influenced by this reading, they were overcome by a sense of crisis¹¹⁰. *Al-ghazal al-‘udhrī* is one of the elements that have been subjected to this manner of reconsideration by scholars in the Arab world – under the influence of colonial discourses on sexuality, Massad would argue.

My thesis will partially make use of certain Western theories about the body and sexuality. For example, Freud’s oft-cited article “Creative Writers and Day

¹⁰⁸ Bouhdiba, p. 117.

¹⁰⁹ The subject of sensuality in Paradise has been addressed frequently by scholars. Many of them rely heavily on Bouhdiba’s analysis. For example, in his essay “Sexuality, Diversity and Ethics in the Agenda of Progressive Muslims”, Scott A. Kugle explains the depiction of Paradise in the Qur’an: ‘[It] is not just bodily, but sensually delightful and even sexually blissful’. Scott A. Kugle, *Sexuality, Diversity and Ethics in the Agenda of Progressive Muslim*, <http://www.geocities.com/vidyak1/scottkugledoc.pdf>. 5 June.2005.

¹¹⁰ Joseph A. Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 30.

Dreaming”¹¹¹ is particularly useful in understanding the relation between the wishes of the poets and their poetry. Georges Bataille, in *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, demonstrates that eroticism assents to life to the point of death. He asks: ‘what does physical eroticism signify if not a violation of the very being of its practitioners - a violation bordering on death, bordering on murder’¹¹². Bataille argues that only the beloved in this world can bring immortality to two mortal creatures. Hence, love spells suffering in so far as it is a quest for the impossible. We suffer from isolation in our individual separateness. He also demonstrates that the possession of the beloved object does not imply death, but rather that the idea of death is linked to the urge to possess¹¹³. This work highlights the connection between individuality, sensuality and death, themes of some importance to my study.

A significant effort has already been made to analyse and understand the concept of love in the classical Arabic sources. In his study, *al-Ḥubb fī al-turāth al-‘Arabi*, Muḥammad Ḥasan ‘Abdallāh criticises the widely held view of separating Arab love into the ‘*udhri* and sensual categories. He believes that the phenomenon of love is more complex, being related to rituals, feelings, ideas and sectarian distinctions, all of which are expressed in poetry. His study deals with various sources of references to love and he analyses many of the concepts¹¹⁴.

Rajā’ Salāmāh is concerned with the complex relationship between passionate love (*‘ishq*) and its expression through the written word. In her voluminous and informative book *al-‘Ishq wa’l-kitābah: qirā’ah fī al-mawrūth*, the author makes a

¹¹¹ Sigmund Freud, “Creative Writers and Day Dreaming”, in the *twentieth century Literary Criticism*, ed. David Lodge, 13 impression (London and New York: Longman, 1989).

¹¹² Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Nary Dalwood (San Francisco: City lights books, 1986), p. 17.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹¹⁴ Muḥammad Ḥasan ‘Abdallāh, *al-Ḥubb fī al-turāth al-‘Arabi* (Cairo: Dār al-ma‘ārif, 1994).

special effort to analyse the words for love in Arabic, of which there are, interestingly, more than a hundred, although some scholars do not consider them synonymous. Salāmāh draws a parallel between the image of the afflicted camel (*al-ba‘īr al-sadīm*) and the fate of the lover (*al-‘āshiq*). The longing is a form of energy, though a problematic one, as it cannot be easily satisfied. In that respect, it resembles fire. Indeed, many of the Arabic words used for love and longing are derived from the root word for “fire”¹¹⁵. Although this study is not confined to the ‘*udhri*’ tradition, it does refer to the tradition, providing a significant contribution to the understanding of love in Arab culture and in the Arabic language. It also contains many references to the body and to death.

In her study *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs: The Development of the Genre*, Giffen provides summaries of many classical Arabic works on love, thus identifying the reasoning behind the Arab theory of profane love. She concludes that ‘the factor which most determines the character of these books is the religious one’¹¹⁶. It is true that the ethical and religious attitudes of the authors influence the structure, general argument, and even the minor details of their books. Poetry is quoted in all the works on the theory of love. It ‘might seem incidental to the burden of the author’s discussion, just so much decoration or elaboration of the essential ideas’¹¹⁷. Anecdotes and stories also appear in these books to illustrate or exemplify the ideas discussed. The information from Arabic lexicographers and philologists alongside the opinions of philosophers and physicians are another element in these works on the theory of love. Giffen also discusses the evolution of form and content

¹¹⁵ Salāmāh stresses this point several times in her study. See, Salāmāh, pp. 53, 80.

¹¹⁶ Lois Antita Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs: The Development of the Genre* (London: University of London Press Ltd; New York: New York University Press, 1971), p. 53.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 58.

in these works, concluding that they reveal certain common features, examining terms such as *‘ishq* and *maḥabbah* and their use. The concept of the martyrs of love is also analysed here, the author tracing its development alongside the concept of martyrdom in Islam.

1.6 The Structure and Trajectory of the Thesis

Kitāb al-aghānī will be my main source for the stories told about ‘*udhrī*’ poets such as Majnūn, Jamīl and Qays¹¹⁸. I will also refer to other classical sources such as *al-Shi‘r wa al-shu‘arā*’ by Ibn Qutaybah. For the poetry, I will refer to the poets’ anthologies of poetry (*diwāns*). The main sources of my thesis are the *diwāns* of ‘Urwah b. Ḥizām, Majnūn Laylā, Qays Lubnā, Jamīl Buthaynah and Kuthayyir ‘Azzah. All of these works and their commentaries have been published during the last century. For the Qur’anic verses, Yusuf Ali’s translation is used.

Moreover, to achieve the objectives of this thesis, it has been necessary to consult the most relevant classical literature on love, particularly for the focus on the depiction of the lover’s body and how it is affected by love¹¹⁹. *Kitāb al-zahrah* (*The Book of the Flower*) by Ibn Da‘ūd (d.909\297), and *Tawq al-ḥamamah* (*The Ring of the Dove*) by Ibn Ḥazm (d.1063\456) are two of the most important sources for my thesis and are closely related to each other. *Kitāb al-zahrah*, is an anthology of Arabic love poetry, but is not just a collection of poetry as it also discusses the theory of love, being the first extant Arabic work on the topic. Some of the key topics in *al-*

¹¹⁸ A discussion about the structure of *kitāb al-aghānī* will be provided in the second chapter.

¹¹⁹ Some of these titles are: *Kitāb al-zahrah* by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Da‘ūd al-Iṣfahānī (d. 297/910), *Kitāb al-muwashshā* by al-Washshā’ (d. 325/936), *Tawq al-ḥamamah fī al-ullaf wa al-ullaf* by Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (d. 456/1064), Maṣāri‘ al-‘ushshaq by Abū Ja‘far al-Sarrāj (d. 500/1106), *Dhamm al-hawā* by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), *Rawḍat al-muḥibbin wa nuzhat al-mushtaqin* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah (d.751/135) and *Tazyin al-aswaq bi tafsil ashwaq al-‘ushshaq* by Da‘ūd al-Anṭākī (d. 1008/1599).

zahrāh are: *Wasl* union with the loved one; being together, *bayn*, *nawā* separation from the loved one; being apart; giving the main reason for the writing of the poem in the first place as being most often due to the pain of separation. There are other references to *Hajr*, *Jafā* spurning or abandonment of the lover, and *Kitmān* "Secret"/Concealment¹²⁰.

In *Tawq al-ḥamamah*,¹²¹ which is widely regarded as a masterpiece, the author proceeds in a rational manner to describe the essence and nature of love, its possible causes and symptoms as well as the frustration and perils surrounding it. This book is a prose work in which the passages of poetry, some composed by the author himself, are subservient to the prose text. Ibn Ḥazm portrays the tragedies of love, including examples from his own life while keeping within the Arabic tradition of literature on love¹²².

The methodology used in this study is text analysis, using classical literary texts of *‘udhrī* narratives and poetry. The thesis consists of six chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter Two focuses on the ways in which stories and narratives about the poets and events throughout the 9th and 10th centuries gave rise to certain compositions that in effect established a tradition and reconstructed a past. The chapter will raise issues such as *Al-ghazal al-ṣariḥ* vs. *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī*, and moral and ethical issues and their effect in reconstructing the past, with special consideration of *kitāb al-aghānī*. In Chapter Three, I discuss the concepts of sexuality, marriage and

¹²⁰ Devin Stewart, *Emory Resources on the Middle East*.

www.mesas.emory.edu/gmesc/pdf/10_Love_Theory_Unit_All.pdf, 18 July 2008, pp. 4-5.

¹²¹ *Tawq al-ḥamamah* has been translated to many languages; the English version appearing in 1953, translated by Arberry. It is one of the few Arabic works which, when translated, is attractive to the Western reader.

¹²² Giffen, pp. 24-25.

chastity in Islamic discourse; this touches on Islamic jurisprudence as well as Islamic culture in general. Also, the implications of chastity as understood in the stories about *'udhrī* poets and theories of love will be discussed, while taking into consideration the context of the 9th and 10th centuries. The problematic relationship that exists between the *'udhrī* tradition and Islamic discourse around sexuality and love will be the main focus of this chapter.

In Chapter Four, the theme of how the beloved's body is represented, is set within the generic convention of classical Arabic poetry. Attention is drawn to the image of a corpulent woman and the depiction of a woman as a gazelle. Moreover, the chapter examines the ethereal aspect of female beauty in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. The presence and absence of the beloved's physical form is the primary subject of discussion in Chapter Five. I will argue that the bodily presence in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* does not always take the form of a physical body—sometimes it appears through symbolic channels, where the symbolising of the body appears alongside its physical depiction. The themes of gestures, speech, phantoms, the beloved's house, and her presence through nature will be examined in this chapter. This discussion leads to the central question of the subsequent chapter: does the beloved's absence enhance the poetry about her? Therefore, Chapter Six examines the friction between poetry and possession. By tracing the tropes of unfulfilled love and the idealised woman, the chapter offers an argument about the discourse of cultural value developed around poetry, the reception of the poet as a hero and the representation of poetry as the ultimate goal. In Chapter Seven, I provide a discussion of the depiction of the lover's body in the *'udhrī* tradition by analyzing the vocabulary of sickness, healing, the physician and the use of magic—all of which affect the body. They are

frequently repeated motifs and vocabularies in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. The themes of madness and death will also be explored in this, the final chapter. By analyzing the texts through the chapters and discussing the issues raised, it is hoped that the thesis will offer an original contribution to the subject.

Reconstructing the Past

2.1 *Al-Ghazal*: the Love Poem

During the Umayyad period, for the first time in the history of Arabic literature, love poems, known as "*ghazal*", appeared. The *ghazal* is a monothematic poem which is devoted entirely to the erotic theme. Before that time, amatory preludes known as *nasīb* had formed only the opening section of a long poem that praised a patron or tribe or perhaps the poet himself, as well as a description of the poet's journey and of his camel or horse and so on. It is still open to discussion 'whether the *ghazal* originated exclusively from the *nasīb*, or whether other poetic models should be taken into account'¹. In the first chapter we discussed differing opinions on the main factors behind the development of the Umayyad *ghazal* and the new concept of love arising from it². Jacobi notes that 'the poets of the seventh century introduced new themes and concepts, but they also made use of conventions, sometimes subtly changing their meaning or employing them in unusual combinations'³.

In any case, when considering the *ghazal*, we should bear in mind that the art of singing contributed to the spread of this kind of poetry. This art was a natural result of prosperity and the availability of leisure time in Hijāz. Persians also contributed to elevating the Arab art in both singing and musicology⁴. Comparing pre-Islamic love poetry and Umayyad *ghazal*, Jacobi states:

When comparing love poetry of the jāhiliyya to amatory verses of the first Islamic century, I came to the conclusion that at least some elements of the latter could be derived from a common source, a

¹ Renate Jacobi, "Time and Reality in "Nasīb" and "Ghazal", p.1.

² See chapter 1, pp. 11-15.

³ Jacobi, "Time and Reality in "Nasīb" and "Ghazal", p.1.

⁴ For more details see: Shwqī Dayf, *al-Fann wa mathahibuhu fī al-shi'r al-'arabī* (Cairo: Dar al-ma'arif, 1978), 10th edition, pp. 53-59.

change in aesthetic consciousness based on two interrelated factors: 1. a new experience of time, 2. a new attitude towards reality⁵.

Even when the Umayyad love poets employed conventional motifs such as the *ṭalal*, they invented a new ending to the story, or connected it with other themes of the poem⁶.

2.2 The Roots of *al-Ghazal al-'Udhri*

A group of pre-Islamic poets who had adopted a similar attitude in love and *ghazal* to the subsequent *'udhri* attitude were referred to as *mutaiyyamūn*, “passionate lovers”, in classical Arabic literary sources. Examples of these are al-Muraqash al-Akbar and Asmā', Al-Mukhabbal and Maylā', 'Abdullah b. Al-'Ajlān and Hind. This approach to love can be traced back to the pre-Islamic period. Poetry, the creative social expression of the Arab tribes of the desert at that time, voiced this approach⁷, so this expression of love existed in the desert-based nomad societies of the Arabian peninsula before the emergence of Islam. The existence of the pre-Islamic lovers is validated by the *'udhri* poets themselves: Qays b. Dhariyḥ quotes 'Amr b. 'Ajlān who was killed by his love for Hind⁸ and Jamīl also quotes him, together with al-Muraqqash, as martyrs of love⁹. However, the amount of poetry that has reached us from the pre-Islamic lovers (*mutaiyyamūn*) is scarce in comparison with the *'udhri* poetry we have in hand from the Umayyad period. Hence, although *'udhri* love--as represented in texts-- has some roots in the pre-Islamic era, it did not

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁶ Examples of this variation could be found in 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah and al-Walīd b. Yazīd poems. See Jacobi's study of two of their poems: Renate Jacobi, “Theme and Variations in Umayyad *Ghazal* Poetry”, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Jul., 1992), pp. 111-119.

⁷ Yusuf Khulayf, p. 57.

⁸ Qays, p. 122.

⁹ Jamīl, p. 32.

become the marker of a literary genre in its own right until the Umayyad period.

Jacobi notes, ‘Whereas the pre-Islamic love poetry only knows the hero and heroine as profoundly bound to the collective needs, the new love code of the Umayyad period shows lovers who are individuals, even with an unconventional language’¹⁰.

2.3 *Al-ghazal al-ṣarīḥ* vs. *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī*

Many scholars, such as Ṭaha Ḥusayn and Ghunaymī Hilāl, consider ‘*udhrī*’ poetry to be the opposite of the sensual love poetry known as *al-ghazal al-ṣarīḥ* and which not only had a place in early Arabic literature but flourished until recent times.

Therefore, love poetry in classical Arab literature, especially during the Umayyad period, has been seen by scholars generally as divided into two main groups: chaste Bedouin (*‘udhrī*) and sensual urban (*ṣarīḥ*) poetry. ‘*Udhrī*’ poets, such as ‘Urwah, Jamīl and Majnūn, are considered the most illustrious poets of the chaste Bedouin genre, and poets from Madīnah and Mecca, such as ‘Umar b. Abī Rabi‘ah and al-‘Urjī, are considered the best in the profane urban genre¹¹. Hilāl explains that when Ḥijāz lost its political prestige, it suffered from a state of isolation, and its poets started to entertain themselves and lead a dissolute life. The best examples are ‘Umar b. Abī Rabi‘ah and those living in cities where facilities and luxuries were available as a result of the Islamic conquests. However, rural poets took their pure love in other directions because they were neither involved in politics nor yearning for a luxurious life. According to Hilāl, this dissimilarity can be attributed to the fact that they lived in areas remote from cities and were steeped in Arab traditions and were, therefore,

¹⁰ Renate Jacobi, “*Die Udhra: Liebe und Tod in der Umayyadenzeit*”, Workshop held at the Wissenschaftskolleg, Berlin, 1- 2 July 2003. www.wiko-berlin.de/index.php.

¹¹ Hilāl, p. 23.

able to preserve Islamic ethics¹². Yet, as we saw in the first chapter, Hilāl's assumption has been challenged¹³ and one can argue that some city dwellers surely were as "steeped" in Arab traditions.

In any case, according to 'Umar's *ghazal*, love experience had become a profane adventure. The lover is presented as the pursuer of women as part of his amorous adventures during the *Hajj* season¹⁴. 'Umar's *ghazal* description of the beauty of women focuses on the sensual side of it and one single poem might refer to the names of several women. Also, 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah is famous for the *ghazal* that portrays the poet, not only as a lover, but also as the one being loved and chased by women¹⁵. His poetry is constructed around dramatic dialogue. His language is simple, tuned with a rhythm adaptable to songs. In addition, 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah celebrates his amorous adventures with self-assured and independent women from respectable families. Some of these adventures, as 'Umar's poems show, were initiated by women themselves. Al-Isfahānī reports that:

Hind, the daughter of al-Ḥārith of the Murrah tribe, invited 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah to her house one day so that she and her companions could talk to him, saying: 'Oh, oh, 'Umar, listen to this. If only you could have seen me a few days ago when I was with my family! I put my head under my gown and looked at my nakedness and was very desirable. At this I called out: "'Umar, 'Umar" and 'Umar replied: 'I would have called out: 'At your service, at your service'¹⁶.

As this anecdote, and many others of its type show, the kind of love relation that 'Umar's *ghazal* presented is a sensual, adventurous love. The beloved in his poetry is portrayed as strong and beautiful, an independent and pleasure-seeking woman. She is also portrayed as the potential companion of a man.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ See chapter 1, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴ See examples of this in his *diwān*, pp. 150, 371.

¹⁵ See examples of this in his *diwān*, pp. 154, 161, 163, 168.

¹⁶ Al-Isfahānī, vol. 1, p. 176, trans. Walther, p. 165.

On the other hand, the vow to remain faithful is a leitmotiv of *al-ghazal al-udhri*, as often evidenced in the *diwan* of Jamīl. Many of his verses may be understood as allusions to the poet's total obsession with his beloved. Indeed, a core theme of the *udhri* tradition presents the lover as being totally preoccupied with the beloved, devoting himself to her, and refraining from making love with any other woman.¹⁷ When Jamīl found himself presented with seven girls from respectable families, each of them wishing to marry him, he wrote the following poem about Buthaynah:

Many is the woman who comes to me
 And offers herself in all earnest mixed with jestful words
 I answer her with kindness after hesitating,
 My love for Buthaynah, prevents me accepting you.
 If I had in my heart a fingernail of extra love to give
 I would accept you or I would send you my letters¹⁸ [1]

Jamīl, in these verses, is expressing a love that occupied his heart so fully that there is not 'a fingernail of extra love to give' to any woman apart from Buthaynah. Even if other women promised to fulfill his desire, he still could not think of anyone but his beloved, despite the implication that she does not 'offer herself'¹⁹. There is a narrative in *al-Aghani* in which Jamīl's father tries to dissuade Jamīl from pursuing Buthaynah after her marriage, and in so doing he unequivocally states: 'Women are replaceable'. Jamīl counters this with the reply that, for him, Buthaynah is not: 'By

¹⁷ Ibn Ḥazm harshly criticizes the idea of having several lovers: 'Herein lies the root of the error which misleads a man into asserting that he loves two persons, or is passionately enamoured of two entirely different individuals. All this is to be explained as springing out of carnal desire, as we have just described; it is called love only metaphorically, and not in the true meaning of the term. As for the true lover, the yearning of his soul is so excessive as to divert him from all his religious and mundane occupations; how then could he have room to busy himself with a second love-affair?' Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *Ṭawq al-ḥamamah fī al-ulfah wa al-ullāf*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: al-Mu'asasah al-'arabiyyah li al-dirāsāt wa al-nashr, 1993), p.58.

¹⁸ Jamīl, p. 87.

¹⁹ In *al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'ra*, Ibn Qutaybah provides a similar anecdote about Kuthayyir 'Azzah. 'A'ishah b. Ṭalḥah invited him to compose poetry about her, instead of 'Azzah, claiming that she was richer and more beautiful. But Kuthayyir replied in verses that showed his devotion to 'Azzah. Ibn Qutaybah, pp. 508-509.

God, were I able to efface her memory from my heart and to erase her person from my mind's eye, I would have done so but it is impossible (...) indeed this is a trial and affliction'²⁰.

From Jamīl's perspective, love transcends mundane life and reaches up to the eternal. It is a symbol of the absolute. Love, to him, is the whole of 'being'. Imru' al-Qays and 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah on the other hand, do not love specific women but love instead any woman who provides enjoyment. As for Jamīl's love, it is purely personal. He is not interested in an instrument or means, but rather in a single being who is incomparable to any other. This person cannot be substituted by another. Women, from this perspective, seem to be exemplary symbols of desire. The lover finds his ultimate happiness in dreaming about this matchless character and attaining this desire. Thus, he becomes devoted to one woman regardless of whether she marries him or another²¹.

Labīb argues that there is a parallel between the concept of monotheism and the unique beloved in the 'udhri tradition. Islam refuted polytheism by stressing the need to submit to one God alone. Consequently, the concept of monotheism is mirrored in the uniqueness of the beloved from the beginning of the 'udhri tradition. In Labīb's opinion, the theme of 'udhri poetry is often centred on a woman for whose sake one wishes to die. Moreover, contemplating her love can have a curative effect. Jamīl says: 'remembrance of you cures my numb leg'²². Sympathizing with the lover and supplication to her make the beloved (the woman) an ideal, while the lover (the man), is a human being²³.

²⁰ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 8, pp. 314-315, trans. Khan, p. 295.

²¹ Adunis. *al-Thabit wa al-mutaḥawil*, vol.1 (London: Dār al-sāqī, 2002), pp. 299-301.

²² Jamīl, p. 89.

²³ Labīb, pp. 90-91.

Moreover, the desire is the object itself for *'udhri* lovers. That desire is their only aim even if it ultimately leads to madness and death. That is why Majnun casts himself as the eternally suffering lover:

She said: you have lost your mind over me
I said to her:
Love is greater than what [afflicts] the madmen
One entrusted with love, the possessor [ṣāhib] of love,
Does not recover from it for eternity,
Whereas the madman is only felled by it for a time²⁴ [2]

In these verses, Majnun 'nobly privileges his passion for his beloved above all else'²⁵. He states that there is no way for the 'possessor of love' to recover from it. Yet, 'true love, in contrast to a crazed infatuation, is romanticized as an affliction from which recovery is not only impossible but undesirable'²⁶.

The motif of the poet's total preoccupation with the beloved was developed and continuously elaborated upon by Umayyad and later Abbasid poets. 'Abbas b. al-Aḥnaf (d. 188/804), for example, devoted a poem to it, describing the loss of all his perceptive faculties. Not even his tongue obeys him any more, but insists on pronouncing the beloved's name. Thus reality has lost its power at last, and the lover's mind is entirely dominated by the imagination²⁷.

However, in spite of this distinction between *'udhri* and *ṣarīḥ* "sensual" *ghazal*, no trace of such a clear division can be found in early texts dealing with the *ghazal* in the Umayyad period. *Al-shi'r wa al-shu'ara'* by Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/899), for instance, is one of the oldest sources to address the *'udhri* poets and poetry. Ibn Qutaybah did not categorize these poets as one school nor did he place them in the

²⁴ Majnun, p. 217, trans. Khan, p. 117.

²⁵ Khan, p. 118.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Jacobi, "Time and Reality in "Nasīb" and "Ghazal", p. 9.

"opposing" genre of "sensual love" urban poets. Instead, he just described each of the *'udhri* poets as 'one of the famous Arab lovers (*'ushshaq*)²⁸. Certain modern scholars have also criticised this division, including Salāmah who notes that *'udhri* poets share 'Umar's view of a woman as a potential friend of a man²⁹. Some of the urban poets, moreover, such as al-Ḥārith b. Khālīd were themselves proud of being chaste³⁰. In addition, Bürgel notes that some *'udhri* elements exist in the love poetry of non-*'udhri* poets such as 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah and even in that of the terrible rake Caliph Walīd b. Yazīd, who boasted of his ability to emulate the *'udhri* style³¹. Therefore, the link between the Bedouin encampment with its chastity, on one hand, and urban areas full of sensuality, on the other, is derived from the emergence of a superficial nostalgia for an imaginary origin, which in this context is represented by the desert. This moral duality of chastity and the profane has been incorrectly applied by scholars in integrated texts of *ghazal* where neither geographic nor tribal belonging seem to be of importance³².

Also, unfulfilled love was not limited to the Bedouin in the desert. After the time of these bards and their environment, love was vocalized in a new milieu in urban areas by poets who were *fuqaha'* and religious ascetics. One example is 'Ubaydallah b. 'Abdullah b. 'Utbah, who demonstrated his regret for divorcing his spouse by composing poems about her³³. His story reminds us of the story of the

²⁸ Ibn Qutaybah used this sentence to describe Jamīl, p. 260, Qays b. Dhariḥ, p. 628 and 'Urwah b. Hizām, p. 622.

²⁹ Raja' Salāmah, *al-'Ishq wa al-kitābah: qirā'ah fī al-mawrūth* (Colon: Manshurāt al-jamal, 2003), pp. 356-357.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Bürgel, p. 94.

³² Salāmah, p. 358.

³³ Al-Iṣfahānī, vl.8, p. 93.

'*udhri* poet, Qays b. Dharih³⁴. Among the ascetic poets in Madīnah was 'Ubd al-Rahmān al-Jashmī, known as al-Quss who became infatuated with the songstress, Salāmāh, after listening to her singing³⁵. Clearly, the bards and *fuqahā'* were already rejoicing at love in the Abbasid era when the first compilations of the words of paramours including 'udhrīs, and others concerned with love, first began to appear.

2.4 The Important Source: *Kitāb al- Aghānī*

After the flowering of *al-ghazal al-'udhri* in the Umayyad period and the diffusion of its spirit to *fuqahā'* in Madīnah and Mecca, it cannot be traced again as a genre until the Abbasid age when '*udhri* love became the exalted ideal of courtly society in Persia, although the prevailing moral outlook of the latter context clearly differed with respect to the earlier milieu. It was at this time that moving love stories were documented about tragic lovers and when poetry and *akhbār* from prior periods were documented and compiled. The earliest extant version of the romance is to be found in an anthology of Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889), who collected the works of major Arab poets³⁶.

But, the most important source of *al-ghazal al-'udhri* is *Kitāb al- Aghānī* by Abū-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967), the authenticity of which we discussed in the first chapter³⁷. However, we still need to know more about the author and his interests, as well as how the work was composed. We also need to look more closely at its structure, in order to understand al-Iṣfahānī's contribution to *al-ghazal al-'udhri*, which became in his period the subject of renewed interest. Abū-Faraj 'Alī b. al-

³⁴ See his story in chapter5, pp. 171-172.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vl.8, p. 6.

³⁶ See chapter1, pp. 16-17.

³⁷ See chapter1, pp. 19-23.

Ḥusayn al-Iṣfahānī, is an ideal scholar to focus on because of his wide range of knowledge, his aristocratic lineage and the fact that he was also a poet. He was of Arab origin, a descendant of the Quraysh tribe and a lineal descendant of Marwān, the last Umayyad Caliph. He was born in Iṣfahān, Persia and studied grammar, philology, ḥadīth, Qur'anic sciences, and history in Baghdad. He was very knowledgeable in the requisites of the convivial companion, such as the narration of anecdotes, fables, poems, and biographies, falconry, farriery, medicine, astrology, music and last but not least, in the preparation of beverages. Al-Iṣfahānī was a man of the world, who was in great demand in aristocratic circles because of his encyclopaedic knowledge³⁸.

Al-Iṣfahānī spent fifty years writing his *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, thanks to the generous patronage system which gave Abbasid scholars the opportunity to work undisturbed by financial concerns³⁹. The *Kitāb al-Aghānī's* 24 volumes, almost ten thousand pages, includes poems and songs from pre-Islamic times to the tenth century; biographies of poets and musicians; and detailed descriptions of literary and music circles. Documenting a song with the name of the poet and composer, along with the modes of rhythm and melody employed, was not enough for al-Iṣfahānī. He gave painstaking descriptions of the context in which a song was composed and performed, believing that the context was extremely important for a proper understanding of the text itself⁴⁰. He also gave copious details of the physical, verbal, and social behaviour of both musicians and audience, the process of learning, the process of composition, the process of change, the uses and functions of songs, and

³⁸ George Dimitri Sawa, "The Status and Roles of Secular Musicians in the *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Book of Songs) of Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī", *Asian Music*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Autumn - Winter, University of Texas Press Stable: 1985), pp. 69-82.

³⁹ Shafīq Jabrī, *Dirast al-aghānī* (Damascus: Dar al-bashā'ir, 2001), 2nd ed, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Sawa, p. 70.

the cause and nature of textual and musical improvisation. Thus, al-Iṣfahānī's work was a precursor of our modern musical anthropology⁴¹.

Although the greater part of the *akhbār* in *kitāb al-aghānī* was transmitted orally to the author, he also cited written works, noting that 'authors and *aṣḥāb adab wa akhbār*' helped to preserve various links of the *isnād*⁴². Kilpatrick notes that al-Iṣfahānī often refers to written materials by using the terms *nasakhtuhu* and *wajadtuhu*⁴³. Even so, as Zolondek notes, the written works by these authors is under-represented in the *isnād* of *akhbār* in *kitāb al-aghānī* and, moreover, we do not know whether these authors showed a significant interest in the subject⁴⁴. This problem applies to the *akhbār* of the poets cited throughout the *kitāb al-aghānī* including *'udhrī* poets. Nevertheless, Zolondek argues, it is apparent that Abū al-Faraj had the various transmissions of the "collector sources" in hand and worked systematically from a definite plan both as regards to content and as to the use of the "collector sources" available to him⁴⁵.

Therefore, when addressing *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, it seems that al-Iṣfahānī treats this tradition in the same way as the various other traditions detailed in his enormous work. He reports as much as possible of these poets' *akhbār* and poetry. When he is dealing with a number of reports on a subject and sets out to note their points of divergence, he does not usually follow one main version but integrates the common elements. Even if he does not announce at the beginning that he will

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Leon Zolondek, "An Approach to the Problem of the Sources of the *kitāb al-aghānī*", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3. (Jul., 1960), p.219.

⁴³ Hilary Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs Compilation and the Author's Craft in Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's Kitāb al-aghānī*, (London: Routledge: 2003), p.95.

⁴⁴ Zolondek, p. 219.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

mention them, digressions are sometimes made in the course of a *khabar*⁴⁶. One might question here how the stories and narratives about *udhrī* poets, starting with *kitāb al-aghānī*, gave rise to certain compositions that in effect marked the beginning of a new tradition. This and similar questions will be discussed in the following section.

2.5 Reconstructing the Past

How can we explain the retrospective mood of the ninth and tenth centuries that looked back to *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* and prompted scholars to collect this poetry and the narratives about '*udhrī*' poets of the seventh and early eighth centuries? What happened at that time to spark off a fresh interest in '*udhrī*' love almost two centuries after the death of the '*udhrī*' lovers?

I would suggest three assumptions to answer these questions. Firstly, when *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* was revived as a literary phenomena in the ninth century, it was not with "new" exponents. Rather, the still living tradition was revived when the poetry was collected and documented and when the stories that fit somehow with the poetry were collected and retold. Therefore, the restoration of the '*udhrī*' tradition was partly due to the criticism and authorship movement in the Abbasid age.

Secondly, the foreign influences on Arabic literature, especially from Persia, could also explain the turning back to *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. Moreover, the Persian interest in Majnūn led to the development of narratives about the Arabic origin of the story and the addition of new Sufi elements to it⁴⁷. Thirdly, concerning moral and ethical

⁴⁶ Kilpatrick, p. 97.

⁴⁷ To the present, three main characters from Arabic literature still exert an influential presence in Persian literature: Majnūn, Alī b. Abī ṭalīb and al-Mutanabī.

issues, "the profligacy movement" on one hand and the Sufis and asceticism on the other, were all instrumental in renewing the interest in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. I will now discuss these three assumptions in turn.

2.5.1. The Period of Documentation, Criticism and Authorship

The interest in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* in the ninth and tenth centuries that is evident in the compilations of *al-'udhrī* poetry, together with biographical details of the poets that appeared then, is not so surprising, as such documentation had already begun in the ninth century with the collection of both pre-Islamic and post-Islamic poetry as well as the related literary news (*akhbār*)⁴⁸. Also, literary criticism flourished and the Prophet's ḥadīth were collected during the same period. The time lapse, I would argue, between the appearance of *'udhrī* poets in the seventh century and the start of writing about them after a gap of about one and a half centuries should not be considered as a real gap when we bear in mind that literature needs a period of fermentation before literary criticism can properly approach it. In fact, an interest in the authors themselves had already been shown at an earlier time, reappearing through studies and criticism. For example, interest in the stories of *Kalīlah wa dimnah*, by Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 190/759) came back with Abbān b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Lāḥiqī (d. 200/815), and interest in al-Jāḥiẓ as a personality also came back in the art of *al-maqāmāt*. Therefore, *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* returned to captivate the public and scholars alike, alongside every other kind of literary expression. In fact certain figurative elements like the wolf, for instance, returned to recapture the attention of poets. This animal had figured in Arabic poetry of the pre-Islamic era by al-

⁴⁸ The book *Ṭabaqāt al-shu'arā'* (*Categories of Poets*), by Muḥammad b. Sallām al-Jumaḥī (d. 232/846) is considered one of the early books which were devoted to collection of poetry and division of poets into categories or classes.

Muraqqash al-Akbar and al-Shanfarā, to reappear with al-Furazdaq in the Umayyad era, and again with al-Buḥturī, al-Sharīf al-Rradhī and others in the Abbasid era⁴⁹.

Hence, it is possible that a literary phenomenon or personality may vanish for a while, and then return in another form. For example, *al-maqāmāt* appeared in the fourth century A.H, composed by Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, before vanishing, only to appear once more in the sixth century A.H by al-Ḥarīrī and thereafter by al-Suqursuṭī. Therefore, it can be said that after the invigoration of *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* during the Umayyad era, it came back to life again with the documentation of the Abbasid era. The return of this poetic form is evident in three related areas:

- Documentation: the collection of anecdotes and biographical details (*akhbar*) and poetry of *'udhrī* poets by Abū Bakr Wālibī, a collector of Majnūn poetry and by Ibn Qutaybah, who collected numerous anecdotes about *'udhrī* poets in his *al-shi'r wa al-shu'arā'*.
- Criticism: Arabic criticism before the fourth century A.H. was impressionistic and was not aimed to critical intervention as much as it was to demonstrate eloquence. Ibn Qutaybah is considered one of the first critics, establishing rules for literary criticism in his book *al-shi'r wa al-shu'arā'*⁵⁰. After Ibn Qutaybah came Qudamah b. Ja'far (d. 337\948), whose book *naqd al-shi'r* (*Criticism of Poetry*) shows the influence of the literary criticism translated into Arabic at that time, particularly Aristotle's *Poetics*. Then two more books on criticism appeared, first al-Āmidī (d. 371/981) and *al-muwāzanah bayna al-ṭā'yyan*, then Alī al-Jurjānī (d. 392/1002) and his work *al-wasaṭah bayna*

⁴⁹ For more details on the depiction of the wolf in Arabic literature by different poets from different periods, see: Muḥammad al-Hādī al-Ṭarābulṣī, *al-Bunā wa al-Ru'a* (ṣafaqs: Dar Muḥammad 'Alī li al-nashar, 2006), pp. 35-53.

⁵⁰ Ibn Qutaybah divided poetry into types: see his book *al-Shi'r wa al-shu'arā'*, pp. 5-9.

al-Mutanabī wa khuṣumuh (Mediation between al-Mutanabī and his opponents). However, criticism did not fully mature to become methodical until the appearance of Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī (d. 456/1064) who penned *al-'umdah fī ṣinā'at al-shi'r wa naqdih* (The Pillar in the Creation and Criticism of Poetry) and al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī with *al-ṣinā'atayn* (The Two Industries). Undoubtedly, this rich period of criticism prompted critics to look at the poetry of previous eras including *al-'udhrī* poetry.

- The poetry concerned with courtly love was influenced by *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* as we see in its most illustrious exponent al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf (d.188\ 804), a poet who is considered by some scholars as the natural heir of 'udhrī poets⁵¹, even though the love celebrated in his poetry was eventually fulfilled, and the women were not, by any means, ordinary. The beloved here is rather a high-ranking lady of the court. Perhaps it is the themes of long sorrow and cruel fate that link this poetry to 'udhrī poetry.

In the light of the foregoing, we see that a literary style can either vanish or be transformed into something new, and it can be subject to a phase of documentation, criticism and analysis. So it was with the reappearance of *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* and the reasons for the rather changed forms largely correspond to the cultural life of the ninth and tenth centuries. At the same time, this mode of poetic expression was also linked to the political and social climate which led to the interest in courtly love (*ghazal*) poetry, and to the patronage of scholars and poets. The renewed interest in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* as the poetry of 'udhrīs and their stories was part of this cultural

⁵¹ Zākī Mubārak studies him along with Jamīl and Kuthayyir, see his book: *Al-'Ushshaq al-thalāthah* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-ma'arif wa-maktabatuha, 1945). Shawqī Ḍayf, likewise, considers him as 'udhrī poet, see his book: *al-Ḥubb al-'udhrī 'ind al-'Arab* (Cairo: al-Dar al-Miṣryyah al-Lubnanyyah, 1999).

revival, constituting rich material for authors writing on the subject of love. First, al-Jāhīz (d.255/868) authored his dissertation on female singers and women and especially on passionate love, which was his main theme. He defined it, advocating it as a source of goodness, further drawing an analogy between the mirth of singing and the mirth between lovers, also providing comparisons between men and women⁵². By developing his theories on love, Al-Jāhīz laid the groundwork for later writers who devoted whole books to the subject.

Subsequently, from the third century A.H, entire books were written about lovers who died of unfulfilled love for each another. *Kitāb al-zahrah* by Ibn Dāwūd al-Anṭākī (d. 296/909) is one of the most acclaimed works that appeared on the theory of love in the ninth century. It ‘initially corresponded to the ideal concepts of Court circles concerning a person of good breeding’⁵³. This book makes use of ‘*udhri*’ stories and poetry to set a model for “courtly love”. In this book we read: ‘He who wishes to be noble and cultivated must be chaste’, and ‘It is ignoble to treat the beloved in a contemptuous way by describing her’ In this light, we can understand the emphasis placed on chastity in ‘*udhri*’ love. During this period, the idea was remodelled to match the new standards of courtly love. Another example of this remodelling is found in a book that appeared in the tenth century which set a new standard of morality for the lover using examples from the past, especially from the ‘*udhri*’ stories. The book, *al-Muwashsha*, by al-Washshā’ (d. 325/937), states: ‘In the past when a man loved a woman, he did not desert her until death and his heart concerned itself with no other, neither did he endeavour to find consolation elsewhere...and the woman behaved in like manner. When one of them died before

⁵² Al-Jāhīz, *al-Rasā’il*, p. 166.

⁵³ Walther, p. 159.

the other, the partner either took his own life or lived on only in a spirit of love for the one he had lost; remaining true, and honouring the memory of the partner'⁵⁴. Al-Washshā', in this text, refers to the 'udhrī relationship as a model, and the book is filled with references to 'udhrī poets and with quotations from their poetry. Here we can see the strong influence of these poets, who were much quoted at this time, as well as how their stories were remodelled to match the contemporary society.

In addition, these books introduced a dramatic element to love as can be seen in titles such as *Maṣāri' al-'ushshāq* "Death of the Passionate Lovers", by al-Sarrāj (d. 500/1106), which greatly popularised the theme that passionate love bore tragic consequences⁵⁵. Much of the content of *Maṣāri' al-'ushshāq* appears in numerous later works, which use 'udhrī love stories as examples of how love affects its victims and how it often kills them. One of these works; *Kitāb al-waḍīh al-mubīn fī dhikr man istushhida min al-muḥbīn*, by Mughulṭāy (d.762/1361), is devoted entirely to the martyrs of love. Such drama and death can only be the result of tortured and deprived love. The *al-'udhrī* example is the ultimate one for incarnate fidelity both in love and in separation. Subsequent books on theories of love were suffused with such idealism. Hence these books emphasised this permanent state of longing and imparted these values to *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* in one way or another.

2.5.2. Influence of Sufism and the Persian Interest in *al-Ghazal al-'Udhrī*

Further interest in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* came from abroad, particularly from Persia, which is closely linked with the Sufism movement that flourished in the Abbasid era.

⁵⁴ Muḥammad b. Ishaq Washshā', *Kitāb al-Muwashshā'* (Laydan: Brill,1885), pp.70-71. trans. Andras Hamori, (*Love Poetry Ghazal*), p. 77.

⁵⁵ See my discussion about this book and the theme of tragic love in chapter 6, pp. 231-233.

It is well known that the Persians had shown particular interest in the story of Majnūn Laylā. Their greatest poets, specifically Sa'dī and Nizāmī, re-wrote that story until it took a purely Sufi form with the poet 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī⁵⁵. Nizāmī's narrative poem of approximately 4,600 lines is the third of five long narrative poems known collectively as the *Kamsa* (the Quintet). Here are some details about his work:

In composing his romance, Nizāmī used many of the Arabic anecdotes and considered several key elements of the '*udhri*' genre. He refers explicitly to his sources seventeen times, at the beginning of each episode, but none of the sources can be identified with certainty: these references are probably a narrative device to emphasize the romance's outlandish origin to his Persian readers. Nizāmī adds a strong Persian flavor to the legend. For example, the Nawfal episode is developed into a completely different event, hardly resembling the original Arabic account. The Arabic sources portray Nawfal as an official, but Nizāmī's Nawfal is a chivalrous Persian chieftain (*javānmard*) ready to risk his life to bring the two lovers together. Nizāmī threads the scattered anecdotes about Majnun's love into a finely woven narrative with a dramatic climax. Persian verse romances are commonly about princes, and characters are usually related to courtly circles. Likewise, Nizāmī portrays the lovers as aristocrats. He also urbanizes the Bedouin legend: Majnūn does not meet Laylā in the desert amongst the camels, but at school with other children. Other Persian motifs added to the story are:(...) Majnun's supplication to the heavenly bodies and God; his kingship over animals, and his didactic conversations with several characters⁵⁶.

Undoubtedly, these new dimensions given to the story of Majnūn heightened the interest in this poetry. Moreover, some scholars, such as Hilāl, claim that Sufi love is an '*udhri*' love that evolved due to specific philosophical and religious factors⁵⁷. Both types were subject to the creed of Islam and the interpretations of its texts. At the same time, neither of these two expressions of love shied away from the physical side, and in the case of Sufi love, contemplating physical beauty was understood as the way to God⁵⁸. Hilāl also stresses that the Sufis introduced emotional feelings and passion into the anecdotes about Majnūn Laylā, recounting that he became

⁵⁶ <http://www.iranica.com/articles/leyli-o-majnun-narrative-poem>. 21 April 2010.

⁵⁷ Hilāl, p. 38.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

unconscious for a short time whenever the name of Laylā was mentioned. With Sufis, fainting was accompanied by a frenzy of love feeling⁵⁹.

2.5.3. Moral and Ethical Issues

Although “diverting entertainment” appeared in Islamic societies from the Umayyad era onwards, as we see for example in the stories of al-Walīd b. Yazīd, it seems that “the profligacy movement” known as *mujūn*, meaning those who make light of moral values yet also indicating inter alia sexual freedom and the consumption of alcohol, only became widespread in the Abbasid era from the third century A.H. Ḍayf states that two factors contributed to the spread of *mujūn* in the third and fourth centuries A.H., firstly the appearance of “doubters” like the schools of atheists and *zanādiqah*, and secondly, the popularity of female singers (*qiyān*)⁶⁰.

The *zanādiqah* movement, which arose in Persia, was originally influenced by the book *al-Afsta* of Zoroaster, developed by Manī who called upon his followers to lead an ascetic life. The movement continued after the advent of Islam and grew during the Abbasid era, particularly during the days of Caliph al-Mahdī who asked *al-mu'tazilah* and *al-mutakalimah* to respond to *zanādikah* who were accused of approving marriage between sisters and brothers as well as fathers and daughters⁶¹.

Concerning the female singers, *al-qiyān*, al-Jahīz portrayed their life of singing and seduction through ornament, poetry and voice⁶². *Kitāb al-Aghani* also depicts this underside of life which was full of slave girls and female singers,

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁶⁰ Ḍayf, *al-Fann wa madhāhibuh fī al-'asr al-umawī*, p.100.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-114.

⁶² Al-Jahīz, *Risalat al-Qiyān*, pp.9-13.

drinking and singing⁶³. It seems that this wave of diversions and *mujūn* encompassed al-Kūfah, according to Muṭī' b. Iyās, Wālibah and Ḥammad 'Ajrad. A portrayal of Al-Basrah at this time by Bashshār b. Burd, who was fond of wine and women (as can be seen in his poetry), reveals that this city was also submerged under the same wave. Moreover, the two poets Abū Nuwās and al-Ḥusayn b. al-Dahhāk depicted widespread profligacy and homosexuality as characteristic of the era⁶⁴.

Is it possible that the spread of libertinism in the Abbasid era helped to create a desire to return to *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, which is considered to be the utter opposite of libertinism? Walther claims that the renewed interest in *'udhrī* love and in composing books on tragic chaste love came about 'perhaps because people had had enough of the constantly increasing fickleness of erotic relationships'⁶⁵.

However, from my point of view, we should be cautious regarding such interpretations; how do we know that erotic relationships were increasingly fickle? Perhaps they are represented as such in texts but we cannot assume that this representational history, if it is even borne out, bears any relationship to the history of lived relationships. *Al-Aghānī* contains accounts of *'udhrīs* and the ascetics. But also, we find in *al-Aghānī*, tens of stories about profligates and a depiction of palace life as being indulged in extravagance and libertinism.

It also depicts the life of poor poets. On the other hand, we observe that asceticism and Sufism had started to take root in society alongside the alleged emergence of *mujūn* and libertinism. Dayf explains that the wave of asceticism in the

⁶³ It was the inclination of Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī to spread such accounts (stories) in order to inform the public of what was going on inside the palaces of their caliphs and princes as well as matters which took away their sanctity?

⁶⁴ Dayf, p. 103.

⁶⁵ Walther, pp. 157-158.

Abbasid era was not less intense than the wave of *mujūn* and may have arrived as a foreign influence from Indian asceticism and Christian monasticism. Abū al-‘Atāyah was perhaps one of the most important ascetic poets, after starting his life as a *mujūn* and ending up by extolling asceticism, death, and the grave⁶⁶.

2.6 Contradictory Texts on Physicality in the ‘*Udhri* Tradition

As we have seen from the previous sections, the period of documentation and authorship led to an interest in collecting the poetry and narratives of the ‘*udhri* poets. Later on, the elements of ‘*iffah* (chastity) in this tradition were refined. But, a close examination reveals a kind of contradiction regarding the issue of ‘*iffah* and physicality in ‘*udhri* poetry and *akhbār*, which appeared in important sources like *al-Aghānī*. Perhaps the structure of *al-Aghānī* and the way it was composed contributed to this contradiction, as we shall see.

Despite the scholarly emphasis on the ‘*iffah* (chastity) of ‘*udhri* poets, it is a fact that the beloved is noticeably present throughout the genre of *al-ghazal al-‘udhri*. The ‘*udhri* poet celebrates his beloved’s corporal beauty in all its glory, and he often refers to his desire for her. Yet, and at some poetic and narrative levels, he claims that a physical contact with his beloved did not occur. How are we to understand the contradictions found within the ‘*udhri* tradition regarding physical contact between the lovers? For example, Jamīl was reported to have said on his deathbed: ‘May Muḥammad not be my saviour (in the other world) if my hand ever touched Buthaynah for a suspicious thing. All I used to do is to rest her hand on my

⁶⁶ Dayf, pp. 114-115.

heart in order to have some relief⁶⁷. Is this statement simply due to his piety, or does he imply that the ideal beauty the poetry depicts is unpossessable, even unthinkable? In Ibn Qutaybah's book *al-Shi'r wa al-shu'arā'* we also read: 'Jamīl is among those who are content with very little'⁶⁸. He cites these famous verses composed by Jamīl:

I am pleased with very little things accorded to me by Buthaynah
 They are so insignificant
 that if they were known by the man (who spies us)
 he would not be annoyed with my love
 I am pleased even when she says: "no" or "I cannot"
 And when she makes me live on promises ..
 promises hoped for, but always disappointing
 I am pleased with a quick glance to her,
 and even with spending a whole year without our meeting-
 neither at the beginning nor at the end⁶⁹. [3]

In other verses Jamīl says:

I know nothing of what lies beneath her clothes,
 nor have I ever kissed her,
 I have never touched her.
 We just talked and were lost in each other's eyes⁷⁰. [4]

Moreover, a number of related themes appear in the passages contained in *al-Aghānī*.

For instance, Jamīl asked Buthaynah during a conversation in her tent one night:

'Would not you like now to give me the reward of all my ardent love for you?' She answered, 'What do you mean?' Said Jamīl, 'The thing that normally happens between lovers'. Buthaynah refuses brusquely, seeing that she will not see him again should he hint at this ever again. But now Jamīl says: 'I only wanted to know your

⁶⁷ 'Abdallah b. Muslim b. Qutaybah, *al-Shi'r wa al-shu'arā'* (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif), p. 441, trans. Kinany, p. 256.

⁶⁸ Ibn Qutaybah, p. 442.

⁶⁹ Jamīl, p. 83, trans. Kinany, p. 180.

⁷⁰ Jamīl, p. 49.

opinion about that. Had you complied with my wish, I would have killed you with my sword immediately, because if you granted it to me, I knew that you would grant it to others too⁷¹.

One can be easily captivated by such verses and anecdotes, which can be found in a number of sources that deal with the theme of love within Islamic and Arab history, such as *Maṣāri‘ al-‘ushshāq*, *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn*, and *al-Muwashshā*. Nevertheless, we may observe a striking phenomenon in this tradition at both the poetic level and at the narrative level. This phenomenon can be traced through the existence of the two contradictory notions in interpretations of one single source. Indeed, as can be seen, if certain narrators have related stories about ‘*udhri*’ lovers making a particular claim about them, others relate stories that give the opposite impression. Even with regard to the physical descriptions of the beloved in ‘*udhri*’ tradition, different narrators have been inclined to give often incompatible statements. For example, the following episode suggests the ugliness of Buthaynah: Jamīl was in a *ḥammām* in Egypt when an old man observed his beauty and asked him who he was. When he realised that he was Jamīl, Buthayna’s famous lover, he said to him: ‘what do you like about her? I saw her and I swear that her hock is so sharp that it can be used to slaughter a bird’. Jamīl replied: ‘Oh sir, if you could just see her through my eyes, you would be happy to commit adultery within the eyes of God’⁷².

One should note the link that Jamīl suggested between Buthaynah’s beauty and his desire, a desire which was great enough to compel him to use the word

⁷¹ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 8, p. 298, trans. J.C. Bürgel, “Love, lust and longing: Eroticism in Early Islam”, p. 93.

⁷² Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar tarīkh Dimashq* (Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 1984), vol. 6, p. 114.

adultery. However, in another context, Buthaynah was described by the famous poet ‘Umar b. Abī Rabi‘ah, after he had a conversation with her, as a tall beautiful woman⁷³. In *al-Shi‘r wa al-shu‘ra*, a storyteller describes Buthaynah as being like the full moon to indicate her beauty⁷⁴. Likewise, in another passage in *al-Aghānī*, Laylā asks a woman to scrutinise Laylā’s [her] body and to report ‘whether Majnūn lied or told the truth’, whereupon the verdict comes: ‘No, by God, he spoke veraciously’⁷⁵. The notion that Majnūn must have really known Laylā’s body to be able to describe it precisely, as the above anecdote suggests, is at the heart of this anecdote. Moreover, Laylā is shown ‘pleasurably absorbed in and musing with her friend over the matter of whether the poet-lover has described her physical appearance in a flattering manner, whether his poetry had appealingly mirrored her’⁷⁶. However, Majnūn’s verses suggest another view regarding Laylā’s appearance from the point of view of a censurer who associated her with shortness and ugliness, but Majnūn insists on his love for her despite the blamer’s opinion⁷⁷.

As has been seen, these kinds of contradictions in episodes evince confusion over the portrayal of the ‘*udhri* poets’ beloveds. Buthaynah’s portrayal, for instance, incites Khristū Najm to say:

Buthaynah’s character is excessively ambiguous! She is beautiful and ugly, Bedouin and urban, chaste and profane, she lives in poverty in the desert and in luxury in towns. She was forced to marry a Bedouin to remove her disgrace, and then, they consoled her after the death of her lover. She wanders in ‘Udhra faubourg and then appears in the palace of the caliph. She appears as a prodigy of contradiction⁷⁸.

⁷³ Al-Mu‘afā b. Zakaryya, *al-Jalīs al-ṣāliḥ wa al-anīs al-nāṣiḥ*, p. 452, www.alwaraq.net, 2 March 2007.

⁷⁴ Ibn Qutaybah, vol. 2, p. 567.

⁷⁵ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 368, trans. Khairallah, p. 66.

⁷⁶ Khan, p. 273.

⁷⁷ See Majnūn, p. 252.

⁷⁸ Najm, p. 116.

The classical Arabic text simultaneously provides contradictory anecdotes, perhaps an attempt to leave the door open for discussions, probabilities and open-ended predictions. It seems that Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī was aware of the ambiguity that his anecdotes provided. Thus, he chose a simple strategy: ascribe responsibility to the narrator⁷⁹. By adopting this strategy, *al-Aghānī* contains a plethora of contradictory episodes.

This phenomenon is evident in ‘*udhri*’ poetry and in the anecdotes written about it. Majnūn, for instance, says:

If Laylā’s husband is among you,
then I swear by God that I kissed her on the mouth eighty times.
And I swear by God that I saw her and twenty of her fingers-
were clutching at my back⁸⁰.
[5]

Yet he also says:

When I want to kiss Layla she turns away
Like a horse with a loud neigh
And she bites her thumb and nods to say:
I am afraid that people will see.⁸¹
[6]

The contexts in which the poet recited these verses differ. He might have said them in different phases of his relationship with Laylā, which might have taken on various forms. What concerns us here is the contradiction, if we may term it as such, that exists in the body of ‘*udhri*’ poetry. This contradiction stresses the ambiguity surrounding the concept of bodily contact between the two lovers.

Yet, this ambiguity is not restricted to ‘*udhri*’ anecdotes; some of these contradictory anecdotes and verses have been reported about ‘Umar b. Abī Rabi’ah,

⁷⁹ This sentence appears frequently in *al-Aghānī*: “والعهدة على الراوي”: “the responsibility lies with the narrator”.

⁸⁰ Majnūn, p. 237.

⁸¹ Majnūn, p. 191.

a poet represented by researchers as the antithesis of the ‘*udhri*’ tradition, and the leader of a sensual school of Arabic poetry. On one hand, ‘Umar actually confesses that he did everything he described in his poetry, but that he asked God for forgiveness⁸². However, another anecdote reports him saying: ‘I swear by God that I never told a woman something she did not want to hear, nor have I touched a woman that I was forbidden to touch’⁸³. Hence, this game has long been present in the classical Arabic literary text. Besides the popular anecdotes, there have also been other lesser-known anecdotes that open doors for other views on this issue; the only difference is that the other anecdotes are less popular. Occasionally, an episode hints at a different interpretation. For instance, the aforementioned episode in which Jamīl asks Buthaynah to reward all his ardent love for her: this was apparently only a test of her purity, and her refusal of his advances was really what he was seeking. This episode shows the ‘*udhri*’ couple to be perfectly chaste, but there is a hint in this story that might suggest a different disposition. The rest of the story shows that Buthaynah’s father and brother were watching the two with swords under their gowns, and that, after hearing this dialogue, they went away saying to each other: ‘We need not hinder this man from meeting her any more’⁸⁴. As J.C. Bürgel observes:

Taking into account the fact that Jamil appears much more active and cunning in the stories than his ‘udhrite colleagues ever do, we may not exclude that in this case he made a serious proposal but sensing either the coy reserve of Buthaynah or the presence of her guardians, or the one as well as the other, he withdrew into the ‘udhrite guise or pose’⁸⁵.

⁸² Al-*Iṣfahānī*, vol. 1, p. 87.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Al-*Iṣfahānī*, Vol 8, p. 298, trans. J.C. Bürgel, p. 93.

⁸⁵ J.C. Bürgel, p. 94.

Most contemporary Arabic studies try to ignore this contradiction by elevating the status of the texts that emphasise the chastity of the ‘*udhri*’ poet⁸⁶. This chastity is usually attributed to the effect of Islamic traditions on the poet’s attitude. Other texts that were graphically sensual were rejected and attributed to wrong ascription, without substantial evidence. Therefore, such studies do not handle ‘*udhri*’ love as a well-rounded phenomenon where reality and history intersect with the imaginary, but pick and choose what the researchers fancy, and what they are disposed to believe of the virtue of ‘*udhri*’ love.

Therefore, instead of ignoring the contradiction within poetry and narratives ascribed to ‘*udhri*’ poets, one may see it within a duality of both bodily presence and absence. It is also valid to assert that the difference between chaste and sensualist poetry may be attributed to the mood of a particular poet, or the phase the poet is going through. Or, as ‘Abdullah argues, it may be that these differences in contradicting anecdotes about sensual and virtue poetry and narratives within ‘*udhri*’ tradition, are a result of the different experiences of the young poet and the mature poet⁸⁷. As may be observed, Abdullah’s opinion in paradoxical anecdotes reported about ‘*udhri*’ poets emphasises the element of time, which is a decisive element, and which is important if we are to understand the ‘*udhri*’ tradition.

Accordingly, was the ‘*udhri*’ poet going through various phases in his relationship with his lover? Or was he playing a game, drawing closer and then withdrawing from his object of desire? Approaching her to satisfy his desire, and departing so as to inflame his love? Obviously, human emotions within love are quite

⁸⁶ Except for few studies which led to further discussions in the subject such as, al-‘Azam’s *Fi al-ḥubb wa al-ḥubb al-‘udhri* and Labib’s *Susyūljā al-ghazal al-‘Arabi: al-shi‘r al-‘udhri namūdhajan*.

⁸⁷ ‘Abdallah, p. 245.

complex and cannot be simply classified into the two categories of virtuous and sensuous (and these may not necessarily be opposing concepts). This fact gives love poetry a conflicting nature as the poet's emotions fluctuate between the unattainable glorified image of his lover, and his own instinctive desire to unite with her.

Hence, we are not supposed to cut short the historical event, nor should we curtail the text. We should believe first, that the phenomenon of *al-ghazal al-'udhri* exists and that the anecdotes about poets is part of its existence, and then analyse its historical credibility and mythical possibility. The role played by story tellers (*ruwāh*) should not be neglected here as they paid special attention to love stories because they were so popular with their audiences. A statement by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d.1349/751) shows clearly this popularity:

While the commoner's fame is incomparable with that of King is and brave as being heroes, he gains his celebrity when he falls in love. He even mentioned in the presence of Kings, Caliphs and their successors. His stories are recorded and his poems get recited. Poetry makes his existence eternal. Without love, he would not be mentioned nor would he be able to be paid any attention⁸⁸.

It is plausible to argue that the story tellers tried to please their audiences with details about the meetings and sweet conversation between lovers and, at the same time, they made sure to keep within the bounds of conservative tradition, and direct the poets to the right and acceptable path. The mainstream inclination towards perpetuating conservative tradition is evident in a narrative about 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah. The narrative claims that 'Umar had never acted upon his religious desire; despite the fact that his poetry is abundant with sensual love scenes⁸⁹.

⁸⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn wa nuzhat al-mushtaḳīn*, ed. Ṣābir Yūsuf (Cairo: Maktabat al-jami'ah, 1973), p. 174.

⁸⁹ See al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 1, p. 87.

Significantly, these contrasts highlight the latent contradiction in the 'udhrī love tradition and it could be argued that they show a manifest obsession about physical contact between 'udhrī lovers. Whether the narratives allude to the fact that physical contact took place in their relationships, or claim its absence, the result is still the same. The body lies at the heart of the 'udhrī tradition. The lack of possession/physicality only serves to heighten the desire since it only draws more attention to that which is being denied. Hence, this shows us the privileged position of the body by the prominent duality of its presence and absence. The very concept of chasteness involves a conscious denial of physical contact, and this consciousness often implies a strong awareness of physicality.

'Udhri' Tradition between Chastity and Sensuality

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the concepts of sexuality, marriage and chastity in Islamic discourse, which includes Islamic jurisprudence as well as Islamic culture in general. I will clarify how I use Islamic jurisprudence as a source, in discussing the Islamic emphasis on marriage versus a discernible 'udhri' attitude towards this social institution. On the other hand, the implications of chastity as understood in the stories about 'udhri' poets and theories of love will be discussed, while taking into consideration the context of the ninth and tenth centuries. A problematic relationship exists between the 'udhri' tradition and the prevalent Islamic discourse around sexuality and love, however. On one hand, it seems that *al-ghazal al-'udhri* was influenced by several elements brought by the new faith, notably monotheism as well as the description of *hur' al-'ayn*, which will be discussed in detail later. On the other hand, the 'udhri' tradition moved away from the simple and direct approach of Islamic discourse towards chastity and marriage to create its own models of love and physical union.

Using the term "chastity" as a translation of the term *'iffah* does not imply that the word "chastity", as it appears in English discourse, is equivalent to the word *'iffah* as it is used in Arabic and Islamic discourse. Nevertheless, I have chosen to use this term, 'chastity', because it is the English word that most closely approximates the Arabic *'iffah*. Both words convey the meaning of restraining oneself from realizing certain desires¹. Other possible words include, "loyalty", which is useful in terms of

¹ In OED these definitions are provided for chastity: 1- Purity from unlawful sexual intercourse; continence. 2- Abstinence from all sexual intercourse; virginity, celibacy. 3- Exclusion of meretricious

the *'udhrī* poets' attitude towards their beloved, but loyalty does not convey the complexity of attitude and action, concerning sexuality and sociality, that *'iffah* encompasses. 'Chastity' does imply the complicated relationship between sensuality (seemingly the best translation of the Arabic term *ḥissyyah*), and *'iffah*, or sexual probity, in Islamic and *'udhrī* discourse. This separation of *'iffah* and sensuality is not to deny their close connection; I make it purely for analytic purposes. As we shall see, the two terms are not always opposites. Indeed, in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, these two terms are complementary.

3.2 Sources

'Islamic discourse' cannot be seen as monovocal. Any investigation of sexuality and marriage in discourses associated with Islam should make use of multiple sources, both religious and more broadly cultural. We do not have the scope in this dissertation to elaborate fully the Islamically inflected discussions on these socially central topics, but for contextual purposes we refer to those textual areas closest to the topic at hand. To some extent, poetry and literary prose, which could be defined by the general term *adab*, can offer an insight into the sexual lives of medieval Muslims, although we must always keep in mind the caveats mentioned earlier about conflating textual representations and lived experiences. In this chapter, I will refer to some of this literature, especially that which has appeared in books as collections of anecdotes and poetry about love among Arabs. At the same time, to neglect

ornament; purity of style, modesty, chasteness. On the other hand, in *Lisān al-'Arab*, *'iffah* is defined as: Refraining from all that is forbidden. To refrain oneself from greed and what is forbidden by religion. A chaste woman: a woman who protects her private parts. As we can see, the first definition of chastity is very close to the definition of *'iffah*.

certain major works and genres of Islamic literature such as the Qur'an, Ḥadīth, *tafsīr* and *fiqh* would make this image incomplete and incoherent. And thus we must start with the Qur'an.

For example, *fuqaha'* elaborated on very sensitive issues concerning sexuality with ease and comfort. As Maghen observes, 'nor did they feel the need to excuse this explicitness, from which even the *adab* literature largely shied away from, by evoking the merits of reproduction'². There is no feeling of shame in their discourse over this explicitness, however, and they were thus far freer in their treatment of sensitive erotic issues than the early physicians or the poets and *udaba'*³. 'When proof-texts were needed by the *fuqaha'* in the framework of legal debates on *ṭaharah*, scores of anecdotes appeared in which [sexual activities] were ascribed to the Prophet, his wives and his Companions'⁴. Therefore, these religious sources reveal much about how Muslims thought and acted regarding the body, its desires, activities and the rituals related to it. In comparing *adab* and *fiqh*, Maghen states that the

formulation in *fiqh* may be less fine than that found in *adab* and the descriptions less exciting or adventurous, but those who are interested in discovering as much as possible about the daily dealings of the ordinary Muslim man and woman of other places and times must proceed first to the canon of the establishment. At any rate, they must not limit themselves solely to the canon of the anti-establishment⁵.

Maghen also maintains that the code of purity offers a unique window on gender relations and notions of sensuality at different times and places in Muslim societies⁶.

² Ze'ev Maghen, *Virtues of the Flesh- Passion and Purity in Early Islamic Jurisprudence* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 119.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120. There are many examples of those anecdotes, a number of them were quoted by Maghen and ascribed even to Muslim women like Umm Sulaym, who made this statement during her inquiry to the Prophet about a sensitive issue: 'God is not embarrassed by the truth'. For a more elaborate discussion see Maghen, pp. 120-125.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 133.

The panorama here is wide and representative. Within this purity code the *fuqahā'* saw it as their duty to discover what aroused the majority of people. Therefore, jurisprudence is probably the best place to discover what specific Muslim communities, at various times and in various places, found sexually appealing⁷.

Correspondingly, *fuqahā'* debates over the various interpretations of particular verses of the Qur'an and Ḥadīth can show their attitude to the body and sexuality. For example, by studying the various opinions on whether or not touching one's genitals cancels one's state of purity, Katz observes that the different views are signs of the differing attitudes towards the human body. One view stigmatises some parts of the body as unclean while the other affirms that the human person is pure in its entirety⁸.

3.3 The Body in the Qur'an

Not all references to the body in the Qur'an have negative connotations, as they are not associated with repression or profanation. In Iqbal 'Urawī's analysis of the Qur'anic view of the body, he indicates that the nature and functions of the body prove the truth of monotheism and the greatness of God because he creates them so perfectly. In addition, certain Qur'anic verses refer to particular parts of the body in a way that reveals the omnipotence of God and His miraculous power in creating these parts⁹. Other verses describe the stages of development of the human body from the foetus to the formation of the entire body, again indicating nothing profane: 'Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Marion Holmes Katz, *Body of Text The Emergence of the Sunni Law of Ritual Purity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 209.

⁹ Al-Balad (90:9), Al-Infīṭār (82:6-8).

a place of rest, firmly fixed; Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then we made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then we developed out of it another creature. So blessed be God, the best to create'¹⁰. 'Urawī argues that 'The prevalent phenomenon of viewing the body as profane means that women are perceived as concealing evil in their bodies, thereby denigrating the female sex. Thus, linking the above phenomenon to Islam contradicts the actual references to the body in the Qur'an'¹¹. In addition, 'Urawī asserts that the body is also presented in the Qur'an as a subject of *zīna* as in the following verse: 'Say: Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts)[*zīna*] of God, which He hath produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, *ṭaiyybat* (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgment. Thus do We explain the signs in detail for those who understand'¹². This representation personifies the body as a reflection of all the beauty of nature and the universe. In this case, the body is not necessarily linked to the other *ṭaiyybat*, like food and drink. According to the Qur'an, the body is more than a mere physical necessity, as man is urged to enjoy its beauty. Moreover, the verse does not confine the treatment of the body to *zīna* but extends to a reminder that the body should be counted as one of God's greatest blessings¹³. In addition to the fact that body is created for a purpose in this life, it will also bring pleasure in the next life. The appearance of believers on the last day is often described as good: '(Other) faces that Day will be joyful, which will

¹⁰ Al-Mu'minūn (23:12-14).

¹¹ Muḥammad Iqbal 'Urawī, "Mustawayāt ḥuḍūr al-Jasad fī al-khiṭāb al-qur'ānī", *Ālam al-fikr* (37:4), (al-Kuwayt: 2009), p. 17.

¹² Al-A'raf (8:32).

¹³ 'Urawī, pp. 17-21.

neither nourish nor satisfy hunger'¹⁴. 'God will admit those who believe and work righteous deeds, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow: they shall be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearls; and their garments there will be of silk'¹⁵. 'Urawī concludes by saying that the Qur'anic speech celebrates the body and sets directions not only to purify but also to beautify it¹⁶. Thus, contrary to the claims of other scholars¹⁷, 'Urawī affirms that not all references to the body in the Qur'an have negative connotations.

There are many references in the Qur'an to the physical connection between men and women. For example, 'They are your garments and ye are their garments. Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you; so now associate with them, and seek what Allah hath ordained for you've'¹⁸. There are also several Qur'anic verses giving a clear description of the creation of human beings¹⁹. In fact, the Qur'an alludes to the nature of sexual

¹⁴ Al-Ghashiyah (88:7-8).

¹⁵ Al-Hājj (22:23).

¹⁶ 'Urawī, p. 29.

¹⁷ The question of the body in Islam is mishandled in Fuad I Khuri's contribution on this subject. In his book *The Body in Islamic Culture*, he tackles the question of the body in Islam from too narrow a perspective. For instance, he examines the Qur'anic verses only superficially, ignoring their various interpretations. He claims that the same anecdote about Adam and Eve occurs in both the Old Testament and the Qur'an¹⁷. However, it is clearly stated in the Old Testament that it was Eve who was tempted by Satan to eat the forbidden fruit, and that she, in turn, tempted Adam to eat it, while the Qur'an states that both Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan: Satan, trying to seduce him [Adam], said: "Do you want me to show you the Tree of Eternity and the Everlasting Kingdom?" Adam and his wife [Eve] ate [the fruit] from the tree and found themselves naked. Then they began to cover themselves with the leaves from the Garden. Adam disobeyed his Lord and went astray. His Lord accepted his repentance, forgave him and gave him guidance" (20:120–122). Moreover, the notion of the essential impurity of women is rejected in Islam. Nevertheless, to support his idea of the preference for virgin brides in Islam, Khuri quotes certain verses from the Qur'an, apparently without realising that they refer to *al-ḥūr al-'ayn* in Paradise, not to earthly women¹⁷. On the same page, he quotes the following *ḥadīth*: 'A woman is contracted in marriage for her looks, wealth, or noble origin.' However, he neglects to complete this *ḥadīth*: 'So try to obtain one who is religious, may your hand be besmeared with dust [may you enjoy the benefits]. These omissions and misreadings betray a bias or blind spot in Khuri's interpretation of Islamic discourse around sexuality. (Fuad. I. Khuri, *The Body in Islamic Culture* (London: al-Saqi Books, 2001).

¹⁸ Al-Baqarah (2:183–7).

¹⁹ Al-Mu'minun (23:12–17).

relations as a means of attaining mutual satisfaction, closeness and compassion between a wife and husband'²⁰. In the Qur'an, God's creation of mates is considered one of His signs: 'And among His signs is this: that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them and He has put love and mercy between you; in this are signs for those who reflect'²¹.

3.4 Defilement and Purification

Within its concern about the human body, Islamic law provides guidance for the treatment of one's own body regarding its defilement and purification²². Indeed, as Katz observes: 'Islamic legal discourse on the body, its healthy functioning, and various discontents is meaningful and that analysis of this discourse reveals an important aspect of Muslims' understanding of the human experience'²³; this being the kind of analysis her study offers. She argues that:

Self-conscious and systematic juristic discussion of the rules relating to the pollution and ablution was preceded by the emergence of a quite coherent and unified tradition of popular practice whose authority was such that it generally prevailed in the face of theoretical challenge²⁴.

On the other hand, the Islamic law of purification *ṭahārah*, which required Muslims to wash after certain bodily activities, does not imply a base view of the human body in Islam. On the contrary, it indicates that no human beings, whether male or female, may be described as impure. Katz states that:

²⁰ *An Islamic Perspective on Sexuality*, by the Muslim Women's League, http://www.mwlnusa.org/topics/sexuality/sexuality_pos.html, 5 November 2007.

²¹ Al-Rūm (30:21).

²² Not just Islam, in fact, many religions subject their followers to strictures of purity. As Katz explains, Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians, and even ancient Greece set rites of purification before engaging in ritual activities or entering sacred spaces. For more details see Katz, pp.3-5.

²³ Katz, p.1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

[A] reciprocal understanding of the rule suggested that the source of pollution was not the body of either of the individuals concerned, but the act of touching itself. This inference established a parallel between the act of touching women, and the other acts requiring the renewal of one's *wuḍū'* ablutions, all of which are bodily functions one has oneself performed rather than instances of contagion by another person or substance. What is envisioned is not a quality of substantive impurity inherent in bodies of either sex, but a quality of pollution ascribed to heterosexual contact²⁵.

Some scholars see the symbolic structures of ritual purity in the paradigm of the fundamental dichotomy between nature and culture. As Katz puts it: 'A corollary of this interpretation, in which rites of purity are seen to function as cultural responses to the irreducible residuum of the natural in human life, is that the fundamental *raison d'être* of these rites is the reassertion of control'²⁶. The central insight of this theory, represented mainly by Mary Douglas, is that 'purity practices must be understood to emerge from, and in turn to constitute, symbolic systems'²⁷.

Regarding the sources of law that deal with the body, especially regarding its purity, Katz concludes that '[the]purity law emerged from the social and political interplay among rulers, scholars, and ordinary Muslims as well as from the theoretical interplay between authoritative text and unifying theory'²⁸.

3.5 Positive Perspective on Sexuality

It can be observed that Islam 'always took care to admit that sexuality existed as a problematic element in the relationship of the individual and society and never hesitated to leave room for the discussion of approval or disapproval'²⁹F. It should

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29. However, despite the influence of this view on the study of ritual purity, it has been criticised several times as Katz has detailed. pp. 16-18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

²⁹ Franz Rosenthal, "Fiction and Reality: Sources of the Role of Sex in Medieval Muslim Society", in Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid-Marsot (ed.), *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, p. 4.

be noted that the body is given a remarkably high status in Islam. As Bouhdiba puts it, Islam:

in no way tries to depreciate, still less to deny, the sexual. On the contrary, it attributes a sublime significance to the sexual and invests it with such a transcendental quality that any trace of guilt is removed from it³⁰.

Although the 'udhrī tradition devotes itself to highlighting marriage by drawing attention to its absence, marriage is strongly recommended in Islam and indeed is regarded as a cornerstone of Islamic belief and practice. The word *nikāḥ̄* (marriage) appears in the Qur'an twenty three times³¹. In his extensive study of sexuality in Islam, Bouhdiba stresses this point in every way. He quotes many *hadiths* showing the privileged status of marriage and the unfavourable status of divorce: 'The profound meaning of the institution of *nikāḥ̄*, an institution given great importance in Islam, lies in the recognition of the harmony of the human couple as an essential ideal of life'³², insofar as the 'unity based on *nikāḥ̄* is a creative mission, because it is based on freedom assumed within the framework of life with others'³³. Therefore, Bouhdiba assumes that this essential intuition makes *nikāḥ̄* a sacred mission, in which the notions of guilt and sin are absent. It is worth noting that the theme of 'sacred sex' also appears in many other contributions to the subject³⁴.

³⁰ Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, *Sexuality in Islam*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 6.

³¹ See, for example, Al-Nisā' (3: 22), Al-Nūr (24: 32).

³² Bouhdiba, pp. 90–91.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.91.

³⁴ See, for instance, S. Kamal, *Islam and Sacred Sexuality*, www.gaia.web.org.waia-wicca, 12 June. 2006.

According to many scholars, there is no doubt that Islam strongly favours marriage³⁵. It is often mentioned that the Prophet himself ‘established marriage and legal sexual intercourse as a general *sunnah*’³⁶. Thus, we can find many *hadiths* dealing with the question of sex and marriage in the *sunnah*:

O young men, those among you who can support a wife should marry, for it restrains the eyes [from casting evil glances] and preserves one from immorality; but he who cannot afford it should observe a fast, for it is a means of controlling sexual desire³⁷.

Narrated Ibn Masud: We used to fight in the holy battles in the company of the Prophet and we had no wives with us. So we said, "O Allah's Apostle! Shall we get castrated?" The Prophet forbade us to do so³⁸.

Hence, scholars have drawn the conclusion from these and other *hadiths* that Islam views sex in a positive light, as it encourages sexual enjoyment (provided it is within marriage). Also, the Prophet was open to the discussion of this topic with the believers:

Let none of you come upon his wife like an animal, let there be an emissary between them. When asked what the emissary was, he replied, "The kiss and sweet words".³⁹

Bellamy points out that the Prophet’s promotion of marriage is used in the argument against celibacy. In addition, his treatment of his wives is given as an example of the fairness due to each of several wives⁴⁰. It seems that strong encouragement of marriage is predominant in Islamic thinking in spite of certain Sufi voices calling for

³⁵ The acceptance of sexuality as a healthy aspect of life is a decisive cultural difference between Arabic and Western religious thinking, also reflected in their different versions of Paradise. See Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture* (Princeton, NJ : Markus Wiener, 1999), p. 70.

³⁶ James A. Bellamy, “Sex and Society in Islamic Popular Literature”, in Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid-Marsot (ed.), *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, p. 32.

³⁷ Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, trans. ‘Abdul Ḥamid Ṣiddīqī (Lahore : SH Muhammad Ashraf, 1972), vol.2, Book 5, Number 3231, p. 703.

³⁸ Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 9, trans. Muhsin Khan, <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/> 1 November 2007.

³⁹ Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (Cairo: Mu’assasat al-ḥalabī, 1967-1968), p. 86.

⁴⁰ Bellamy, p. 30.

celibacy⁴¹. It is hard to ignore all the traditions that connect lawful sex and spiritual rewards. When the Prophet stated: ‘In the sexual act of each of you there is a *ṣadaqah*’, his companions were astonished, asking: ‘Oh Messenger of God! When one of us fulfils his sexual desire, will he be given a (spiritual) reward for that? The prophet explained: ‘Do you think that were he to act upon it (lustful desire) unlawfully, he would be sinning? Likewise, if he acts upon it lawfully he will be rewarded’⁴². Furthermore, ‘love has its finality in procreation, which is the gift of existence, the promotion to existence of a new being (...). So the act of generation is highly commendable: (Couple and multiply), the prophet was to order’⁴³.

Accordingly, it is a work of piety to convince others to marry. The Qur’an says explicitly: ‘Marry those among you who are single, or the virtuous ones among yourselves, male or female: if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His grace: for Allah encompasseth all, and He knoweth all things’⁴⁴. The prophet says: ‘To marry is to perform half of one’s religious duty’⁴⁵. Marriage, then, is half of faith. ‘The personality of man finds fulfillment only in the intimacy of the sexes. The unity based on *nikaḥ* is a creative mission, because it is based on a freedom assumed within the framework of life with others’⁴⁶.

⁴¹ In the early period of Islam, Bellamy says, there was a movement in favour of celibacy. He quotes the following *ḥadīth*: ‘Abdullah b. ‘Umar related that once they were on a raid and had no means [of sexual gratification]. They asked: "Why do we not castrate ourselves?" But the Prophet forbade that'. He argues that centuries later, celibacy reappeared among the Sufis. He highlights the attitude of some of the later Sufis such as, Ibrahim b. Adham and Bishr al-Hafī, the latter fearing that he would be an executioner on the bridge if he had a family⁴¹. In general, they worried about being distracted by worldly concerns from the worship of God. The same point is made by al-Ghazālī, who recommended the Sufi *murīd* to avoid marriage at the beginning of his career. For more details see Bellamy, pp. 32-34.

⁴² Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 2, Book 5, Number 2198, p. 482.

⁴³ Bouhdiba, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁴ Al-Nūr (24:32).

⁴⁵ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Husayn al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb shu‘ab al-‘imān*, <http://www.ahlalhadith.com/vb/showthread.php?t=23108>, 14 January 2009.

⁴⁶ Bouhdiba, p. 91.

Classical Arabic books on the question of sexuality are numerous. In his work *al-jins wa 'ulamā' al-Islam*⁴⁷, Ibrāhīm 'Isā states that there are more than a hundred books written by medieval Muslim scholars on this subject. Many of the modern studies devote one or more chapters to a discussion of these medieval sources. For instance, Bouhdiba's work *Sexuality in Islam* includes a chapter entitled "Erotology", in which the author cites a variety of treatises and books attributed to al-Jāhiz, al-Tifāshī, al-Nifzawī and many others, all dealing with sexuality. The author also refers to the large volume of this kind of literature.

However, the modern sources that address sexuality and the body in Arab Muslim culture seem to differ in their points of view and in the conclusions they draw. Whereas some sources focus on the concepts of love and sex as they are treated in the Qur'an and Sunnah, others rely on the interpretations of the *fuqahā'*; and yet other focus on history or poetry. Consequently, some sources assert that Islam 'warmly recommend[s] believers to take their share of sexual pleasures, which are an essential prefiguration of the pleasures of Paradise'⁴⁸, whereas others advise sexual repression and the restriction of physical freedom in Islam. Moreover, where some authors are struck by the straightforward language often used to describe the body in Muslim cultures, others highlight its modesty. As this is a huge area of research, however, I shall focus on only the crucial contributions that shed light upon the topics with which I am concerned in this thesis.

Bouhdiba asserts that in the practice of love, the Qur'an describes a balanced approach, but he argues that this has not been translated into social practice. In other words, what was unified in revelation fell apart at the historical level. Bouhdiba also

⁴⁷ Ibrāhīm 'Issā, *Al-jins wa 'ulamā' al-Islam*, (Cairo: Madbulī, 1996).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

addresses the subject of variations on eroticism: misogyny, mysticism and *mujūn*, maintaining that they are three ways of dealing with the single problem: misogyny encloses Muslims in their own empire, *mujūn* releases their inhibitions, and mysticism sublimates them⁴⁹. The sensuality of Paradise is also discussed in his chapter “The Infinite Orgasm”, where Bouhdiba argues that the sensual nature of paradisiacal pleasures means that the physical aspect of the body is not scorned. The author quotes from the Islamic texts that provide details of the infinite pleasure to be had with houris. He concludes by addressing the crisis of sexuality and the crisis of faith in contemporary Arab-Muslim society, emphasising the role that colonization played in the degradation of women.

The subject of sensuality in Paradise has been frequently addressed by scholars, many of them relying heavily on Bouhdiba’s analysis. For example, in his essay “Sexuality, Diversity and Ethics in the Agenda of Progressive Muslims”, Scott A. Kugle explains that the depiction of Paradise in the Qur’an ‘is not just bodily, but sensually delightful and even sexually blissful’⁵⁰. According to the 55th chapter of the Qur’an, for the God-fearing are stored up –*inter alia*- ‘two gardens containing all kinds (of trees and delights)... In each (garden) two springs will flow freely... In them will be fruits of every kind... and in (the gardens) will be chaste maidens, restraining their glances, whom no man or jinn has touched, (whose complexions) will be like unto rubies and coral’⁵¹. We read elsewhere that the deserving shall lounge on thrones set in lines⁵², wear fine and thick silk⁵³, and that round about them

⁴⁹ Bouhdiba, p. 117.

⁵⁰ Scott A. Kugle, *Sexuality, Diversity and Ethics in the Agenda of Progressive Muslim*, <http://www.geocities.com/vidyak1/scottkugledoc.pdf>. 5 June.2005.

⁵¹ Al-Raḥman (55: 46-58).

⁵² Al-Ṭūr (52:20).

shall go ever-blooming youths bearing goblets and ewers, and cups of pure drink. (And there will be) fruits that they choose, and flesh of fowl that they desire, and fair ones with wide, lovely eyes, like unto hidden pearls⁵⁴. Nevertheless, the sensual nature of paradisiacal recompense is the subject of debate, having been lampooned in the West⁵⁵.

This positive perspective on sexuality infuses the famous jurist al-Suyūṭī's (d.1505\911) contribution to the subject. He wrote many books on it, the best-known one being *al-Īḍāḥ fī 'ilm al-nikāḥ*, which he begins with what is quite simply a pastiche in rhymed prose of the traditional Friday sermon. Here are a few significant lines from his prelude:

Laud to the Lord who adorned the virginal bosom with breasts, and
 who made the thighs of women anvils for the spear handles of men.
 Whose lance point devised for attack of clefts and not of throats.
 Who made the active worker cushioned coynte to correspond with
 nice fit and perfect measure all the space that lies betwixt the still
 unstormed-breach, and the maiden-head unreached⁵⁶.

3.6 Chastity ('iffah) between 'udhri and Islamic discourse

While permissible sexual relationships are described in Islamic sources as great wells of love and closeness for the couple involved, prohibitions against adulterous relationships are equally strong. Adultery is strictly and repeatedly forbidden in the Qur'an.

⁵³ Al-Dḍukhkhān (44:54).

⁵⁴ Al-Wāqī'ah (56:17-23).

⁵⁵ The Muslim attribution of this worldly voluptuousness to the other world (*The ākhīrah*) provoked an uncharacteristically violent outburst from the Jewish *mutakalim* Moses Maimonides. About a century after Maimonides, a text known as *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* – while actually praising many Muslim beliefs and institutions – describes the Islamic notion of paradise with an unmistakable hint of derision. For more details see Maghen, pp.6-7.

⁵⁶ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *The Book of Exposition*, trans. An English bohemian (London: Darf Publishers Ltd,1987), pp. 1-2.

It could be argued that the concept of ‘*iffah* chastity, as it appears in the Qur’an and *sunnah*, is rather strict. Here are some relevant quotations:

‘Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils),’⁵⁷.

‘The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication,- flog each of them with a hundred stripes: Let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by Allah, if ye believe in Allah and the Last Day: and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment’⁵⁸.

‘Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means out of His grace. And if any of your slaves ask for a deed in writing (to enable them to earn their freedom for a certain sum), give them such a deed if ye know any good in them: yea, give them something yourselves out of the means which Allah has given to you. But force not your maids to prostitution when they desire chastity, in order that ye may make a gain in the goods of this life. But if anyone compels them, yet, after such compulsion, is Allah, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (to them),’⁵⁹.

‘The believers must (eventually) win through. Those who humble themselves in their prayers; Who avoid vain talk; Who are active in deeds of charity; Who abstain from sex, Except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hands possess, for (in their case) they are free from blame, But those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors’⁶⁰.

The story of the prophet Joseph and the wife of the governor of Egypt in the Qur’an shows the prophet’s high level of chastity and virtue:

‘The woman whose house it was solicited him. She barred the doors and said: (come over here). He said: (Allah is my refuge! He is my lord and has been good to me with where I live. Those who do wrong will surely not succeed),’⁶¹.

⁵⁷ Al-Isrā’ (17:32).

⁵⁸ Al-Nūr (24:2). While harsh, modern commentators are often quick to note that the punishment prescribed for adultery is mitigated by the impracticality of meeting its requirement for being applied: the testimonies of four eye-witnesses to the act (24:13). Many today consider this to mean it is an almost purely symbolic way of denoting the severity of the offence, while others consider it a legally required punishment.

⁵⁹ Al-Nūr (24:33).

⁶⁰ Al-Mu’minun (23:1-7).

⁶¹ Yusuf (12:23).

‘He said: (My Lord, the prison is preferable to me than what they call on me to do. Unless you turn their guile away from me, it may will be that I will fall for them) But she in whose house he was, sought to seduce him from his (true) self: she fastened the doors, and said: "Now come, thou (dear one)!" He said: "(Allah) forbid! truly (thy husband) is my lord! he made my sojourn agreeable! truly to no good come those who do wrong!"’⁶².

Therefore, any extramarital sexual intercourse, by persons married or unmarried, is punishable and constitutes the offense of *zina*. In the case of unmarried offenders, the punishment is one hundred lashes, while for married offenders it is being stoned to death. However, in general terms, the *shari‘ah* doctrine formulates very strict and rigid specifications for the legal evidence required, without which no punishment can be applied.

In the *sunnah* one finds many examples of the strict prohibition of immoral sexuality. Here are some examples from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*:

Narrated ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar: ‘The Jew brought to the Prophet a man and a woman from amongst them who have committed (adultery) illegal sexual intercourse. He ordered both of them to be stoned (to death), near the place of offering the funeral prayers beside the mosque’⁶³.

Narrated Ibn ‘Abbās: I have not seen a thing resembling ‘*lamam*’ (minor sins) than what Abu Hurayra ‘narrated from the Prophet who said: ‘Allah has written for Adam's son his share of adultery which he commits inevitably. The adultery of the eyes is the sight (to gaze at a forbidden thing), the adultery of the tongue is the talk, and the inner self wishes and desires and the private parts testify all this or deny it’⁶⁴.

Looking at this sort of *ḥadīth*, al-Ghazālī compares the gaze to a poisonous arrow and stresses its sinful implications, justifying the Islamic law's condemnation of

⁶² Yūsuf (12:33).

⁶³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Volume 2, Book 23, Number 413, trans. Muhsin Khan, <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/> 1 November 2007.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Volume 8, Book 74, Number 260.

gazing as a sin when it is coupled with desire⁶⁵. However, there is no contradiction between the positive attitude towards sexuality and the strict code of chastity in Islamic discourse. If we understand the context, we will see that there is room for both. 'An emphasis on modesty does not necessarily go hand in hand with repressed sexuality or a negative attitude to physical intimacy...the two tendencies tend to complement one another'⁶⁶. The combination of passion and purity, between the houris who are described as 'long to cohabit with their husbands' and the same houris who are also described as 'pure and undefiled...whom no man or jinn has touched', is a reconciliation between modesty and carnality that achieved its balance in this Islamic ideal⁶⁷. Maghen states that:

Vibrant sexuality and elaborate legalism are, at first glance, strange bedfellows. The former is characterised by the shedding of inhibitions and the loss of control; the latter seeks to instill inhibitions and exert control...The jurisprudential component was thoroughly unhampered, and early on managed to spawn a plethora of intricate provisions concerning the ritual effects of divers sexual situations. Passion, for its part...managed to remain lucid and liberated...The text in which we read about these matters are themselves a symptom of, and a metaphor for, such comfortable coexistence⁶⁸.

On the other hand, an examination of the concept of chastity *'iffah* as it appears in *'udhri* tradition suggests a different definition from that which appears in the Qur'an and *sunnah*. As discussed in the first chapter, the *'udhri* poets lived during the Umayyad period; but the *'udhri* tradition was crystallized later on when the collections of *'udhri* poetry were gathered, and when the books about the lovers among Arabs "*'ushshaq al-'Arab*" were produced. Although these books are devoted mainly to *'udhri* love, they are not actually confined to the poets' stories, as

⁶⁵ Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans. C.Field (London: Octagon Press [for the Sufi Trust], 1980), p. 97.

⁶⁶ Maghen, p. 112.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

narratives about other lovers from different periods are also included. As Jacobi explains:

In a more realistic strand, ‘*udhri*’ love is not so much an emotion or state of mind, but a code of behavior among lovers. It can be associated with the literary and social ideal of (*zarīf*) refinement, described in detail by al-Washshā’ (d. 325/936) in his *kitāb al-Muashshā*⁶⁹.

By examining the ‘*udhri*’ poetry and the narratives that appear in *al-Muashshā* and many other collections of love stories, which all stress the chastity of the lovers, one will find a special concept of chastity that is not necessarily purely Islamic. On a poetic level, the desire to obtain the object of love is expressed repeatedly. Certain characteristic terminology strikes the reader of ‘*udhri*’ poetry, such as thirst, nights, touch, saliva, beds, longing, kissing, embrace, appointments, and so on. It is irrelevant whether this desire has been satisfied or not as that question belongs to the historical contexts, which is not our concern here. Rather, we are examining the literary context. The poets' expression of their desire and longing for physical contact with the beloved is extreme. For example: Jamīl wishes he could spend one night with Buthaynah, talking and kissing:

Ah me! Shall we ever spend another night like our night
until we see the rising of the dawn;
She showering her words upon me,
and oft times showering her saliva upon me from her mouth?⁷⁰ [1]

In other verses he shows his readiness to fight Buthaynah’s people who were angry when he spent the night with her.

And I can never forget her family when they came
with their swords and surrounded us and said:
Jamīl has spent the night with her in the camp.
And they unsheathed their swords and stood there.
But in the house was I the forest lion,

⁶⁹ Renate Jacobi, EI2, “Udhri”, p. 776.

⁷⁰ Jamīl, p.38.

and were it not for fear for the soul of Juml [Buthaynah]
and fear of God they would have been given bloody noses⁷¹. [2]

He always expresses his longing for his beloved's kisses:

Do you not know –
You who have sweet saliva –
That I shall remain thirsty
Until I have tasted your sweet?⁷² [3]

He tells Buthaynah:

And if a skin that is not yours
touched me
under my garments
I will get rash⁷³ [4]

Moreover, he wishes:

O I wish (though wishes are not enough)
that I had met with her after the watchmen were asleep.
How welcome you are as a shawl for a cold lad to make his garment
when he fears the chill and the cold⁷⁴. [5]

Such verses and allusions to physicality between the two lovers incited a contemporary scholar to suggest that the marriage union had actually taken place in Jamīl's story; Faṭmah Tajwar in her study *al-Mar'ah fī al-shi'r al-Umawī* argues that Jamīl's sensual verses -- like the ones quoted above -- suggest a marital bond between him and Buthaynah. She, for example, cites the verse where the two lovers ask someone from their families to judge and resolve the disagreement between them. Tajwar wonders: 'If the relationship was not public, as in a marital form, would Buthaynah have asked a member of her family to sit in judgment? [she would have been too ashamed to ask a relative if the relationship had not been a marital

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁷² Jamīl, p. 107. See also p. 24. Yet some contemporary scholars, such as Fayṣal, warn us not to have any ill-thoughts about this verse. Fayṣal, p. 287.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

one]. Would it have been acceptable for a female to make such a request had it only been an affair?’⁷⁵

However, in my view, the sensual allusions in Jamīl’s love poetry do not necessarily indicate his marital union with Buthaynah. We may rather see them in the light of desire that the poet expressed towards his beloved. Moreover, such allusions are not confined to Jamīl, as all the ‘*udhrī*’ poets express similar wishes, so were they all engaged in a marital union with their beloved? Majnūn, for instance, depicts his longing for Laylā using several images:

I see Laylā’s slip and I envy it - the slip,
for what it contains, is the object of my envy⁷⁶ [6]

A similar image is found in ‘Urwah’s poem:

I wished, out of my passion for ‘Afrā’,
that I was her Yemeni slip under her chemise⁷⁷. [7]

Qays draws a link between his longing for Lubnā and the prophet Idrīs longing for paradise:

I long for the perfume of her bosom
Just as [Prophet] Idrīs longed for Paradise⁷⁸. [8]

The longing for the beloved to quench the poet’s thirst involves poetic images such as thirsty birds and the thirsty fasting person⁷⁹. Qays’ verses elaborating on his longing for Lubnā are worth examining here:

See the parched birds which circle round the water night and day,
but for fear of being beaten never drink their fill
or come close to the cool ponds
They see the froth of the water and death together
and are attentive to the voices of the water bearers

⁷⁵ Faṭmah Tajwar, *al-Mar’ah fī al-shi’r al-Umawī* (Damascus: Manshūrāt ittiḥād al-kuttāb al-‘Arab, 1999), p. 131.

⁷⁶ Majnun, p.71.

⁷⁷ ‘Urwah, p. 51.

⁷⁸ Qays, p. 124.

⁷⁹ Majnun, pp. 170, 182.

They are no more afflicted than I am
 with the heat of longing and ardour
 but the enemy has hindered me⁸⁰. [9]

The birds represent the poet himself or the external equivalent of his desire. These verses contain remarkable terms as they picture the interplay between two contrasting forces: the motivating force (towards water, life and woman) and the force of the resisting obstacle. The birds' persistence in gazing at water that is inaccessible is a metaphor of the poet's persistence in trying to reach the object of his desire, the woman. 'The voices of the water bearers' evokes the sense of deprivation felt by the birds and by their emotional counterpart, the poet. For the poet to reach the life-giving water, he must, paradoxically, cross the terrifying bridge of death.

Majnūn states that his remedy is to embrace his beloved⁸¹. He longs for her to the extent that he wishes to be part of her clothes⁸². One will notice the use of terms such as 'privacy at night' and 'bedfellow'. Qays describes Lubnā saying:

O most perfect of people from head to toe,
 and most beautiful of people clothed or unclothed
 Oh how wonderful you are as a bedfellow just after sleep
 as I pull you towards me full of sleep and wakefulness!F83F [10]

The 'udhri concept of love clearly involves the concept of bodily desire. Majnūn addresses Layla:

Ah me! Shall I ever spend a night
 where my beloved sleeps comfortably?⁸⁴ [11]

Yet, contemporary scholars like Ghunaymī Hilāl compare the perspective of 'udhri poets to that of chaste religious people, like the prophet Joseph who resisted being

⁸⁰ Qays, p. 155. Qays used the word 'ha'imā', which can mean either birds or camels. However, I chose to interpret it as birds.

⁸¹ Majnūn p. 163.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 76

⁸³ Qays, p.109.

⁸⁴ Majnun, p. 140.

seduced by the governor of Egypt's wife⁸⁵. However, those 'udhrī songs about the craving for physical contact with the beloved are, one could argue, far away from the strict concept of chastity as articulated in Joseph's attitude. He prefers to be jailed rather than succumb to the desire of the seductress.

On a narrative level, there are several accounts that imply physical contact between 'udhrī lovers, some which have already been mentioned. In one account, for instance, Jamīl visited Buthaynah in secret and she hid him for three nights in her home⁸⁶F. In any case, it seems that a specific concept of chastity emerged later on in the corpus written about love in general and 'udhrī love in particular⁸⁷F. This concept divides the body of a woman into the upper and lower parts. The lover should attain the pleasures of love by captivating the upper part of his beloved, not the lower.

These traditions in love were crystallised later in the ninth and tenth centuries when the books that were concerned with courtly love, and which set the norms for lovers, appeared. Although the tales are set mainly in cities and courts, and the lovers were usually much more refined than the earlier Bedouins, these stories are full of echoes from the early Bedouin lovers, especially 'udhrī. Their stories were polished and reproduced in the form of courtly love. The book *al-Muashshā* is a good example of this genre. Washshā', the author, 'sets forth what the cultivated man, the *ẓarīf* or the *adīb* should know (...) This *Ẓarf adab* ideal sets standards for good manners and decent behaviour in courtship. An integral part of these codes are the

⁸⁵ Muḥammad Ghunaymī Hilāl , *Al-ḥayāh al-'atifyyah bayna al-'udhryyah wa al-ṣūfiyyah: dirāsāt naqd wa muqāranah ḥawla mawḍū' Laylā wa al-Majnūn fī al-adabayn al-'arabī wa al-fārisī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-anjlū al-miṣriyyah, 1960), pp. 34-35.

⁸⁶ See more examples about Jamīl's and Buthaynah's relationship in al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 8, pp. 300, 304, 305.

⁸⁷ I am referring particularly to *Maṣāri' al-'ushshāq*, *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn*, *Ṭawq al-ḥamāmah*, and *al-Muwashshā*.

concepts of idealised and chaste ‘*udhri* love’⁸⁸. Within this concept of chaste love the author of *al-Muashsha* writes:

To love is to kiss, to touch hand or arm, or to send letters whose spells are stronger than witchcraft. Love is nothing but this: when lovers sleep together, love perishes. The unchaste are only interested in having children⁸⁹.

Likewise, in his treatise on love, where ‘he deals with ‘*ishq* as a universal principle’⁹⁰, Ibn Sīnā states:

If the purpose of kissing and embracing is to get close to and become one with the lover, these actions are not shunned because one desires to acquire his beloved by touching after gazing at her. Thus, the lover desires to embrace and kiss his beloved. However, if embracing and kissing are followed by sexual intercourse, they are to be refrained from⁹¹.

Interestingly, this special understanding of ‘*iffah*’ appears even in the books written by famous jurists “*fuqha*” like Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. In his *Rawḍat al-muḥbbīn*, he states that:

They (the jurists) have made a kiss permissible for one who otherwise fears death saying that not to do so might lead to death, a kiss being a small thing compared to death which is a great thing. When someone becomes ill with two diseases the most serious illness is treated first and there is no danger greater than death. They have even made it mandatory for the beloved to accede to such a thing if it is known that it might otherwise lead to death⁹².

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah also provides several related anecdotes which show that for someone truly in love, to kiss or embrace is semi-legal, or at least only the kind of minor sin called *lamam*,:

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madā’inī said: ‘A Muslim once fell in love with a girl in Mecca and desired her but she refused so he said in the words of ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Ribāḥ the jurist: ‘I asked the Meccan jurist whether there was any sin in the embrace and kiss of one whose heart

⁸⁸ Lois Anita Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs: The Development of the Genre* (London: University of London Press, 1972), p. 14.

⁸⁹ *Washsha*, p. 209.

⁹⁰ Giffen, p. 146.

⁹¹ Ibn Sīnā, cited in al-Ḥufī, p. 148.

⁹² Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, pp. 129-130.

yearned'. He said: 'God forbid that piety should be taken away by an embrace between two wounded hearts'. She said: 'By God, you asked about 'Aṭā' that and he said you can do this?' He said: 'Yes, by God'. So she visited him and said: 'Woe betide you that you go beyond the ruling of 'Aṭā'!',⁹³.

It seems that support from jurists for the lovers to reach a certain point in their physical union is forthcoming:

Al-Zubayr b. Bakkar related from 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz who said: 'Muhammad b. al-Munkadir recited the saying of Waḍḍaḥ al-Yemen:

'She did not yield until I humbled myself in front of her and made her read what God has made allowable regarding derangement *lamam*'. Muhammad laughed and said: 'Waḍḍaḥ was a jurist in his own right!',⁹⁴.

Furthermore, the '*udhri*' concept of chastity is clearly declared by a man who was asked: 'Would you like to have your lover tonight?' He said: 'Yes'. He was asked: 'So what would you do?' He said: 'I would obey love by kissing her and disobey Satan by not sinning with her',⁹⁵.

Nevertheless, some theorists draw more flexible boundaries, as does al-Jahiz in *Risālat al-Qiyān*. Ibn Ḥazm, in his famous eleventh century love treatise, *Ṭawq al-Ḥamamah (The Ring of the Dove)* where he expresses puzzlement over why Bedouin tales show the women as being fond of publicity while they have a reputation for chastity:

I have read in some Bedouin tales that their women-folk do not feel satisfied and convinced that a man is really in love with them, until his romantic feelings become public knowledge and are completely divulged; he must advertise and broadcast his attachment, and sing their praises for all to hear. I know not what to make of that, considering they have such a reputation for chastity: what chastity

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 329. The same verses appear in *Tazyīn al-aswāq*, though the Meccan jurist refers to al-Shafi'i. An interpretation is provided there to the verses: a newly married man asks whether or not he can embrace his wife during Ramadan while he is fasting.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* Likewise, Ibn Ḥazm's *Ṭawq* contains much evidence that stolen glances and even stolen pleasures were fairly common among 'good' people. See pp. 183-188 of his book.

does a woman in fact possess, if her greatest desire and joy is to be notorious after this fashion?⁹⁶

In this passage, Khan notes, a woman ‘is portrayed as allowing her name to be appropriated by a male poet in return for a kind of stardom or renown which in turn confers upon her an aesthetic and erotic value prized in courtship rituals’⁹⁷.

Paradoxically, the ‘*udhri*’ model in love, and its special treatment of the question of physical contact between the lovers, differs from the strict teaching of Islam on the subject. Islamic teaching highlights the preference for marriage, which the ‘*udhri*’ tradition challenges, as will be discussed in the following sections.

3.7 Marriage in the ‘*Udhri*’ Tradition

Despite all the Islamic encouragement of marriage, it seems that the ‘*udhri*’ attitude to it moves in another direction. It is not that the poets fail to express their desire to marry their beloved, but rather, they show the impossibility of its realisation. It seems that the ‘*udhri*’ love tale resists the expected and accepted happy ending, simply because the enactment of it will mean the end of the story itself, and, more dangerously, the end of the poetry. If the poet lover did not suffer, he would not compose poetry⁹⁸. Therefore, the resistance, on a narrative level, to marriage between the lovers is understandable in this light.

Considering the ‘*udhri*’ corpus, there were, in fact, no real obstacles to marriage between the lovers as they were usually cousins from the same tribe, equal in wealth and social status. In the tale, however, all kinds of difficulty make the

⁹⁶ Ibn Hazm, p. 86.

⁹⁷ Khan, p. 266.

⁹⁸ The link between composing poetry and an unattainable beloved will be discussed in detail in a further chapter.

marriage impossible. Sometimes, the tale claims that the poetry the poet composes about his love prevents him from making his wish come true. Paradoxically, in other contexts, when a poet writes poetry about a woman, her father rewards him. But, in the ‘*udhri*’ context, poetry was considered to be the cause of the lovers' misery. Moreover, whenever the story moves towards union between the lovers, new obstacles appear. This factor helps explain why all the offers from noble people to unite the lovers by marriage always fails. For example, the following narrative is told about Majnun:

Nawfal (ibn Musāḥiq)⁹⁹ asked him: (Is it love that has brought you to this state?) (Yes) said Majnun, (and it will bring me to a worse state than this). Nawfal asked: (Would you like me to help you marry her?) (Yes) replied Majnun, (is there any possibility of that?) Nawfal replied: (Come with me, I will bring you to her and arrange your engagement to her, making you desirable to her people by [paying her father] your marriage gift. (Will you really do it?) asked Majnun, and Nawfal said: (Yes). Majnun said: (Mark what you are saying). (I will make it my duty to do this for you), said Nawfal. So Nawfal went off with him, and then sent for some clothes. Majnun put them on and went with him like the soundest of companions, talking with him and reciting poetry. The news reached Layla's family; they came to meet them with arms and said to Nawfal: (By God, O son of Musāḥiq, we would die before Majnun enters our house; the Sultan has allowed us to shed his blood with impunity). Nawfal tried his best to persuade them, but they refused. When Nawfal realized that, he told Majnun to go away. Majnun said: (By God, you have not kept your word!). Nawfal answered: (Your departure is easier for me than bloodshed). So he [Majnun] went away¹⁰⁰.

As can be seen, Nawfal represents authority in this narrative, for he came to collect the alms tax. He met Majnun, empathised with him and tried to help him marry. Nevertheless, a higher authority, in the form of the Sultan, was then introduced into the narrative to prevent Nawfal from achieving his aim. The Sultan proceeded to shed Majnun's blood with impunity. The narrative shows that by choosing

⁹⁹ He came to the tribe to collect the alms tax.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Qutaybah, vol. 2, p. 565, trans. Khairallah, p. 137.

matrimonial union, Majnūn actually chose death. His own blood stands between him and his beloved¹⁰¹.

The ‘*udhri*’ narratives go beyond preventing lovers from getting married, to even mock the notion of matrimony itself. In all the ‘*udhri*’ stories, the beloved marries a man other than her love. This marriage usually takes place in the first half or middle of the story. Yet, ‘the love relation does not simply fade or disappear after the time of the marriage. On the contrary, it is itself opposed to the matrimonial bond. The tension between the two relationships -- marital and amorous – is, therefore, a crucial factor (in ‘*udhri*’ romance),¹⁰². The narratives state that the poet-lover continues to visit his beloved after the marriage, showing no respect for the matrimonial bond. The citation below reveals how Majnūn persists in visiting Laylā after her marriage takes place:

Laylā’s husband and her father departed due to a matter that took the tribe away to Mecca during the night. Then Laylā sent her slave-girl to Majnūn to extend an invitation to him. So he stayed at her place for a night and she made him leave at daybreak, saying to him: Come to me each night as long as the tribe is away. He [regularly] came to her place until they [father and husband] returned. Concerning the last night of their tryst, when she bade him farewell, he recited:

Enjoy Laylā, indeed you are an owl...
That each day draws nearer to its death.
Enjoy until the riders return, [for] when they return,
Forbidden to you is her speech¹⁰³.

Likewise, Jamīl is reported visiting Buthaynah even after her marriage:

¹⁰¹ In Aḥmad Shawqī’s treatment of Majnūn legend in his modern poetic play: Majnūn Laylā, he portrays Nawfal trying to help Majnūn by conversing with Laylā’s people, but her people were armed and ready to take Majnūn’s life. They did not listen to Nawfal, and they wanted to marry off Laylā to another man called Ward. Interestingly, Shawqī makes Majnūn’s *ghazal* for Laylā the chief motivation that persuaded Ward to propose to her. Nevertheless, according to the play, Laylā remained a virgin after her marriage as the Majnūn’s strong presence stood between her and her husband. See: Aḥmad Shawqī, *Majnūn Laylā* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1989).

¹⁰² Khan, p. 278.

¹⁰³ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 376, trans. Khan, pp. 303-304.

[Jamil used] to come to her secretly and then she was married. Thereafter, he used to visit her in her husband's house clandestinely until Dajajah b. Rib'iy was appointed governor over the Wadi al-Qur. They complained about [Jamil] to him and he ordered him not to visit her at her home and empowered them to shed his blood with impunity if he resumed visiting her¹⁰⁴.

Respectively, the episodes quoted above, as Khan points out, 'suggest that the beloved in question voluntarily engages in a consensual bond with her lover. She receives her lover of her own free will even after marriage'¹⁰⁵.

Moreover, it seems that the '*udhri*' tradition tends to treat 'husbands' ironically. Certainly, the husband is, like the beloved herself, a victim of social mores and customs. He proposes to a certain girl to obtain a normal married life, but then he has to face all the difficulties of being married to the beloved of a poet, while the poetry about her spreads far and wide. Yet the narratives do not empathise with him as he is often portrayed as an outsider who separates the lovers. Although he lives in an Islamic society where he is supposed to have power and rights, he actually takes the weakest position in the story. Al-Iṣfahānī states that people in Madīnah were singing Qays's poetry about Lubnā. So, her husband admonished her. She became so angry with him that she told him: 'By God, I did not marry you because I wanted you (...). I got married because the Sultan would have shed Qays's blood if he came near my tribe, so I wanted to protect him from being murdered by marrying another man. If you want to do so, set me free. I do not need you'. Her husband, al-Iṣfahānī continues, trying to placate her by inviting singers to sing Qays's poetry to her!¹⁰⁶

Consequently, the '*udhri*' tradition does not move in favour of marriage in spite of all the virtues that marriage has in Islamic society. The narratives ensure that

¹⁰⁴ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 8, p. 300, trans. Khan, p. 305.

¹⁰⁵ Khan, p. 305.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 9, p. 143.

the lovers are kept away from the idea of marriage, and, moreover, if the lovers ever did get married, the story would be sure to separate them for one reason or another. The story of Qays and Lubnā is typical in this regard. In fact, their love story commences at the moment of separation, when their desperate longing for each other begins. At the same time, the beloved always marries another man, not her lover, and the husband invariably appears as a pathetic and dislikeable character, as mentioned above.

3.8 Between Platonic and 'udhri love

The term "Platonic love" seems to take on somewhat different shades of meaning when used in different contexts. Initially, I am citing here two definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary, both with a number of examples:

- 1- Of love, affection, or friendship: intimate and affectionate but not sexual; spiritual rather than physical. Now usually with lower-case initial. 1678 J. NORRIS *Coll. Misc.* (1699) 355 Platonic Love is the Love of Beauty abstracted from all sensual Applications, and desire of Corporal Contact. 1995 *Daily Express* 17 Mar. 29/2 If you have a physical attraction, who wants to remain platonic friends?.. But if you get into sex, the friendship goes.
- 2- Of a person: that feels or professes platonic love; that has a non-sexual relationship. 1709 R. STEELE *Tatler* No. 32. 3 This Order of Platonick Ladies are to be dealt with in a peculiar Manner from all the rest of the Sex.

Thus, the popular understanding of platonic love 'is a non-sexual affectionate relationship. A simple example of Platonic relationships is a deep, non-sexual friendship, not subject to gender pairings and including close relatives'¹⁰⁷. However, this interpretation shows a misunderstanding of the true nature of the Platonic ideal of love which, from its origin, was that of a chaste but strong love, that was believed

¹⁰⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platonic_love. 3 March, 2010.

to be elevated above sex¹⁰⁸. In his book about platonic love, Gould argues that Plato assumes love to be the key to civilization, art, justice, and all great, brave acts in the world, while the Christians and Romantics, in different ways, thought that love destroyed society or was an effort to escape from it¹⁰⁹. Moreover, love is the key to everything important in life. Without it, neither thought nor activity is profitable or possible¹¹⁰. Gould adds that platonic love could not find fulfillment solely in physical pleasures¹¹¹.

Several scholars use the term “platonic love” to describe ‘*udhri*’ love. For example, Massignon, in the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, claims that ‘‘*udhri*’ love is related to the platonic love of the Greeks from which it is derived’¹¹²; and Kinany says that ‘*udhri*’ love is a sort of platonic love¹¹³. Likewise, Von Grunebaum pointed to close parallels between ‘*udhri*’ and Greek love poems and apparently saw the root of ‘*udhri*’ behaviour in a Greek influence¹¹⁴.

However, ‘*udhri*’ love as presented in poetry and stories ascribed to or told about ‘*udhri*’ poets is far removed from the concept of platonic love. This idea has not escaped the notice of many scholars who have, in fact, challenged the concept of ‘*udhri*’ love as platonic love. In the new edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, for example, Renate Jacobi writes: ‘‘*udhri*’ love in the seventh century is neither platonic nor courtly, not even sentimental’¹¹⁵. Al-Jawāri, likewise, dedicates numerous pages

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Gould, *Platonic Love* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 23.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹¹² Massignon, “‘*udhri*’”, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. H.A.R. Gibb (Leiden: Brill, 1960), p. 990.

¹¹³ Kinany, p. 7.

¹¹⁴ Von Grunebaum in J.C. Bürgel, “Love, Lust, and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam as Reflected in Literary Sources”, in Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid-Marsot (ed.), *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam* (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1977), p. 92.

¹¹⁵ Renate Jacobi, “‘*udhri*’”, *EI2*, ed. E. Van Donzel (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 776.

in his book to making a clear distinction between ‘*udhri*’ love and platonic love. His argument relies on various facts, such as the Arabs being unaware of Greek philosophy when ‘*udhri*’ love appeared among them. Also, ‘*udhri*’ love emerged in the desert among Bedouin, far away from the intellectual influence that was present in towns and cities. Moreover, ‘*udhri*’ love is a poetic expression, while platonic love is a philosophical idea¹¹⁶. Likewise, Sulaymān lists various factors that distinguish ‘*udhri*’ love from platonic love. He argues that Platonic love is a means towards creation and creativity. Thus, it is not an end in itself. On the other hand, ‘*udhri*’ love is an end in itself. In platonic love, you must have someone to guide you and show you goodness and beauty. However, you will not realise absolute beauty until you are literally burned with the fire of knowledge, in order to fully appreciate art and to gain wisdom. Nothing of that sort exists in ‘*udhri*’ love. Also, platonic love has a final aim which is God or absolute beauty, whereas ‘*udhri*’ love is all about lovers¹¹⁷.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have studied the ‘*udhri*’s association with chastity by exploring the concept of chastity in Islamic discourse on the one hand and the representation of this concept in the ‘*udhri*’ tradition on the other. Evidently, the view of chastity as it appears in the Qur’an and *sunnah* is rather strict as it establishes a high standard of virtue. Nonetheless, ‘*udhri*’ theory and practice, as crystallised in ‘*udhri*’ poetry and books that have dealt with the ‘*udhri*’ phenomenon, suggest a different view of chastity. It could be argued that this view divides the body of a woman into the upper

¹¹⁶ Al-Jawārī, p. 64.

¹¹⁷ Sulaymān, pp. 58, 59. See similar argument by Iḥsān al-Naṣṣ, p. 26.

and lower parts. The lover should obtain the pleasures of love by captivating the upper part of his beloved, not the lower. It seems that ‘*udhri*’ poets -- according to the ‘*udhri*’ corpus -- were distanced from the notion of marriage in direct contrast with the encouragement of marriage that Islam favours. As we have discussed, Islamic discourse around marriage is positive, marriage being highly favoured among Muslims. The Prophet’s *hadīths* and his personal life are good examples of this view. But, the ‘*udhri*’ tradition challenged the possibility of a marital bond between ‘*udhri*’ lovers. Even if they were married, like Qays and Lubnā, the narratives would separate them in order to inflame their yearning, which is, after all, the main theme of ‘*udhri*’ poetry. Moreover, the poets continued to visit their beloved, in spite of the fact that they were married to other men and the beloved’s husband is always treated unsympathetically, making him appear pathetic and hateful. If the Islamic attitude emphasises the aspect of reproduction as the result of sexual enjoyment, the ‘*udhri*’ tradition provides no trace of children. Moreover, the beloved is usually depicted in an ethereal manner with no hint of potential motherhood, as shall be seen in the next chapter.

The Representation of the Beloved's Body

4.1 Introduction

Studying *al-ghazal al-'udhri* reveals that the body enjoys a prominent and significant position in it: both that of the beloved and the lover. This chapter will concentrate on the depiction of the beloved's body. Certainly, focusing on the bodily presence in *'udhri* poetry does not imply a denial of other intellectual aspects, but the discussion of those aspects is beyond the purpose of this chapter. This is not to say that the intellectual aspects of *'udhri* poetry will be set aside. In fact, it can be argued that studying the body yields a challenge to the classical distinction in Islamic culture between the body and the soul¹. This distinction can be found particularly in Sufi discourse, where the flesh is afflicted and thus the subject seeks egress from this world and its material rewards and pleasures. Al-Ghazālī, for example, clearly distinguishes between the body (*badan*) and the soul (*nafs*) in his refutation of the philosophers' statement that it is impossible for human souls to undergo annihilation after having come into existence². According to the Persian mystic Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār the body is the soul's cage; in the hereafter the body will become soul, and one must prepare for it in this world³. Ibn al-Nafīs, the doctor and theologian, says:

¹ In fact, not only in Islamic culture: "this separation between the psyche and the body, and a related rejection and mortification of the latter, lies at the core of Western culture. The roots of such a separation dwell in Plato's idealism and in the celebration of the spirit in Christianity, which sees the soul as the only link with God, and the body as the dwelling place of vice and evil". Stefani Michelucci, "D.H.Lawrence's Representation of the Body and the Visual Arts", in *Writing the Body in D.H.Lawrence: Essays on Language, Representation, and Sexuality*, ed. Paul Poplawski (London: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 19.

² Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), p. 205.

³ As cited in: Michael Winter, "Islamic Attitudes Toward the Human Body", in *Religious reflections on the human body*, ed. Jane Marie Law (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 42.

‘Man is composed of body and soul: the body is this thing which can be perceived, but the soul is that to which one refers when one says: “I”⁴.

However, salient aspects of the religious system, as Maghen argues, limited the extent and effect of Sufi preaching that separated and subordinated the body. One of these factors was the pervasive Islamic outlook reflected in Quranic statements such as: ‘O you who believe! Do not prohibit the good things which God has permitted you’⁵. Another factor was the blatantly sensual nature of paradise, and the third was *ṭahārah*, the deeply-entrenched and omnipresent Islamic code of ritual purity⁶.

The symbolic body will receive discussion in a chapter to follow, chapter 4. In this chapter I will focus only on the depiction of the body of the beloved. I will begin by examining the images used to portray female beauty in *al-ghazal al-‘udhri*, with the link between this portrayal and the conventional pattern of female beauty as suggested throughout (other) classical Arabic poetry. Next, I will look at the question of the stereotypical image of female beauty in both Arabic poetry and Persian paintings; hence, I will provide a comparison between Laylā’s physical portrayal in Majnūn’s poetry and later Persian painting. This will lead me to investigate the stereotypical image of the desirable woman in classical Arabic literature in general, and in *al-ghazal al-‘udhri* in particular: the image of a corpulent woman. Thus I intend to discuss this desirable image of a woman in light of its origins in ancient Arab culture. Although *al-ghazal al-‘udhri* makes use of tropes and metaphors that were inherited from the pre-Islamic period, nevertheless it moves away from the old tradition by emphasizing the ethereal aspect of female beauty. Therefore, I will look

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Al-Mā'idah (5:87).

⁶ Maghen, pp. 4-7.

at the notion of sublimated beauty in *al-ghazal al- 'udhrī* and its link with the notion of time, eternal beauty, and love. I will end by examining the theme of the beauty of the beloved which leads to the death of the lover.

I have selected verses of poetry on the criteria of both internal evidence in the poetry itself and external evidence from the *akhbār* (historical anecdotes) that accompany the poems in the classical *'udhrī* corpus. The goal here is not to offer a comprehensive account of the ways in which *al-ghazal al- 'udhrī* refers to the body, but rather, to examine in some detail a selection of texts in which the body is manifestly represented. It should be clear that the concern here is not the real historical figure of Laylā or Lubnā, but their literary representation.

4.2 The Conventional Pattern of Female Beauty, with Special Reference to Pre-Islamic Literature

The importance of the body in classical Arabic literary discourse is undoubted. Common themes found in this discourse include such topics as sexuality and eroticism, feminine ideal, the concept of virility, and so on⁷. As special literature developed around describing female beauty, in particular:

Human beauty was a major topic in Arabic aesthetic discourse, and the only subject besides calligraphy of which aesthetic canons were compiled. A special literature deals with female beauty, describing in detail its types, forms, colours, and proportions, and setting criteria for perfection. It also includes a discussion of the tastes and predilections of religious and historic persons for certain women. A large variety of terms were used to describe types of female beauty and grades of beauty and sex appeal.⁸

⁷ This literature includes many motifs. For example, for feminine ideal motifs such as how to examine a *jāriyah* (female slave) are found. The concept of virility includes motifs such as medicine that promotes virility.

⁸ Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 1999), p. 56.

Therefore, this literature governed the conventional desirable elements of female beauty, and defined it within certain parameters. The general criteria of beauty remain almost the same in both the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods. The later depiction of this beauty was derived from the inherited depiction that materialised in pre-Islamic literature.

Figurative language associated with female beauty involves metaphors based upon deer, oryx, doe, ivory, silver, pure water, sand dunes, grapes, wine, sun, moon, and so on. It is significant, however, that these metaphorical possibilities are not limited to poetry. In fact, one of the oldest passages describing the female body -- attributed to the pre-Islamic period-- appeared in prose form. This passage is attributed to a woman, who was sent to observe another woman's body in order to describe it to the king of the *Kindah* tribe, 'Amr b. Ḥijr, the grandfather of the famous poet Imru' al-Qays. The king wanted to marry the daughter of 'Awf b. Miḥlam al-Shaybānī. 'Awf's daughter was called Umm-Iyās, a brilliant and very beautiful girl. 'Amr b. Ḥijr sent a clever woman called 'Iṣām to observe Umm-Iyās so that she could describe her to him and report whether what he had heard about her beauty was accurate or not. Hence, 'Iṣām went there and saw Umm-Iyās, then went back to the King and described what she had seen. Her discourse recorded the criteria for female beauty. I am quoting 'Iṣām's description of Umm-Iyās at length in order to show how significant and comprehensive this text is in terms of representing female beauty:

Umm-Iyās's forehead is as clear and beautiful as a gleaming mirror covered with completely dark hair just like that of a braided horse tail; her black tresses appear like chains, and when she combs them, they look like clusters of grape washed by heavy rain. Moreover, her eyebrows are very well-designed as if they were drawn by a pen, and dark as if they were coloured by carbon. They are curved around her beautiful eyes which look like the eyes of a beautiful bird. Umm-Iyās's

nose which is neither long nor short is as sharp as the blade of a beautiful polished sword. Furthermore, her cheeks are a purplish colour and snow-white as pearls. She has a wonderful small mouth with a charming smile, cheerful prominent white incisors and pearl-like teeth; in addition, her saliva smells like wine and tastes like honey; let alone, her lips which are red like flowers. She is eloquent, clever and quick-witted and she has a beautiful neck which is like a silver made jug. She has fleshy arms which make you think that they are boneless and have no veins; additionally, she has soft hands and her breasts are just like two pomegranates. Besides, her abdomen is neither fat nor thin and is rolled up like folded compacted cobatti⁹. She also has a navel like a shining piece of ivory that is used for painting. Further, her back is like a stream of water which ends at a fascinating waist. Beneath it there are rumps which force her to sit when she tries to get up, and make her look as if she is standing when she sits. Her rumps are like a little heap of soil matted by drizzle and they are carried by rounded thighs which look like tiered palm pith, and the thighs are carried by fleshy shanks with dark hair. All these parts are carried by two arrowheads like small feet. May God bless them, how can they tolerate all of that weight? Finally, I do not want to describe the rest of it¹⁰; however, it is more beautiful than any description –whether in prose or in poetry¹¹.

[1]

Consequently, ‘Amr b. Ḥijr proposed to Umm-Iyās immediately.

This precise description of the female body is almost the same description that we encounter in the poets’ portrayal of their beloveds. This woman, Umm-Iyās, has certain elements of beauty that Imru’ al-Qays’s Faṭimah has, or al-A‘shā’s Hurayrah has, and so on. The description begins from top to toe, from what is seen and known (such as the face) to what is unseen (such as the private parts). The woman who describes the body draws a parallel between it and certain natural elements. Her report goes much further than mere observation and is enhanced by her claims about the sweet taste of Umm-Iyās’s saliva. Therefore, ‘Iṣām is seeing Umm-Iyās with masculine eyes, rather than with her own, through her detailed description of Umm-Iyās’s physical beauty. Her description indicates the

⁹ Arabic plural noun of clothes made of linen Egypt.

¹⁰ She means Umm-Iyās’s pudenda.

¹¹ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Andalusī, *al-Iqd al-farīd*, ed. Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-‘Aryan (Cairo: matba‘at al-istiḳamah, 1940), vol. 7, pp. 121-122.

overwhelming influence of the prevailing discourse at that time on the classical Arabic culture¹².

In the light of this, one can understand the power that the desirable image of the female body has over literary expression. The following verses from pre-Islamic poetry present the authoritative image of an attractive woman:

She shows you when you enter privily with her
And she is secure from the eyes of the hateful foemen(...)
A soft breast like a casket of ivory
Chastely guarded from adventurous fingers,
The flanks of a lithe, long, tender body,
Buttocks oppressed by their ponderous cargo¹³ [2]

As we can see, these classical verses reflect the dominant concepts of female beauty.

The breast shines like 'ivory', the body is 'tender', buttocks 'oppressed by their ponderous cargo', etc. In Imru' al-Qays's *Mu'allaqah* similar elements appear in depicting his woman:

I twisted her side-tresses to me, and she leaned over me;
Slender-waisted she was, and tenderly plump her ankles,
Shapely and taut her belly, white-fleshed, not the least flabby,
Polished the lie of her breast bones, smooth as a burnished mirror...
She turns away, to show a soft cheek, and wards me off
With the glance of a wild deer of *Wajra*, a shy gazelle with its fawn;
She shows me a throat like the throat of an antelope
not ungainly when she lifts it upwards, neither naked of ornament¹⁴ [3]

Once again, the whiteness of the skin, softness of the body, slenderness of waist, and a general resemblance to deer and antelope are emphasised. 'The names vary but it is, from top to toe, always the same woman: all pampered softness, languor,

¹² Farīd al-Zāhī, *al-Jasad wa al-ṣūrah wa al-muqaddas fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Ifriqiya al-sharq, 1999), p. 75.

¹³ 'Amr b. Kulthūm, "Mu'allaqah", in *The Seven Odes: the First Chapter of Arabic Literature*, trans. A.J.Arberry (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1957), p. 204.

¹⁴ Imru' al-Qays, "Mu'allaqah", trans. A.J.Arberry, p. 63.

plenitude'¹⁵. Moving to the early Islamic period, *nasīb*¹⁶ celebrates the same image of a desirable woman:

On the morning of departure
when her tribe set out
Su'ād was but a bleating antelope
with languid gaze and kohl-lined eye...
When she smiles she flashes
side teeth wet
as if with a first draught of wine
or with a second,
mixed with cool water from a wadi's bend...¹⁷

[4]

So, it is not an individual--whether she be Su'ād or Fāṭimah or 'Ablah—who emerges, but rather it is the perfect image of a beautiful woman that we see. These previously cited verses and many others indicate that the '[poem] has less to do perhaps with the poet's experience than with the audience's expectations'¹⁸, as it provides the stereotype of female beauty, and establishes a poetic figurative language to represent it.

Moving to *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, some motifs in the poem are developed in various aspects beyond what they were in the poems mentioned. Before the Umayyad age, *nasīb* used to be the prelude, or the opening section of every poem. Poets would begin their poems by expressing their longing for a woman, describing her beauty, and crying at her campsite ruin. Then, the poems would move onto different themes such as eulogies and satire. However, in the Umayyad age love poetry (*ghazal*) emerges as an independent genre among *'udhrī* and other poets who dedicated their poetry to love, such as 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah. Therefore, in the *'udhrī*

¹⁵ Andras Hamori, "Love Poetry (*Ghazal*)", p. 204.

¹⁶ It is crucial to distinguish between *Nasīb* and *Ghazal*. *Nasīb* is the lyrical-elegiac opening section of the *qasīdah*, while *ghazal* is independent love poetry.

¹⁷ Ka'b b. Zuhayr, *Bānat Su'ād*, trans. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "Pre-Islamic Panegyric and the Poetics of Redemption", in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 24.

¹⁸ Hamori, "Love Poetry (*Ghazal*)", p. 204.

tradition *ghazal* is not just the opening section of a poem (*qasīdah: nasīb*) any more, but it becomes an independent *qasīdah* itself, and the entire poem addresses the theme of love. Apart from Kuthayyir who was often with the caliph and composed praise poems to him, ‘*udhrī*’ poets also limited their poetry to the theme of love, and they never composed eulogies. Furthermore, their intentions differed from the previous poets’ intentions; their motives for composing love poetry were not just aesthetic but also psychological or emotional¹⁹.

‘*Udhrī*’ poets add several elements to the *ghazal*. These elements include themes such as devotion in love. They abandon the motif of halting at the campsite ruin. They also include the use of simple language and their dedication to only one subject instead of many²⁰. Nonetheless, when it comes to depicting the beloved’s beauty these poets adopted a similar image to what had been established since the pre-Islamic *nasīb*. Therefore, the physical descriptions of Laylā, Lubnā, Buthaynah, ‘Afrā’, and ‘Azzah, are very much the same as the description of Faṭimah and ‘Ablah from the *Mu‘llaqāt*. It is always the same features which are stressed: tallness, whiteness, big eyes, long neck, ample bosom, slender waist, heavy hips, and plump legs. ‘There are a multitude of such poetic descriptions, differing little in content, the pre-Islamic pattern having been for centuries copied without much variation’²¹. The following section will discuss in detail the depiction of the beloved’s body in *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī* and will illustrate how this depiction resembles the old poetic norms. However, the following discussion will also show that there is an attempt by ‘*udhrī*’ poets to distinguish themselves from the previous poets by

¹⁹ Sabrah, p. 209.

²⁰ Except for a few examples, especially with Kuthayyir.

²¹ Behrens-Abouseif, p. 57.

stressing the ethereal nature of their beloved's beauty. This phenomenon gives *al-ghazal al-'udhri* its own distinctive nature among other classical *ghazal* in spite of their similar depictions of the female body.

4.3 Corporeal Representation: The Physical Description of the Beloved's Body

By its focus on corporeal representation, the *'udhri* poem celebrates the beloved's beauty in all its glory as will be described in detail. Thus, the reader of *'udhri* poetry will encounter a plethora of detailed description about the beloved's desirable body. This section will further examine this motif through highlighting several aspects of the beloved's beauty, as shown in *'udhri* poetry, e.g. her glow, face, scent and figure. It will also explore the metaphoric image of the beloved as 'gazelle' along with its mythic associations.

4.3.1 The Glow of the Beloved

The verses of Majnūn, Qays, Jamīl, and Kuthayyir depict the beloved as a resplendent beauty with a white, unblemished face like the full moon. This face is not only dazzling like the moon²²; moreover, and more frequently, it is bright like the sun²³. On the one hand, the beloved's resplendence resembles the moon or the sun, on the other hand, the moon and sun themselves are incapable of emulating her brilliant light. She makes them feel shy in her presence. Majnūn declares:

I was poured a drink by a sun whose light put the full moon to shame
and who outshone the lightning when it flashes²⁴ [5]

Yet, the fullest moon would be eclipsed by the light of her presence²⁵. In comparison with the pre-Islamic poetry, the theme of the woman's glow and her resemblance to

²² Jamīl, pp. 37-38, Majnūn, p. 83.

²³ Qays, p. 81, Majnun, p. 77.

²⁴ Majnun, p. 160.

objects such as a beacon, a lamp, and the sun often appears in the pre-Islamic

*ghazal*²⁶. For example, when Imru' al-Qays describes his beloved's face he says:

In the evening she lights up the darkness
As though she were the light in the place
Where the hermit does his eventide devotions²⁷ [6]

However, the 'udhrī poets do not simply link the pure hue of their beloveds' faces with the light of sun as Ṭarafah, for instance, does in his *mu'allaqah*²⁸. 'Udhrī poets go further in the comparison between the beloved and the sun. Kuthayyir even places 'Azzah in a situation of going to court, so that the judge *Muwaffaq* should state who is the more beautiful: 'Azzah or the sun?²⁹

The comparison between Laylā on the one hand, and the sun and the moon on the other is always won by Laylā's beauty³⁰:

Illuminate the world instead of the moon when it declines,
and play the role of the sun whenever the dawn is late,
because you have the radiance of the sun,
and the sun does not have your beautiful mouth
and your charming smile,
You have the sparkling moonlight
but moon does not have your gorgeous breasts,
and your attractive upper chest,
The shining sun in the forenoon
can neither have apathetic eyes darkened with kohl,
nor Laylā's special charming characteristics,
The sun cannot also appear like Laylā,
who looks like a frightened oryx,

²⁵ Majnūn, p. 115.

²⁶ Al-Ḥufī, p. 42.

²⁷ Imru' al-Qays, in Alan Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry, Volume Two: Select Odes (Edition, Translation and Commentary)* (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1992), p. 69.

²⁸ Ṭarafah's verse reads: A face as though the sun had loosed his mantle upon it, pure of hue, with not a wrinkle to mar it. (trans. A.J.Arberry, *The Seven Odes*, p. 83).

²⁹ Kuthayyir, p. 153.

³⁰ It is significant that, afterwards, the theme of the sun and the moon feeling shy in the presence of a beautiful woman becomes a frequent theme in Arabic literature. For example, al-Sāhib (d. 385/969) says: 'He almost put the morning sun to shame' (in al-Tha'ālībī, *Yatīmat al-dahr*, p. 284). See more examples in al-Muḥibbī's *Nafht al-riḥānah*, pp. 190,300, and in al-'Imād al-Iṣfahānī's *Kharīdat al-qasr*, p. 107. All the references are from www.alwaraq.net, 5 June 2007. Moreover, we can find this theme, later on, in other Eastern poetry, like the one written by Rahman Baba, the Pukhtuns' poet. For instance, one of his verses reads: 'At dawn the moon feels ashamed before your face, and must live in the pitch-dark'. Rahman Baba, *The Poetry of Rahman Baba: Poet of the Pukhtuns*, trans. Robert Sampson and Momin Khan (Peshawar: University Book Agency, 2005), p. 141.

when she bows because of her coquetry³¹ [7]

Using the words “moon”, “dawn”, “sun” (*badr, fajr, shams*) reveals a tendency to abstract the beloved from her physical attributes by making her resemble ephemeral elements such as light. The eyes of the lover see the beloved with a shining face where eyes are filled with light to the extent that these eyes are more glittering and shining than sunlight itself. Thus, the body of the beloved is not perceived as concrete like other elements in life, but as glittering and soft as light. Majnūn states:

They said: where does she live?
Who is she?
I said: she is the sun, sky is her home³² [8]

Sun is a source of life on earth. Majnūn realizes the power of the sun, and its high state. No one can reach it, while it can reach every thing on earth. Therefore, depicting Laylā as the sun is a theme repeated in many verses composed by Majnūn:

I say to my companions:
“She is the sun - her light is close but she is too distant to touch”³³ [9]

‘Alī al-Baṭāl argues that the resemblance between the sun and woman in classical Arabic poetry has its roots in ancient Arab mythology. The sun was one of the gods that used to be worshipped by the ancient Arabs. They ascribed characteristics of motherhood to the sun, conceiving it as the Mother god, which is why the sun is referred to as being female. Therefore, a woman described as a sun in Arabic poetry is evidence of this link³⁴. However, in Islamic poetry these religious images transferred to artistic models, so the sun-woman metaphor was removed from its ancient mythic setting to a new rational setting, where the sun is not the Mother god

³¹ Majnūn, pp. 91-92.

³² Majnūn, p. 21.

³³ Majnūn, p. 67.

³⁴ ‘Alī al-Baṭāl, *al-Ṣurah fī al-shi‘r al-‘arabi ḥatta ākhir al-qarn al-thānī al-hijrī* (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1983), p. 57.

that gives life, but resembles the woman in her aloofness and light³⁵. This can be seen clearly, when Majnūn says to his friends that she (Laylā) is the sun; her light is visible while her actual figure is not palpable³⁶.

It is clear, though, that this insistence on the beloved's light complexion is meant to reflect her interior serenity. Jamīl compares Buthaynah's luminescence with the light that illuminates every thing around her³⁷. The lucent face could indicate one's inner peacefulness. The tradition that demonstrates that a beautiful believer is the utmost perfection and an ugly unbeliever is utmost ugliness³⁸, or the one saying that beautiful people are auspicious³⁹, should not escape our notice here.

4.3.2 The Beloved and the Gazelle Metaphor

The beloved's eyes radiate darts and wound the heart, not the skin⁴⁰. Beautiful eyes are described as big and black with brilliant whites, *ḥawrā'* and *najlā'*⁴¹. Qays refers to these eyes as drowsy and says they pose a possible threat to his own life:

Proclaim for my blood, if I die
From a maiden who has languid and drowsy eyes⁴² [10]

Nevertheless, the most significant fact about the depiction of the beloved's eyes is their resemblance to those of a deer and doe⁴³. Majnūn states that Laylā's eyes, while gazing at him, are more beautiful than a deer's black dotting eyes whilst looking after

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³⁶ Majnūn, p. 67

³⁷ Jamīl, p. 111.

³⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn*, ed. Ṣābir Yūsuf (Cairo: Maktabat al-jāmi'ah, 1973), p. 217.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁴⁰ Jamīl, p. 23

⁴¹ Kuthayyir, p. 181, Jamīl, p. 38.

⁴² Qays, p. 46.

⁴³ There are various terms referring to the deer in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. According to Badwī, these terms are: *ghazāl*, *shādīn*, *ṭāfl*, *jidayah*, *rasha'*, *khāshf*, *ṭīla*, *aghann*, *rashīḥ*, *adma'*, *rīm*, *khadhul* and *zabyah*.

Walīd Mis'īd Badawī, *al-Alfāz al-dāllah 'alā al-ḥusn wa al-qubḥ fī al-Shi'r al-'udhrī* (Cairo University: Dar al-'ulum, unpublished Masters dissertation, 2004).

its fawn⁴⁴. Jamīl, likewise, sometimes describes Buthaynah's eyes as white antelope's eyes, and as brocket's eyes on other occasions⁴⁵.

In fact, the comparison of the beloved with a gazelle is one of the major topoi of classical Arabic love poetry. In his long description of the beauty of his beloved, Imru' al-Qays uses this comparison as we have seen in his aforementioned verses⁴⁶.

The image of a lonely frightened deer left behind with her little fawn becomes a parallel image to that of the beloved, who is described as having the same big dark eyes, and the same long neck. This is an important theme within *ūdhrī* poetry, as Jamīl repeats this image three or four times⁴⁷, and Majnūn adopts it as a core motif of the similes in his poetry. Laylā is often portrayed as a gazelle in Majnūn's verses, he even declares that the gazelle is almost Laylā herself, except of course, for the antlers⁴⁸. Laylā's neck, in particular, is depicted like the neck of a gazelle⁴⁹.

Kuthayyir offers a series of images in order to achieve the position where the beloved is as beautiful as, or more than, a doe:

The white-breasted shining-backed gazelle,
who takes her young to the cool of the shade
and scratches with her horns the fruit of an Arak tree
and reaches with her hooves if the branches are high,
is no more beautiful of eye or neck or throat than she
when she wears her finery⁵⁰

[11]

⁴⁴ Majnūn, p. 108.

⁴⁵ Jamīl, pp. 59, 85.

⁴⁶ See p. 89 of this chapter.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 85, 111.

⁴⁸ Majnūn, p. 217.

⁴⁹ Majnūn, p. 176.

⁵⁰ Kuthayyir, p. 153. Interestingly, another Umayyad poet, 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah, devoted the following verses to the difference between girl and gazelle:

A young gazelle grazing upon a meadow high
On even hills reminds me of the Taymite's daughter
I said to it/her, feeling some apprehension in my heart—
For I had never seen such a similarity—
How you resemble her! But for the leanness of your legs,
And that your flanks are not like hers,
That you are bare and naked while she is

He also says:

She captured me with the eyes of a gazelle
who is accompanied by her white newly-born to the Arak trees
in the bend of the wadi of Bisha
where the plaintive doves sing;
as if those doves who called loudly in the morning
become at noon chanting songstresses for wine-drinkers⁵¹ [12]

This doe is usually a white deer: *rīm*. Once again, whiteness is stressed in *al-ghazal al-`udhri*. Reading Sells's analysis of some classical Arabic poems, I would also argue that in these verses quoted above, the poet 'set up a descriptive point only to be overrun through the semantic overflow of the passage. The movement of the poem continually overflows the descriptive points the simile poses'⁵². The metaphor introduced here is that of the beloved as a doe. Kuthayyir introduces the doe apparently as a metaphor for the beloved by saying: 'she captured me with a doe's eyes'. Nevertheless, the poet becomes preoccupied with the depiction of the doe, and forgets his original motivation: a description of the beloved. The doe is shaking *Arāk* berries. In the other verses the doe is following her fawn to *Arāk*, where the doves are singing. Then, again, Kuthayyir leaves the doe that he is describing and becomes preoccupied with the description of the doves. The doves are like beautiful singers in a drinking gathering. As Sells observes:

[The doe's metaphor] reveals a poetics that is far removed from the simple substitution of gazelle for beloved. The gazelle imagery and that of the beloved are developed synchronically. It becomes difficult to tell whether the object of description is the beloved or the gazelle⁵³.

Not naked, nor are her hands bare.
And that you have no hair, whilst hers
Is blackest flood upon her shoulders clothing her
'Umar b. Abi Rabi'ah, cited and translated by J.C. Bürgel, "The Lady Gazelle and Her Murderous Glances", *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Volume 20, Number 1, 1989, pp. 1-2.

⁵¹ Kuthayyir, p. 70.

⁵² Michael A. Sells, "Guises of the *Ghul* Dissembling Simile and Semantic Overflow in the Classical Arabic Nasib", in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 141.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

At a superficial level, the gazelle is a metaphor of the beloved as they share beautiful features like stunning eyes and sleek, aesthetically pleasing contours of the body. Al-Dughlī claims that Arab poets portray their beloveds as gazelles because their desert environment was poor, and they could not find other metaphor to describe them⁵⁴. I disagree with this assertion, and I would rather see this metaphor in a different light. As argued by Khan, especially for Majnūn, ‘gazelles are generally considered among the most serene of animals, their presence lends a pastoral air to his wildness’⁵⁵. There is also another suggestion regarding the gazelle used as a trope, which connects with mythology. The gazelle was considered sacred, and Arabs would allow them to go free instead of killing them⁵⁶. An anecdote states that a gazelle was caught by a group of hunters, and Majnūn bought the gazelle and set it free: ‘It ran away when I set it free. O, gazelle, you owe your freedom to Laylā’⁵⁷. Bürgel demonstrates that ‘sparing or freeing a gazelle out of a certain feeling or affection for a person it resembled was a literary topos already in early Islamic times’⁵⁸. In another anecdote, Majnūn killed a wolf which killed a deer and then he buried the deer and burnt the cadaver of the wolf⁵⁹. Thus, the ‘gazelles are so placed in this narrative (Majnūn’s) precisely because they lend a sentimental, romantic cast to the poet-lover’s state of wildness’⁶⁰.

⁵⁴ Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Dughlī, *Aḥādīth ghazilah fī al-ghazalayn al-‘udhrī wa al-‘umarī wa imtidadatuhuma fī al-ghazal al-‘arabī* (Damascus: Manshurāt maktabat Usamah, 1985), p. 75.

⁵⁵ Khan, p. 95.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵⁷ Kinany, p. 283.

⁵⁸ Bürgel, “The Lady Gazelle and Her Murderous Glances”, p. 4. Find a detailed discussion of the magical and numinous background of gazelle metaphor in this article, pp. 6-10.

⁵⁹ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 377. W. Robertson Smith states that the south Arab tribe called Banū Ḥārith ‘among whom if a dead gazelle was found it was solemnly buried, and the whole tribe mourned for it seven days’, W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (Cambridge: University Press, 1885), p. 227.

⁶⁰ Khan, p. 96.

Moreover, the emphasis on the image of a deer with its fawn could be understood in the light of the woman who has become sacred through motherhood. This process has its roots in ancient Arab religious belief, which used to worship the goddess-mother. The ancient Arabs portrayed her as a mother-deer and a mother-oryx⁶¹. It seems that the poets simply inherited this image and they applied it to their beloveds. However, the *'udhri* poets used these images without seeing their beloveds in term of motherhood.

4.3.3 The face of the beloved

The face of the beloved centers the attention of *'udhri* poets. Every single feature of it is celebrated in generous description. The poets clearly realize the importance and status of the face as a centre of one's beauty, and associate with it roles of communication and seduction.

With regard to the beloved's hair, *'udhri* poetry defines attractive feminine hair as black, thick, fragrant, and especially perfumed with ambergris and basil⁶². It is usually falling in waves, and sometimes also with curls. Kuthayyir describes 'Azzah's hair as dark tresses clustering down her back like bunches of grapes⁶³.

Moving to the beloved's cheeks, they are portrayed as glowing, and amazingly soft⁶⁴. In fact, the stress on softness is recurrent in *'udhri* poem. The beloved appears in it as a highly sensitive woman. Her body is so tender, an insect's minute wing would make it bleed⁶⁵. Moreover, Buthaynah's skin is so soft that whenever she has a bath, the water almost injures her skin⁶⁶ and Laylā's finger is

⁶¹ Al-Batal, p. 95

⁶² Majnun, p. 85.

⁶³ Kuthayyir, p. 197.

⁶⁴ Majnun, p. 72.

⁶⁵ Jamil, p. 112.

⁶⁶ Jamil, p. 30.

described as being of pure silk⁶⁷. 'Afrā' is depicted as a woman who is completely enveloped with down (*muna'ammah*), and all of her fingertips are tinted⁶⁸. The exaggeration of describing the tenderness of the beloved in so far that the smallest of ants walking on her skin would make it bleed, persuades the author of *al-Zahrah* to write about it. He cites many verses like those with these images, and criticizes them as extreme exaggeration (*sarfun shadīd*)⁶⁹. In my view, they are extreme, but this highlights an image of the beloved by the lover as being synonymous with the softer components of the world, like water and light.

As for the mouth of the beloved, this feature assumes the utmost significance within *'udhrī* poetry and the poets provide series similes to celebrate it. The mouth is given a great deal of attention in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, due to a number of reasons. First, it is considered as a basic aspect of the beauty of the beloved. Second, it is the place for kisses and pleasurable contact. Third, it is the part of the body for speaking, and the source of beautiful words and discourse. The adjectives given to the mouth in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* concentrate on describing the mouth's aromatic smell. The smell is being described as musk⁷⁰ and the poet draws a link between the mouth's perfumed smell and its pretty smile, so the poet's beloved smiles often and 'when she smiles, some parts of her beautiful teeth appear'⁷¹. When the beloved smiles her beautiful teeth --which have spaces between them-- appear⁷². The attention given to the smell of the mouth and its shape is incomparable with that given to its taste. The *'udhrī*

⁶⁷ Majnūn, p. 52.

⁶⁸ 'Urwah, pp. 25, 46.

⁶⁹ Ibn Da'ud, p. 135.

⁷⁰ Jamīl, pp. 18,122, Majnūn, p. 36.

⁷¹ Jamīl, p. 111.

⁷² Kuthayyir, p. 70, Majnūn, pp. 115,120, Jamīl, p. 67.

poets attribute large parts of their poems to describe how amazing is the taste of the beloved's mouth, how sweet her saliva.

As if her mouth is full of the essence of carnation, and musk
early morning clouds raindrops are in her mouth⁷³ [13]

This image of the beloved's mouth scented with good smell and full of raindrops is very similar to certain poetic images in pre-Islamic poetry. For instance, Imru' al-Qays says:

Wine and recent rain,
blossom, incense smoke
Cool from her mouth I kissed
In the soaring song of dawn⁷⁴ [14]

Jamīl also describes Buthaynah's saliva by saying that it is a mixture of raindrops, wine and scent:

She captivated me with her beautiful mouth,
whose straight teeth appear when she smiles
and her mouth has a fascinating smell and cold saliva,
As if vintage wine is mixed with her saliva
and early pure raindrops mixed with honey⁷⁵ [15]

The significant word here is “captivated” because her beautiful mouth is one of the first things that seduced him. While Jamīl refers occasionally to the beloved's saliva as wine, Majnūn talks in detail about this “wine”. He describes its production process and how it was fermented in *Hawrān*⁷⁶ with bottles of wine that were kept for a period of time so that its value would increase:

Not even a protected fermented wine in *Hawrān*
which emits sparks when it is poured from its bottle,
And which is surrounded by other similar bottles of wine
which the sellers have kept for sale,
Is better than the taste of her mouth
which if its saliva is mixed with musk at night,

⁷³ Majnūn, p. 222.

⁷⁴ Imru' al-Qays b. Ḥajar al-Kindī, *Diwān Imru' al-Qays* (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1958), p. 156, trans. Charles Grewille Tuetey, *Imrulkais of Kinda, Poet (The Poems-the Life-the Background)* (London: Diploma Press, 1977), p. 41.

⁷⁵ Jamīl, p. 120.

⁷⁶ A city in Syria, known for its good wine at that time.

will water a cloud that is heavily raining
with no lightning and thunder⁷⁷

[16]

It could be argued that the poet includes the storage and protection of the wine in order to make an indirect reference to the difficulty and the time involved to reach his beloved to kiss her. Majnūn's image of a fermented wine which the sellers have kept for sale for a long time, as used to describe the beloved's saliva, recalls a similar image in the pre-Islamic *ghazal*. Al-Muraqqash al-Aṣghar starts his verses with the exact phrase: 'Not even a fermented wine', and then he goes on to describe the unique treatment that this wine has received. It has been protected for twenty years, and kept for later sale. After this description of this special wine, al-Muraqqash says: 'It is better than the taste of her mouth when I come to visit her (his beloved) at night'⁷⁸. Undoubtedly, Majnūn's image is derived from al-Muraqqash.

It could be argued that the description of the beloved's saliva as rain drops and wine suggests a link between her and sacred objects. Rain is a primary source for water; a verse in Quran reads 'we made from water every living thing'⁷⁹. Wine also carries certain religious meanings. As shown by pre-Islamic poetry, wine was an important component in some religious rituals. Wine was considered as the sacred liquid of the gods, giving them their extraordinary powers⁸⁰. In spite of the prohibition of wine in Islam, poets continue to refer to it, although without reference to sacred rituals. In Majnūn's afore-cited poem, the description of the wine that resembles his beloved's saliva appears in great detail.

⁷⁷ Majnūn, pp. 106-107.

⁷⁸ Al-Muraqqash al-Aṣghar, in Abū Zayd Muḥammad b. Abī al-Khaṭṭāb al-Qurashī, *Jamharat ash 'arab* (Beirut: Dar ṣadir, 1998), p. 200.

⁷⁹ Al-Anbiya' (21:30).

⁸⁰ Al-Baṭal, pp. 74-75.

In other verses Majnūn insists on the sweetness of Laylā's mouth while claiming that he had not tasted it in reality. He reports having stared at her mouth the way people stare at clouds and perceive the sweetness of their raindrops⁸¹. However, if Majnūn avoids saying that he had really tasted the wine of his beloved's mouth, Kuthayyir refers to this directly and says that the honey of her mouth is tasted only by her bedfellow and that other people are prohibited from doing so. Let us follow the succession of these descriptions:

The sweet saliva of her mouth
 which has bevelled teeth in the late night
 became like honey that is mixed with cold raindrops
 of early morning clouds in *majādīh*⁸²
 those who cannot obtain her mouth enjoy looking at its beauty
 and she waters her bedfellow from her sweet mouth
 when he kisses her suddenly
 she cleans her snow-white teeth at dawn,
 by a green *miswāk*⁸³ from *Nu'mān*
 every creditor was repaid except the poet
 As 'Azzah does not achieve his wish
 so he remains thirsty for her⁸⁴ [17]

To symbolise their agony in love and distance from the beloved, Udhri poets use themes such as 'the late night', 'the creditor' and 'a thirsty person'. Kuthayyir states that his thirst for his beloved is not slaked while all other withheld creditors get repaid. Talking about the description of the mouth and thirst is so important because the beloved's saliva is not just a delicious honey but also water that quenches the thirst. The lover's passion for this water always makes him very thirsty, and we will talk later about this in detail. Finally, the beloved's saliva is reported to be a cure for sick people. Moreover, it is said to also bring dead people to life again when they

⁸¹ Majnūn, p. 156.

⁸² Arabs' old device for mixing wine.

⁸³ Tooth stick with a beautiful smell.

⁸⁴ Kuthayyir, pp. 70-71.

taste it⁸⁵. In addition, the beloved's smiling and sweet mouth is described as a source for beautiful words. Beautiful words and discourse are a composite for beauty itself⁸⁶.

4.3.4 The Scent of the Beloved

The sweet scent of the beloved is also celebrated in *'udhri* poetry. The smell of musk emanates from her body⁸⁷ and diffuses itself about her. When the lover visits her during the night, he smells the sweet scent of a mixture of wine, musk and ambergris⁸⁸. The lavender and musk perfume her clothes⁸⁹. Her hair breathes sweet basil and ambergris⁹⁰. Her aroma is sweeter than the aroma of greensward⁹¹. Jamīl says:

It is as if the particles of pure-fragranced Musk
with which she perfumes her sleeves and elbows
rise when she rises from her bed
and will be passed to whoever embraces her⁹² [18]

Moreover, Majnūn declares:

If we travel at night, and you are in front of us
merely your sweet aroma
will guide our she-camels⁹³ [19]

Here, the scent is not just enjoyment, is not simply a scent to remember and enjoy⁹⁴.

It is not only a guide but a beacon for any one who travels during the night. Its aroma is not only effective in the human world; it also has power in other non-human

⁸⁵ Jamīl, p. 38.

⁸⁶ This study will elaborate more on the role of conversations in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* later.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁹⁰ Majnun, p. 85.

⁹¹ Kuthayyir, p. 110.

⁹² Jamīl, p. 68.

⁹³ Majnun, p. 230.

⁹⁴ As 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah, for instance, defines his beloved's smell in his famous poem: "Amin al Nu'min anta ghadin fa mubkiru", see his *Diwan*, p. 101.

world: that of our she-camels. In the above cited verse the beloved's scent is a beacon for human and non-human worlds.

4.3.5 The Figure of the Beloved

The 'udhrī poet also represents the whole figure of his beloved. There are certain elements in this figure which appear frequently in the poems. The poet's lady is a plumpish lady. Buthaynah's bosom is shining like gallipots of silver⁹⁵. It is clear, bright, and white. Its ampleness is stressed again when Jamīl says:

Her breasts and behind prevent her chemise
from touching her belly or from touching her back⁹⁶ [20]

In 'udhrī poetry, as in pre-Islamic poetry, the beloved's curved body is celebrated in several images. According to Jamīl⁹⁷, Majnūn⁹⁸, and Kuthayyir⁹⁹ she has tenderly plump ankles. Her appendages are plump (*khudl*)¹⁰⁰. Her legs are smooth of shank and soft of thigh¹⁰¹. The most crucial denominator of the beloved's body is her plump buttocks. This feature attracts the poet's attention, and they celebrate it using several similes. The favorite simile for heavy hips in 'udhrī poetry is moistened sand, and the rump-curve of a sand dune. 'Urwah describes 'Afra' by saying that there are two sand dunes under her waist, over which a rain shower falls:

And underneath the two (breasts) are two compacted sand dunes
which have been struck by droplets of rain from Gemini¹⁰² [21]

Likewise, Majnūn, Jamīl, and Kuthayyir compose verses describing their beloved's buttocks as a soft dune¹⁰³. She is often portrayed as a woman proud of her shape. She

⁹⁵Jamīl, p. 27.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p.117.

⁹⁸Majnūn, p. 115.

⁹⁹Kuthayyir, p. 197.

¹⁰⁰Jamīl, p. 71.

¹⁰¹Jamīl, p. 122.

¹⁰²'Urwah, p. 47.

¹⁰³Majnūn, p. 106. Kuthayyir, p. 106, Jamīl, p. 112.

would feel happy if the wind blew and wrapped her clothes around her tightly, showing off her voluptuous body¹⁰⁴. Moreover, the beloved's buttocks weigh her down so heavily that she can barely walk. The image of the woman tired from walking is repeated in *al-ghazal al-'udhri'*¹⁰⁵. Kuthayyir compares 'Azzah's walk to a torrential stream (*sayl*) that is obstructed by the curve of the wadi, so it runs very slowly¹⁰⁶. Although the woman in those poems cannot walk well because of her rotund body, her slender waist is just like a ben's¹⁰⁷ bough. Qays describes Lubnā:

Whenever she walks a span of earth,
She drags her feet, panting, so she doesn't go more than a span
She has a behind which shakes when she walks
and a lean-waisted body like the branch of the ben tree¹⁰⁸ [22]

The slight waist of the beloved is described also by Jamīl in several verses: 'she is lithe-waist, just like *al-Sabiryyiah*'¹⁰⁹. The poets usually link the slender waist with heavy hips beneath, and plump breasts above¹¹⁰.

Comparing these compositions to pre-Islamic poetry, one shall find similar images of a woman who can barely walk, or who has a slender waist and plump buttocks¹¹¹. Moreover, some phrases from pre-Islamic poetry are re-used in *'udhri'* poetry, almost verbatim, For example, Ka'b b. Zuhayr says:

هيفاء مقبلة عجزاء مدبرة لا يشنكي قصر منها ولا طول¹¹²
She has lithe-waist, plump buttocks,
She is neither short, nor tall.

¹⁰⁴ Jamīl, p. 113, Kuthayyir, p. 197.

¹⁰⁵ Jamīl, p. 113, Qays, p. 52, Majnun, p. 60.

¹⁰⁶ Kuthayyir, p. 144.

¹⁰⁷ Ben tree (Moringa).

¹⁰⁸ Qays, p52.

¹⁰⁹ Jamīl, p59. *al-Sabiryyiah* is a soft kind of cloth. It has been used to describe a woman's belly since the pre-Islamic period. 'Antarah, for instance, says: "[her] belly is soft like al-Sabiryyiah", *Diwan 'Antarah* (Beirut: Dar ṣādir, 1992), p. 110.

¹¹⁰ For more instances see: Jamīl, pp. 37, 45, 59, 71. Majnun, p. 115, Kuthayyir, pp. 40,124.

¹¹¹ See, for example, al-A'shā poem: "bid farewell to Hurayrah as her people depart" in his *diwan*, Maymun b. Qays al-A'shā, *Diwan* (Beirut: Dar ṣādir, 1966), p. 144.

¹¹² Ka'b b. Zuhayr, *Diwan*, ed. 'Ali fa'ur (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1997), p. 46.

And Jamīl says:

هيفاء مقبلة، عجزاء مدبرة تمت فليس يرى في خلقها أود¹¹³
She has lithe-waist, plump buttocks,
She is perfect, with no defector drawback in her body.

Imru' al-Qays says:

وجيد كجيد الريم ليس بفاحش إذا هي نصته ولا بمعطل¹¹⁴
She shows me a throat like the throat of an (white) antelope, not ungainly
When she lifts it upwards, neither naked of ornament.

And Kuthayyir says:

وجيد كجيد الريم حال تزينه غدائر مستوفي العقاص يصورها¹¹⁵
She shows me a throat like the throat of an (white) antelope,
naked of ornament, but decorated and adorned
with pendulous, long , thick hair.

As seen in these verses, there is a direct reference to previous traditions, not just in images, but also in literal phrases such as: ‘هيفاء مقبلة، عجزاء مدبرة’ and ‘وجيد كجيد الريم’: (She has lithe-waist, plump buttocks), and (a throat like the throat of an (white) antelope).

4.4 Laylā's Portrayal in Persian Painting

We have seen how the popular notion of classical Arabic ideal beauty has been applied to the portrayal of the beloved in ‘*udhri*’ poetry; several unchanging elements characterize such portrayals. However, if we were to examine the depiction of the beloved in the legend based on ‘*udhri*’ love stories that appeared centuries later in Persia, we would discover a completely different portrayal. Yet, the influence of the fashionable theme of any given era on the representation of an object is common in art. Therefore, my justification for making this comparison between Laylā's

¹¹³ Jamīl, p. 117.

¹¹⁴ Imru' al-Qays, “*Mu'allaqah*”, trans. A.J.Arberry, *The Seven Odes*, p. 63.

¹¹⁵ Kuthayyir, p. 106.

portrayal in Majnun's poetry and her portrayal in later Persian paintings, which is based on Majnun's legend, is to examine the influence of the fashionable theme on different forms of art.

There are a small number of extant manuscripts which contain paintings illustrating versions of the love story of Majnūn and Laylā, *Khamse*, written by Nizami (1150-1214), the great Persian poet¹¹⁶. As Uster demonstrates:

Numerous copies of Nizami's *hamse* were produced not only in his own day but in the succeeding centuries because it was a much beloved work. Many of these copies are illuminated and significant proportions were inscribed by famous calligraphers. Those of the highest art historical value whether in terms of the text, the miniature illumination, or the calligraphy in the flowing *ta'lik* Arabic script- are located in the Topkapi Palace Museum Library in Istanbul¹¹⁷.

The details of the various manuscripts are not my prime focus here. I will merely concentrate on the paintings in order to evaluate how Laylā is depicted. It is noticeable, however, that the image of Laylā in these Persian paintings suggests another depiction of the beloved, and differs from that offers by Majnūn's poetry. While she is presented in Majnūn's verses as an ideal of Arabian desirable beauty, where big black eyes, ample bosom, slender waist, plump legs, and heavy hips are typified, Laylā is presented in these Persian paintings with a differently imagined figure. One painting shows Laylā receiving Majnūn in her tent, Laylā is illustrated as an exceptionally thin young maiden. There is no trace of a bosom, nor are there any rounded parts on her body. She is shown with a round face, "Chinese" eyes, a tiny mouth, and arched eyebrows. This painting occurs in an illustrated version of Nizami's *Hamse*, dated 1444, and belongs to the Shiraz school of miniature

¹¹⁶ Treatment of the Majnūn love legend appeared first in the form of *mathnawi* in Persia. Nizami's *hamse* has strongly influenced the subsequent writers of the subject. However, the transfer of Majnūn legend from Arabic to Persian literature, and the new elements have added to it, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

¹¹⁷ Celal Uster, "Ill-fated lovers in the desert Madjnun wa- Layla", in *Art and Culture Magazine*, Winter 2003/Issue7.

painting¹¹⁸. In another painting Majnūn is depicted speaking with an elderly man in a date grove some distant from Laylā, who is sitting down¹¹⁹. Laylā is illustrated as a sad young woman, putting her hand on her cheek. The most apparent themes of her figure are her moon face and her arched eyebrows. Likewise, in a painting showing Majnūn and Laylā fainting¹²⁰, Laylā appears as a thin maiden, with arched eyebrows meeting on her forehead, and a flat chest. In another painting, Laylā looks upset while slapping her husband¹²¹. Her face has the same fine features, and “Chinese” eyes. She is portrayed in a sitting position and is given a slim body. Her raised hand is nothing like the plump arm that has been described in Majnūn’s verses.

It must be noted that most of those paintings were accomplished in Harat in the fifteenth century. During that time, features such as moon face, “Chinese” eyes, a tiny mouth, and arched eyebrows became the usual *cliche* for beautiful young people, male and female. The beloved moon faced, is a Buddha face. She is even shown in the setting of the Buddha’s house. The artists create representations of the Buddha and they portray the beloved in the same style, with recurring features¹²².

However, several versions exist showing the same image of the illustration of Nizami’s *Hamse*, but from different perspectives and with different aspects included. Some painters focus on Majnūn, or Laylā, some on the animals surrounding them, and some painters focus on the sufi imagery of the story. For example, one painting

¹¹⁸ Shiraz school of miniature painting, “Layla receiving Majnūn in her tent”, 1444. Khamse Nizami Mathnawi, Akkuyunlu Turkmen dynasty, In *Art and Culture Magazine*, Winter 2003/Issue7.

¹¹⁹ Shiraz school of miniature painting, “Majnūn speaks with an elderly man in a date grove apart from Layla, who is sitting at a distance”, ca.1480, Khamse Nizami Mathnawi, Akkuyunlu Turkmen dynasty, (Library of Topkap Museum. No.H.761.f.133b, Istanbul).

¹²⁰ “Layla and Majnūn fainting”, image number 274 in Thomas W.Lentz and Glenn, *Timur and the Princely vision Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (L.A: Country Museum of Art, P.Lowry, 1989).

¹²¹ Shiraz school of miniature painting, “Layla slaps her husband Ibn Salam”, ca.1480, Khamse Nizami Mathnawi, Akkuyunlu Turkmen dynasty, (Library of Topkap Museum. No.R862,f. 170a, Istanbul).

¹²² I have gained this information from a meeting with Prof. Robert Hillenbrand on 20 March 2007.

shows Majnūn dying on Laylā's tomb, in which no one around him seems to care¹²³. This painting alludes to a very important sufi theme. Within some sufi traditions, the way to achieve ultimate truth, or love is gained by the suffering of the soul, totally alone, without any support. As mentioned earlier, my only interest is a specific aspect of this: the depiction of the beloved through these images¹²⁴. Subsequently, it seems, through this brief review, that Laylā's portrayal is influenced by the fashionable themes of the era. Clearly her depiction in Arabic poetry varies greatly from her depiction within Persian paintings. Nonetheless, although it is almost a contrasting image, Laylā's portrayal is enacted through a stereotyped image, in both Arabic poetry and Persian paintings.

4.5 The Desirable Image of a Corpulent Female Body

We have seen how these bodily descriptions are similar to those with which the Arab poets since pre-Islamic period used to describe their ladies. But let us consider a bit more the figure of a desirable woman as a corpulent one. Bodily descriptions take on erotic characteristics, when concentrating on the shape and form of the female body. Indeed, 'several round images, such as the egg and the pearl, are used in the classical *qaṣīdah* in symbolic association with the beloved'¹²⁵. If a bosom is *mu'id* that means that it fills one's hand, and if it is *nā'ir* that means that it fills one's eyes¹²⁶. In addition, the description of a woman who does not have heavy hips as *raṣḥā'* and *zala'* codes her appearance through negative adjectives that indicate she is not a desirable woman. Jamīl makes a comparison between Buthaynah, who would feel

¹²³ "Majnūn dies on Laylā's Tomb", in *Persian Painting of the Fifteenth Century*, introduction and notes by R. H. Pinber-Wilson (London: The Faber Gallery of Oriental Art, 1958).

¹²⁴ I need not outline here the differences between these versions of the one image.

¹²⁵ Michael A.Sells, p. 133.

¹²⁶ Abd al-Karīm, p. 211.

happy if the wind blew and wrapped her clothes around her, showing off her voluptuous body, with the *zul* women (who do not have heavy hips), so they try to avoid the wind as they do not have any thing to show off¹²⁷. The use of this lexicon indicates a general tendency towards sensuality and suggests a highly tactile relationship.

In the following section I will examine an argument about the preference of a corpulent woman among Arabs after the pre-Islamic period, provided by a contemporary author: Khalil ‘Abd al-Karim, in his book entitled: *Al-‘Arab wa al-mar’ah hafriyyah fi al-ishir al-mukhayim: The Arabs Concept of Women*¹²⁸. His argument is based on a study of several Arabic lexicons and therefore seems to have influenced other relevant writings in the field¹²⁹. I will summarize his argument for the purpose of analyzing it and to set up my own position challenging his assertions.

Attempting to explain the Arab’s preference for corpulent women¹³⁰, ‘Abd al-Karim claims that it is because Arabs in the period when this literature flourished and lexicons for describing female bodies were developed, lived with camels and horses, depending completely upon them for their lives, and they viewed women within the same framework through which they viewed their horses and camels. His study includes an investigation of Arabic dictionaries which reveals that the roots of words referring to women and animals have much in common, so ‘Abd al-Karim argues that the Arabic words to describe women are derived from the same linguistic roots as those used to describe camels and horses. According to him, ‘Arabs prefer a fat

¹²⁷ Jamil, p. 21. ‘Umar b. Abi Rabi‘ah went so far as wishing that slim women *rashawat* should be isolated and put into exile! See his *Diwan*, p.11.

¹²⁸ The author provides this title to his book in English, along with the Arabic title.

¹²⁹ See, for example, ‘Abd al-Nur Idris, *Rihlat al-Mu’anath fi wijdan al-shi’r al-‘arabi*, www.alwatanvoice.com/pulpit, 3February 2006.

¹³⁰ Although the author mainly focuses on Arabs of early or pre-Islamic period Arabs, his book includes many references to contemporary Arabs, especially from the Arabian Peninsula.

camel *kināz*, and a horse with big hips and plump thighs *hirkūlah*. The more a woman is similar to the *kināz* camel or *hirkūlah* horse, the more preferable she becomes'¹³¹. He also claims that camel-raising is an economic and social custom among Arabs. The geographical environment imposes a strong bond between the Arab and his camel and owning a camel is also an indication of a high social position within the tribe. Therefore, this association makes the camel a measure or norm for women as well¹³². 'Abd al-Karīm provides series of instances from Arabic dictionaries to support his assertion. For example, *daḥūh* could be used for a woman and a she-camel alike. *Ḍamkhaj* means a large she-camel and a large woman. *Sāni'ah* means a good she-camel and *sani'ah* means a beautiful woman, and so on¹³³. Since Arab men preferred strong animals with large features, they use the same language to depict the preferred type of woman, that is, one with similar features. Moreover, 'Abd al-Karīm claims that women were, like animals, used for enjoyment, domestic service, and the preservation of the community.

Therefore, it is no wonder that Arab men used much the same vocabulary to refer to women and to their camels and horses. From 'Abd al-Karīm's perspective, that indicates the low status of women in Arab culture. 'If Arabic contains such crude vocabulary to describe the intimate relationship between a man and a woman, how can one proclaim that it is a poetic or beautiful language?'¹³⁴. 'Abd al-Karīm emphasises that the hard life of the Bedouin had a strong and lasting influence on the Arabic lexicon. This, in turn, he claims, has influenced other nations that adopted the

¹³¹ 'Abd al-Karīm, p. 8.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41.

¹³⁴ For further details, see 'Abd al-Karīm, p. 184.

Arabic language later. That means that the Arabic language changed the status of women, in the nations that adopted it, from high to low¹³⁵.

These are the main threads of ‘Abd al-Karīm’s study, which create a link between Arabs’ concept of women as revealed by their language, and their Bedouin life which depends upon animals such as camels and horses. However, I would like to challenge ‘Abd al-Karīm’s assertions maintaining that he takes an extremely critical and reductive view of the subject. Many of his conclusions are open to further discussion, especially the link suggested by the author between the language used by the Bedouin and women’s status in Muslim culture in general. Yet, the equine lexicon, and similar linguistic roots to describe a woman and a she-camel do not mean necessarily that they are in the same state, or that the Arabs could not distinguish between human and animal beauty. In many languages, it could be argued, there is an exchange between semantic fields. The shared stems for words implicate richness and a derivative capability that is inherent in the language rather than a lack of creative similes and imagination. Not only in Arabic. In English, for example, a slang word to describe an attractive young unmarried woman is ‘filly’ (a young mare or female horse). There are also other colloquial words that describe girls as ‘chick’ and ‘bird’. One might note here that these are all from masculine points of view. The convergence of male-centric societies. What ‘Abd al-Karīm criticises as crude vocabulary to describe the intimate relationship between a man and a woman, exists, in fact, in other languages. For instance, in Shakespeare’s *Othello*, Iago informs Brabantio, Desdemona’s father, of Desdemona’s elopement with Othello:

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

‘Even now, very now, an old black ram is tapping your white ewe.’¹³⁶ Moreover, attributing the desirable figure of a woman to the advantageous figure of a horse is open to more than one interpretation, as the Arab horse is certainly not built like a cart horse, rather it has elegant and slender features.

‘Alī al-Baṭāl advances yet another rationale which appears more convincing than ‘Abd al-Karīm’s assertion. He suggests that the image of the corpulent woman is inherited from ancient religious belief. The Goddess-mother was one of the deities that were worshipped by the ancient Arabs. Her corpulent body symbolizes fertility and motherhood. Motherhood is a principle function of the Goddess-mother, who gives life and enriches the tribe of warriors and preserves the human race¹³⁷. It is essential that a god is depicted with all the characteristics for which he is being worshipped¹³⁸. Therefore, when an Arab poet portrays a woman as fat and comments that she “hardly walked” this is because he is following the perfect image of a sacred woman. It is sacred particularly because of her sexual fertility which leads to motherhood. Through the worship of the Goddess-mother and associating her with the sun and its associated images like a gazelle and a palm tree, this leads to the predominant image of desirable woman. Al-Baṭāl argues that the motifs that usually constitute this image indicate that classical Arabic poetry used earlier metaphors, yet at the same time lost an association with the ancient religion, which worshipped the sun-mother and its associated images like the gazelle and the palm tree¹³⁹. His suggestion is based on the idea that religious sanctity was ascribed to women in ancient ages, but the religious associations were lost over time. The later poet may

¹³⁶ William Shakespeare, *Othello* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Act I, Scene I.

¹³⁷ Al-Baṭāl, p. 61.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹³⁹ Al-Baṭāl, p. 70.

have preserved the image of the female corpulent body, but removed the ancient pagan religious associations from it. Therefore, this image became a model of desirable female beauty, whilst moving away from its possible ancient roots.

While the above cited theory is persuasive, I would also propose that in ancient Arabic culture, a woman's corpulence and her ample hips would be seen as a sign of her prosperity and wealth, leading one to assume her to be of a high class and of noble origin—and someone whose family was always able to feed her well. It goes without saying that attaining such a woman of noble birth indicates great courage and capability on the part of the poet¹⁴⁰. However, while that might be the case for the pre-Islamic poet, for the *'udhri* poet, the beloved is usually portrayed as a cousin or at least one as of his relatives. Thus, there is no need at all to show his courage. He is rather describing her beauty within the favorite motifs of preceding traditions, which were inherited from pre-Islamic predominant poetic themes.

However, a slow evolution in the standard portrayal of beauty would eventually lead to the preference for *al-majdūlah*, which is classified by al-Jāhiz:

Most people who know about women, most experts on the subject, agree in preferring the *majdūlah*, that is to say the type of woman intermediate between fat and thin. Her figure must be elegant and shapely, her shoulders symmetrical and her back straight; her bones must be well covered, and she must be neither too plump nor too skinny. The word *majdūlah* conveys the notion of tautness, of firm flesh without superfluous fat. A graceful walk is the most beautiful thing about a woman, and she cannot walk gracefully if she is portly, fat and overburdened with flesh. Indeed a *majdūlah* is more often slim, and her slenderness is her best known feature (...). A *majdūlah* is described in prose by the words: the upper part of her body is a stem and the lower part a sand-dune¹⁴¹.

¹⁴⁰ 'Abd al-Nūr Idrīs, *Rihlat al-mu'anath fī wijdān al-shi'r al-'arabi*, www.alwatanvoice.com\pulpit , 3February 2006.

¹⁴¹ 'Amr b. Baḥr Al-Jāhiz, "*Kitāb al-qiyān*", in Charles Pellat, *The Life and Works of Jahiz*, trans. D.M.Hawke (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 259.

Al-Jāhiz shows the different attitudes that had an effect on aesthetic taste during his period. The model of beauty had been developed according to the development of other forms of knowledge. The social, cultural, and ethnic structure had changed, and transformed the notions about body and beauty. The new society, in the Abbasid period, a cosmopolitan one, brought together people from Persia, Turkey, Ḥabashah, and many other regions. These included slave girls who brought new standards of beauty. Their beauty was varied, and, moreover, associated with cultural functions like music and singing¹⁴². Slowly, the poet's taste moved towards a shapely woman instead of a portly one. Al-Jāhiz calls her *al-majduḥah*, and emphasises the fact that she is not too plump. He even makes a contrast with the preferred image drawn from earlier poetry of a woman who walks with difficulty because of her great weight. However, his insistence on her legerity does not prevent him from noting the heaviness of the lower part of her body, so he uses the old poetic simile of the sand-dune. Moreover, the old norms and descriptions of female beauty were criticised by al-Jāhiz in *Kitāb al-Nisā'*. He asserts that a beautiful woman is, obviously, more beautiful than an oryx, and a doe, and more beautiful than anything people may compare her to¹⁴³. However, in spite of al-Jāhiz's critique, poets continued to use similar figurative language to depict their women. There are endless examples of subsequent poets such as al-Mutanabbī¹⁴⁴ and Abū Tammām¹⁴⁵ describing beautiful women as gazelles, and portraying particular parts of their bodies as sand dunes and so on.

¹⁴² Al-Jāhiz, "Kitāb al-Nisā'", in *al-Rasā'il al-kalāmyyah* (Cairo: Maktabat al-hilāl, 1987), p. 85.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹⁴⁴ Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Diwān*, Sharḥ Abū al-Baqā' al-'Ukbūrī, ed. Kamal Ṭalīb (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-'ilmyyah, 1997), vol. 3, p. 194.

¹⁴⁵ Abū Tammām Ḥabīb b. 'Aws al-Ṭā'i, *Diwān Abī Tammām bi sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abduh 'Azzām (Cairo: Dar al-ma'arif, n.d), vol. 4, pp. 166, 176, 184, 203, 208, 268.

4.6 *Al-Ghazal al- 'Udhri*: More than Imitation

The beloved, then, in these poems, is represented similarly to the beloved in the pre-Islamic ode. She appears within traditional beauty standards as established or at least confirmed by both Arabic poetry and prose since the pre-Islamic epoch. However, does that really mean that the '*udhri*' poet is just imitating the old model of personifying female beauty?

Thus, does that mean that poetic tradition has more influence within '*udhri*' poetry than the experience of devoted love, which is dedicated to one individual beloved, thus, describing her unique individual beauty, which is supposed to have its own features? The poetic tradition of describing the female body has existed for a long period of time. We must remember that the perception of poetry, at that time, relied on how close the poem resembled or catered to the established taste in receiving poetry. Hence, 'the poet was expected to work within the framework of the literary tradition (...) the ideas were measured by their transmission of ancient established common sense'¹⁴⁶. We might recall a famous critical opinion, from Ibn Qutaybah, which appeared later and stressed this connection:

The later poets should not deviate from what the preceding ones were doing. They should neither stop at inhabited houses to recall their memories and write their poems, nor lament beside settled houses because the preceding poets did that at ruined and obliterated dwellings. Since the earlier poets travelled by camels and described them in their poems, the later poets should not travel by donkeys or mules and do the same. Later poets are not to stop to drink at sweet streaming water for the reason that the earlier poets stopped at turbidity ponds. The later poets ought not to pass by myrtle, daffodil and flowers on their way to the praised person because the preceding poets the preceding poets passed by wormwood and '*ararah*'¹⁴⁷ on their way to the praised person¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁶ Behrens-Abouseif, p. 100.

¹⁴⁷ It is an Arabic name for a kind of small trees which have a very nice smell.

¹⁴⁸ 'Abdallah b. Muslim b. Qutaybah, *al-Shi'r wa al-shu'ra*⁷, ed. Aḥmad Shākīr, vol.1, (Cairo: Dār al-ma'arif, 1982), pp. 76-77.

Nevertheless, in spite of the potential weight of literary tradition, another conclusion may be reached. The bodily image of the woman is governed by the one who describes her, who usually confines himself to the certain criteria of beauty pertaining to his Eve. Alternatively, it is governed by the lover's preeminence that transfers everything about his beloved into beauty. For this very reason, it could be argued that the *'udhri* imitation of the older norms does not mean that they do not see their beloveds with their own eyes. Kinany claims that:

The *'udhri* poets frequently used old clichés to express their new, intense, and rich feelings, so that they put new wine into old bottles, and did not realize that an old cliché even when used to express new sentiment has a limited and established power of expression, and that it could not suggest anything more than a very conventionalized and therefore restricted sentiment and thought¹⁴⁹.

I would rather suggest that the *'udhri* lover sees his beloved through his own passionate eyes, which incline to idealize the object of his love. Therefore, the *'udhri* poet stipulates the boundaries of ideal beauty-- as defined in Arabic poems-- upon his own, unique beloved. He tends to idealize her, and thus to obtain his image of the ideal woman. Hence, he sees and describes his beloved in terms affected by his cultural and aesthetic inheritance. She becomes, through his loving eyes, the very archetype of ideal beauty. No one can replace her, even the literary beauty model. She becomes the model. She becomes the archetype, illuminated and illustrated with all the necessary and desirable colours, and contours of beauty. That is what a lover poet would do: he made his beloved the ideal. Al-'Aqqad declares:

Art is concerned with eternal images and everlasting models, not with creatures that appear once in life and then disappear. What concerns the artist with beauty is its ability to be a general model for many individuals or to all species¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁹ Kinany, p. 285.

¹⁵⁰ Al-'Aqqad, p. 17.

This is well-articulated in an essential statement ascribed to Buthaynah: ‘He (Jamīl) sees me within the eyes that are not in your head!’¹⁵¹ stated in an answer to the Caliph’s (‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān) enquiry of her: ‘What did Jamīl see in you, to compose such beautiful poetry about you?’ . Buthaynah’s response to ‘Abd al-Malik governs the lover’s eyes, and the poet’s imagination, rather than the ordinary eyes, or reality. Reality does not matter in the realm of the poetic lover. We might remember here the anecdotes that insist on Buthaynah’s ordinary appearance¹⁵². It is the authority of love, which transfers every aspect of the beloved’s body into perfect beautiful detail, and personifies her as the imagined model of the ideal woman. This model is now firmly engraved into collective consciousness and literary tradition. The common features of the cultural background do not contrast with the originality in feeling. In spite of this, *‘udhrī* poetry has its own individuality, as we shall see in the following section.

4.7 The Ethereal Nature of Beauty

Although *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī* makes use of tropes and metaphors that were inherited from the pre-Islamic period, there is an additional element that distinguishes it from the previous tradition and gives it its special elements. The *‘udhrī* poet’s imitation of older forms and notions in his descriptive verses addressing his beloved’s beauty is combined with an attempt to idealize her. He does not want her beauty to be compared to or derived from other women’s beauty, even though their beauty is the perfect pattern of female beauty. This is observed from the poet’s insistence that his

¹⁵¹ Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Al-Abshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fanin mustadzraf* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Maḥmūdiyyah al-tijāryyah, 1929), vol. 2, p. 220.

¹⁵² Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. Manẓūr al-Ifriqī, *Mukhtaṣar tarīkh Dimashq*, vol. 6, p. 114.

beloved is the most beautiful creature. Comparative phrases are frequent in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, so as to imply that the beloved is incomparable with any other elements in nature, or humanity. When the poem portrays the beloved as a special animal like a deer and an oryx, it states that the beloved is more beautiful than them¹⁵³. Likewise, the poem often stresses the higher position of the beloved compared with nature's components like the sun and moon¹⁵⁴. The moon and sun themselves are incapable of emulating her brilliant light¹⁵⁵. Comparative phrases are also used to emphasize the unique beauty of the beloved among other women. Jamīl asserts: "Her eye and neck are the most beautiful among all creatures"¹⁵⁶. If she is the most beautiful among all creatures (*khalq Allāh*), she is necessarily the most beautiful woman in the world. Her stunning beauty is definitely not contending with any sort of beauty¹⁵⁷. Qays declares that Lubnā is the most perfect human from top to toe:

O most perfect of people from head to toe,
And most beautiful of people clothed or unclothed¹⁵⁸ [23]

The beloved surpasses other women in every thing; Jamīl portrays Buthaynah as the moon whereas the other women are merely minor stars:

She is the full moon,
whereas the other women are [merely minor] stars
And what a great distance between them
She is superior in beauty to other people,
just as the Night of Qadr is preferred
over one thousand months¹⁵⁹ [24]

¹⁵³ Majnūn, p. 217, Kuthayyir, p. 153.

¹⁵⁴ Kuthayyir, p. 153.

¹⁵⁵ Majnūn, pp. 115, 160

¹⁵⁶ Jamīl, p. 85.

¹⁵⁷ Georges Bataille in his study *Erotism, Death, and Sensuality*, states that 'Beauty is its meaning, what gives it its value, and indeed the element that make it desirable'. trans. Nary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), p. 142.

¹⁵⁸ Qays, p.109.

¹⁵⁹ Jamīl, p. 37.

Her body has its own value, so her own natural beauty is its decoration, and adornment¹⁶⁰. This beauty is independent from outside influences. Just like the poet's independence from any form of beauty, any human or any companion. Therefore, he does away with people, does not enjoy their company, and, even more, he hates any speech that is not hers, and any scene from which she is absent:

After her, it is as though the people I love
are the sap of the split bitter apple tree;
for after her, my eyes detest every sight,
and after her, my ears detest every speech¹⁶¹ [25]

Consequently, it could be argued that although there are several evident erotic elements depicting female beauty in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, it is also the case that the description and feeling of this beauty is not always purely erotic or sensual. Of course, the sensual feeling runs through many images in this *ghazal*, and influences its descriptive language, especially while imitating the older norms and patterns. Nonetheless, *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, in many cases, evaluates beauty and sublimates it to worlds that transcend human ones. This was shown when we discussed the issue of the *'udhrī* poet's persistence in describing the light of his beloved and her status beyond that of the moon and sun. Jamīl compares Buthaynah's luminescence with the light that illuminates every thing around her¹⁶². Hence, the body of the beloved is perceived as glittering and soft as light.

Furthermore, the beloved's beauty in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* is beyond nature and associated with many extraordinary effects. For example, one effect is the impossibility to resist her beauty even by the most virtuous of people:

Monks of Midian,
and those I know weep from the fear of the torment while seated

¹⁶⁰ See for instances: Kuthayyir, p. 106, and Jamīl, p. 111.

¹⁶¹ Qays, p. 84.

¹⁶² Jamīl, p. 111.

But had they heard as I have heard her speech,
they would fall down to ‘Azza bowing and prostrating
The dead is resurrected when she touches his bones
and become immortal when they see her¹⁶³ [26]

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah ascribes to a person from the ‘Udhrah tribe this passage: ‘If you, men from Banū Fizarh, see the women of our tribe, you would take them as al-Llat and al-’Uzza¹⁶⁴ and leave Islam behind you!’¹⁶⁵. Preternatural effects are associated with ‘*udhri*’ beauty to this extent that they affect people in the way that only usually religion can. One may observe this semantic exchange between religion and love. As Hamori puts it: ‘The poaching of religious language is meant in the ‘*udhri*’ lyric to express the extent of this dangerous devotion’¹⁶⁶. Majnun clearly says:

When I pray I turn my face towards her place
though the right direction is the opposite one
I do not do that through polytheism,
but because my lovesickness resisted the cure of the doctor¹⁶⁷ [27]

Small wonder that the language of love converges with religious language, as the poet’s admiration of beauty resembles religious belief. In many cases, the beloved’s beauty surpasses human beauty, and there are more astonishing effects attributed to it. The woe is gone because of Laylā’s face, and rain is falling because of Laylā’s face¹⁶⁸. Her saliva is a remedy for dead people causing them to rise up from their graves¹⁶⁹. If a poison mixes with her saliva, it shall quench the poet when he drinks

¹⁶³ Kuthayyir, p. 76.

¹⁶⁴ Al-Llat and al-’Uzza were two important imageries that people used to worship before Islam.

¹⁶⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, p. 337.

¹⁶⁶ Hamori, “Love Poetry (*Ghazal*)”, p. 206.

¹⁶⁷ Majnun, p. 228, trans. Kinany, p. 298.

¹⁶⁸ Majnun, p. 92.

¹⁶⁹ Majnun, p. 120, Jamil, p. 38. A similar image can be found in the pre-Islamic *ghazal*, though it is really rare. For example, in his amatory prelude, A’shā Qays declares:

If she placed a dead man on her neck
He would come to life again
There would be then no need
To carry him to a cemetery”

A’shā Qays, cited and translated by Kinany, p. 92.

it¹⁷⁰. Hence, *al-ghazal al-'udhri* draws a parallel between extraordinary effects attributed to beauty, and extraordinary effects attributed to prophets, saints, and *hur al-'ayn*. One might remember here the *hadiths* that attributed *hur al-'ain* with great light. For example:

It is on record on the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd that he said: “the Apostle of God –God bless him and his family and give them peace- said that [when] God created the Garden of Eden, He summoned Jibrā'il –upon him be peace- departed and went around through out the Garden. One of the dark-eyed maidens looked down on him from one of the palaces there and she smiled at Jibrā'il –upon him be peace. As a result, the Garden of Eden became illumined by the radiance of her teeth. Jibrā'il –upon him be peace- fell down prostrate, believing that this was from the radiance of the Lord of Might Himself. Then the maiden called out [to him], “O faithful one of God, raise your head”. He did so and looked at her. Then he said: “Praise be to God Who created you”. The maiden replied: “O faithful one of God, do you know for whom I was created? [He replied “no”]. She said, “God created me [for him who] preferred seeking the pleasure of God Most High to the desires of his own heart¹⁷¹.”

This great light attributed to *hur al-'ayn* could be applied somehow to the *'udhri* poetic imagination while portraying the beloveds. The light of the beloved, as the light of *hur al-'ayn*, is greater than any other light. According to Majnūn, she [Laylā] is the sun whose light puts the full moon to shame, and who outshone the lightning when it flashes.¹⁷²

The lover looks to his beloved as the only person capable of bestowing happiness on him as illustrated in this statement from Majnūn:

You are the only person who if you want
Could make me either happy or miserable¹⁷³ [28]

¹⁷⁰ Majnūn, p. 55.

¹⁷¹ Abu al-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, trans. John Macdonald, “Paradise”, in *Islam Studies*, (5:1966), p. 354.

¹⁷² Majnūn, p. 160.

¹⁷³ Majnūn, p. 229, trans. Kinany, p. 271.

The supplicatory language, then, is dominant in *'udhri* discourse to the extent that the poet could not talk to his beloved directly as she was imagined as a sacred and venerated person:

When I suddenly met her I became confounded
Nothing right or wrong could I find to say¹⁷⁴ [29]

It is understandable that the beloved's physical beauty is associated with such preternatural effects, as it is free from the notion of time. This beauty goes beyond time itself. It is timeless beauty, and eternally youthful. Jamīl points out:

Buthaynah said,
when she saw
locks of red hair (on my head)
Oh Jamil, You become older and your youth's gone.
I said,
O please stop it, Buthaynah
Have you forgotten our times at Liwa and Ajfari?
When my locks were (black) just like a crow's wing,
Daubed with Musk and ambergris
Your youth will never fade
as you are a precious pearl
We are from the same time,
So how can I have grown old while you have not?¹⁷⁵ [30]

There are two time frames in Jamīl's poem: his time and Buthaynah's time. His time is affected by age and vicissitude, while Buthaynah's time is constant and does not change. Buthaynah, in Jamīl's poem, has no past, she does not change, she is always in the present. Her beauty remains the same: yesterday, today, and tomorrow¹⁷⁶. She is the source of all good qualities as she is identified with the perfect, eternal, and immutable. She is removed from time altogether by the image of eternal youth, that designates her omnipotence¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁴ 'Urwah, p. 22, trans. Kinany, p. 271.

¹⁷⁵ Jamīl, p. 44.

¹⁷⁶ Adonis, p. 289.

¹⁷⁷ A similar idea appears in Troubadour love lyric: see Charlotte Gross, "Loc Aizi\ Anima Mundi: Being, Time, and Desire in the Troubadour Love Lyric", in *Desiring Discourse The Literature of Love, Ovid through Chaucer*, ed. James J. Paxson and Cynthia A. Gravlee (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1998), p. 114.

When the beloved's body surmounts time this implies its perfection and immortality. It is an immortal body that ascends at the level of worshipped statues and images. I would maintain that there is a link between the beloved's body and that of worshipped idols as it appears in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. Worshipped idols and the beloved share a common aloofness and do not respond directly to those worshipping them. Let us consider Kuthayyir's verses:

When she left me she did not heed me, I called to her,
but she was silent as a rock so smooth that gazelles,
would slip if they walked there
Reluctant she was, and always cruel;
and if I tired of such behavior, she wearied also¹⁷⁸ [31]

And Jamīl's verse:

Do you not know, O mother of Dhil-Wad',
that I jest with your memories while you are impermeable¹⁷⁹ [32]

Jamīl also declares:

I await what you promised me,
as the poor man awaits the rich man
counting his debts but does not fulfil a promise to us
and is not impoverished
You and your promises are like nought,
but the thundercloud which does not rain¹⁸⁰ [33]

Thus, she is a rock, reluctant, (*summ, safūh, salūd*), does not respond, or she is beyond response, just like a statue, nevertheless, she deserves, as the imageries, to be worshipped. The image of the beloved is derived from the image of stubborn rocks, and also, from the image of a statue, which is worshipped, even though it gives no response. However, we should bear in mind that despite the *'udhrī* poet's comparing his beloved to a solid rock, and the inanimate nature that implies, he does not lose hope in what his worshipped love might give him in return: Worshippers of

¹⁷⁸ Kuthayyir, p. 55, trans. Kinany, p. 290.

¹⁷⁹ Jamīl, p. 28.

¹⁸⁰ Jamīl, p. 40.

idols used to await their idols' response in spite of their apparent silence. They also presented the idols with sacrifices as they believed the idols were capable of bringing good and pushing away harm, along with providing rain and fertility. Although the 'udhrī poet claims that his love goes beyond the notion of taking and giving, and although he addresses his beloved when saying "do harm or good to me, no reproach", he implies often that he nevertheless anticipates that she will be ever-giving. He is as the thirsty man to whom the water is unreachable; the debtor whose loans are unsustainable.

Kuthayyir says:

By Allah, every time I came near her
She went far away, and when I spoke at length
She said little¹⁸¹ [34]

So the devotion goes beyond reason, and is regardless of the behaviour of the beloved. Even if the aloofness of the beloved leads the poet to death, he should embrace his destiny:

O When will my tortured heart be cured (of your love)
The arrows of death are between me and seeing thou
Despite the exile, the pain, the longing, the shivering
You don't come closer but I don't go farer
I am like a bird within the swinging palms of a child
The bird suffers death and the child enjoys the game
The child is too young to feel for the bird
And the bird has no feathers to fly away¹⁸² [35]

The bird in these verses is representing as being in a weak, surrendering condition so as to signify the weakness of the poet towards his love. Here, love is destiny and its powerful effect is comparable to exile, pain, longing and moreover with death itself. Yet there is no choice. The bird, signifying the poet, has no feathers to fly away. It should be clear, however, that this theme has nothing to do with the theme of

¹⁸¹ Kuthayyir, p. 56, trans. Kinany, p. 291.

¹⁸² Majnun, pp. 22-23.

unrequited love. In fact, I disagree with scholars like Kinany who define *'udhri* love as unrequited love by arguing that 'the *'udhri* lovers suffered indeed tremendously from all the pangs of unrequited love'¹⁸³. An examination of *'udhri* poetry reveals that the beloved always plays an active part in the romance. In *diwān Jamīl* there are several verses that suggest long conversations between him and Buthaynah, in which they both express their longing to each other. For example, he says:

I was patient as I left in the evening and she was sorrowful
complaining to me of an ardent love
Saying: 'Spend a night with me,
may I be your ransom, I will complain to you, for that is easy'¹⁸⁴ [36]

In these verses, Buthaynah is complaining to her lover, the poet. She is even inviting him to spend the night with her. Another poem reveals a long conversation between Jamīl and Buthaynah in which she asked him to conceal his love because she is afraid that their enemies might hurt him¹⁸⁵. Another poem hints that Buthaynah shows her love to the poet, but she is frightened by the gossipers (*al-wushāh*)¹⁸⁶. Therefore, the complaint about the beloved's aloofness is rather to praise her, as Arabs used to praise difficult women, and to stress the poet's devotion for her regardless of her response to him. Jamīl addresses Buthaynah:

And you were not fair
As for (other) women, they are hateful to me now,
and as for that which is proper, she withholds¹⁸⁷ [37]

And Kuthayyir addresses 'Azzah:

Do me good or do me harm, I shall not blame you,
not hate you, even when you make yourself hateful¹⁸⁸ [38]

¹⁸³ Kinany, p257.

¹⁸⁴ Jamīl, p45.

¹⁸⁵ Jamīl, pp41-42.

¹⁸⁶ Jamīl, p122-123. See more instances in pp. 45,113.

¹⁸⁷ Jamīl, p28.

¹⁸⁸ Kuthayyir, p. 57, trans. Kinany, p291.

When ‘Azzah met the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, she was proud of Kuthayyir’s verse on her in which he described her as a rock¹⁸⁹.

The immortality of the body is also related to the immortality of soul. The ‘*udhri*’ poet suggests that his love began before he was created, and would last after his death: ‘My soul became attached to hers before we were formed’¹⁹⁰. Consequently, it becomes valid for the ‘*udhri*’ poet to talk about eternal love, as even death will not end their mutual love. Addressing Buthaynah, Jamīl sang:

My heart will love you, as long as I live;
And when I die my echo will follow your echo between the tombs¹⁹¹ [39]

‘Urwah also claims:

I love the day of Judgment since I have been told
That I shall meet her there¹⁹² [40]

4.8 Conclusion

To sum up, in this chapter I show how the beloved’s body is depicted in *al-ghazal al-‘udhri*. There are certain elements in this depiction that make use of many images and metaphors inherited from the previous period’s literature. This led to the discussion of the desirable image of a corpulent female body and its connection with ancient religious belief in which a corpulent body symbolizes fertility and motherhood; motherhood is a principle function of the Goddess-mother. In addition, I made a comparison between Laylā’s image in Arabic poetry and her image in later Persian paintings. In both forms of art the beloved is portrayed in an almost stereotypical image, which is influenced by the fashionable theme of the era.

¹⁸⁹ See the whole story in al-*Iṣfahānī*, vol. 9, p. 21. See also al-*Iṣfahānī*, vol. 1, p. 336, about Laylā’s love for Majnūn.

¹⁹⁰ Jamīl, p. 29, trans. Hamori, p. 34.

¹⁹¹ Jamīl, p. 40, trans. J.C.Bürgel, p. 116.

¹⁹² ‘Urwah, p. 41, trans. Kinany, p. 300.

However, *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, in my opinion, offers more than an imitation and moves away from the previous tradition by emphasising the ethereal aspect of female beauty and ascribing extraordinary effects to it. Hence, I examine themes such as the beloved's eternal youth, her omnipotence and the devotion for her that goes beyond reason. As a result, this should lead us to think about symbolizing the body and associating it with nature, which will be the main theme of my next chapter.

Present and Absent Bodies of the Beloved

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we have seen how the ‘*udhri*’ poets depicted the body of their beloved as a model of ideal beauty. In their poetry they present her concrete, corporeal body. Nevertheless, the bodily presence in *al-ghazal al-‘udhri* does not always take the form of a physical body--sometimes it also appears symbolically, alongside a physical depiction, thereby expressing the idea of both the present and absent beloved. The present form can be observed in gestures and speech. Gestures or intimate body language such as glances, gazes, sighs and smells are all illustrated in *al-ghazal al-‘udhri*, indicating the physical presence of the beloved, depicting communication, a kind of *wisāl*, between the lovers at the same time. In addition, speech has always been associated with love in classical Arabic literature in general and in the ‘*udhri*’ tradition in particular. The beloved’s speech is a characteristic of her bodily presence.

Moreover, the absence of the beloved is often presented symbolically in the form of her phantom or her placement in a location inaccessible to the lover. These images are substitutes for her actual presence and a means of keeping her in mind. Her pure absence is expressed by the poet’s longing for the place where she is, as well as by the phantom. Therefore, the phantom of the beloved and her location act as symbols for her absence.

The third aspect in *al-ghazal al-‘udhri* that I aim to examine in this chapter is that of the presence through absence; the beloved who is present in the natural world but physically absent. The omnipresence of Laylā in nature, as reflected in the mind

of Majnūn, and his ability to see the signs of his love within nature will be discussed in detail.

5.2 Bodily Presence

5.2.1 Gestures

I will set out to examine the role of physical gestures in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*¹, 'which expressively hovers between act and language, foregrounds language, self –division between muteness and communication, errancy and truth, unmeaning and meaning'². Glances, sighs, and smell are frequently depicted as channels of communication between the lovers. The Arabic treatises on love identify both the idea of longing looks that lead to love in the first place, and also as gestures that are essential for communication between the lovers. At the same time, the question of the theological legality of looking at women was not forgotten such discussions. In his attempt to define the conversation and glances between men and women, al-Jāhīz provides many anecdotes to show that it was not shameful for women to converse with men or to exchange glances. All his examples, he says, give lie to the tradition reported by *ḥashwīyah* according to which the first glance is licit but the second is illicit³. To support his view, al-Jāhīz says: 'Up to our day, women who are daughters or mothers of the caliph or even of less exalted rank perform the circumambulation of the Ka'bah with their faces uncovered and that condition must be fulfilled in order that

¹ The reader should note that I am examining gestures from the point of view of body-language.

² J.P. Hermann, "Gesture and Seduction in Troilus and Criseyde", in *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde "subgit to alle poesye" Essays in Criticism*, ed. R.A. Shoaf (New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), p. 138.

³ Al-Jāhīz, *Kitāb al-qīyan [The Epistle on Singing-Girls of Jahiz]*, trans. A.F.L. Beeston (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1980), p. 19.

the pilgrimage be complete'⁴. However, those who took a stricter attitude referred to the Qur'anic verse enjoining men and women to behave modestly and chastely and included the advice that they 'cast down their eyes'⁵. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah explains that 'what the heart did not intend [the first glance, which occurs without any intention] is not subject to punishment. But, if the person takes a second look [at a woman] by intent, he sins'⁶.

Nevertheless, in the typical *adab* books on love, the subject is seasoned with piety. 'The authors do not trouble themselves over the battle against desire *hawā*' and the terrible consequences of looking (...). They are doubtless in the habit of thinking of the positive spiritual potentialities of human love'⁷. Authors such as Ibn Dā'ūd and Ibn Ḥazm tackle the issue of glances as a profound question in both causing as well as increasing love. In *Kitāb al-zahrah* glances are treated by Ibn Dā'ūd as the first cause of love; the first chapter of *al-zahrah* is entitled 'he whose glances are many, his woes last long'. In *the Ring of the Dove*, Ibn Ḥazm demonstrates that glances play an honorable part and achieve remarkable results in one chapter entitled 'of hinting with the eyes'. He states that 'by means of a glance, the lover can be dismissed, admitted, promised, threatened, upbraided, cheered, commanded or forbidden'⁸. Then, Ibn Ḥazm describes how even the most ordinary glances are forms of expression. He also emphasises the function of the eye as a messenger:

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵ Al-Nūr (24: 30-31).

⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, p. 35, trans. Giffen, p. 124. Giffen illuminates that al-Jawziyyah in chapters eight and nine of the *Rawḍah al-Muḥibbīn* sets up the advocates of doctrines [that allowed looking and easier standards of social and sexual conduct] like so many straw men to be knocked down, reporting their teachings and providing evidence to prove them wrong. Ibn al-Jawzi, likewise, devoted almost ten chapters of his book, *Dhamm al-Hawā*, to this matter, emphasising the importance of the eyes as the gateway to dangerous sense impressions. Giffen, pp. 126-127.

⁷ Giffen, p. 132.

⁸ Ibn Ḥazm, p. 68.

You should realize that the eye takes the place of a messenger, and that with its aid all the beloved's intention can be apprehended. The four senses besides are also gateways of the heart, and passages giving admission to the soul; the eye is however the most eloquent, the most expressive, and the most efficient of them all. The eye is the true outrider and faithful guide of the soul; it is the soul's well-polished mirror, by means of which it comprehends all truths, attains all qualities, and understands all sensible phenomena⁹.

Regarding *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, it is stated in Majnūn's romance that 'In the beginning of his affair, Majnūn used to see Laylā and frequent her company as well as have close ties with her. Then she was made to disappear from his gaze'¹⁰. This text, by al-Iṣfahānī, uses the word '*nāzīrih*' for "his gaze". So, the first stage in this text is *nazar*, then *nazar* becomes *ru'yah*, and then, as the rest of the text suggests, it became *ru'yā* when Majnūn reached the state of madness and *huyām*. The writer implies here that Majnūn's love for Laylā was caused by their visual communication and conversation. 'His intimacy with her is deviant. Since the origin of this intimacy lies in his image of her through his eyes, her image must be made to vanish from his gaze', from his *nazar*, but it did not vanish from his heart when *ru'yah* was transformed into *ru'yā* which is the stage of his suffering.

It was this specific part of the conversation and glances in Majnūn's romance which incited some authors, such as Ibn al-Jawzī to criticise Majnūn and take him as an example of the dangers which lie in the glances between men and women as well as in their conversation. Ibn al-Jawzī argues that this practice 'worked insidious harm to Majnūn and others like him, driving them mad and destroying them in the end.

⁹ Ibn Ḥazm, pp. 68-96. Interestingly, in medieval Western literature similar attention was paid to the gestures between the lovers. Boncompagno wrote *da Signa*, which is a medieval taxonomy of lovers' gestures. He begins by listing the four lovers' signs: the nod, indication, signal, and sigh. For more details see Hermann, p. 144.

¹⁰ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 355, trans. Khan, p. 179.

They erred, he says, in that such behavior is against both human nature and the sacred law'¹¹.

However, in Majnūn's poetry, looking and glances function in several ways; it was sometimes relief for the tortured heart:

Were our eyes to meet then all would be well
And the troubles would be lifted from my heart¹² [1]

He also says:

I gave her a look that I would not exchange
For all the red and black camels of the land¹³ [2]

When the lovers' eyes meet, they magically cure each other's troubled hearts. A kind of *wiṣāl* is reached. Hence, those precious glances are more valuable to Majnūn than anything else, even 'the red or black camels'. Glances could also be a suitable channel of communication between the lovers in a society full of blamers and *wuṣḥāh*:

When she looks my way her eyes speak to me
and my eyes reply while we remain silent
One of them tells me I will meet her
while the other almost leaves me dead¹⁴ [3]

Glances could express great contrasts of meaning in these 'visual conversations'.

Although their tongues were silent, the outer angle of her eye would 'speak' and his would 'answer'. One glance is promising and it announces a meeting, another might lead to death. The role played by the eyes in Majnūn's poetry is pivotal, so some of his verses read:

I was prevented from greeting her the day of her departure,
so I saw her off with the angle of my eye which was in tears
And I was speechless to answer her
Who has ever seen a lover in tears bidding farewell to his heart¹⁵ [4]

¹¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, cited in Giffen, p. 127.

¹² Majnūn, p. 229.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Here, the gaze functions as an index in a system of gestural codes. It is not just Majnūn, but his beloved, Laylā herself, who is said to have recited the following verses to him:

Both of us appear in front of people
To hate each other
And yet each is entrenched with his friend
The secrets of the glances are not hidden
If the eyes disclose what he conceals¹⁶ [5]

Similarly, Jamīl's glances convey messages between himself and Buthaynah:

But the glances we exchanged were as messengers,
which conveyed what our hearts conceal¹⁷ [6]

So here, the two lovers rely upon the gesture of looking to conceal as well as to reveal. Furthermore, 'love has involved the composition of demeanour to mislead others, turning facial expression into a misleading sign written upon the body itself'¹⁸. Jamīl says:

When you come to me then control your eyes
For our love is obvious to one who has vision
And turn away if you meet an eye you fear
And exhibit hate – that is more secret
But when you come you always move your eyes towards me,
So that your love nearly becomes manifest¹⁹ [7]

'Just as the corporeal image of holding the tongue metaphorises the suppression of speech, the gestures and movement of the eyes represent expression of speech'²⁰.

Kuthayyir declares:

¹⁵ Majnūn, p. 145.

¹⁶ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 338, trans. Khan, p. 176. According to Al-Iṣfahānī, these verses caused Majnūn to roam in the wildness of the desert.

¹⁷ Jamīl, p. 47

¹⁸ Hermann, pp. 154-155.

¹⁹ Jamīl, p. 42. In another context the poet-lover Waḍḍaḥ al-Yemen depicts the gestures between him and a married woman in a more scandalous image for the time, saying:

I crept to her silently after her husband fell asleep and the night was cold
And her hand was her husband's pillow

She gave me a sigh out of the corner of her eye saying:

Welcome, welcome, you will have what you desire despite all the calumniators
(cited in Kinany, p. 206).

²⁰ Khan, p. 161.

So I swore never to forget ‘Azza’s glance;
 I almost exposed my stammering passion on the night
 when their eyes were upon us
 and she gave me a sign with her hand that I must not speak²¹ [8]

It is noteworthy that in all these verses by ‘*udhri*’ poets cited above that the eyes function as a metaphor for language. Khan notes that Majnun’s romance

rehearses for us how the body (eyes) functions as metaphor for language: the imaging (secreting) and conveying (revealing) of the lover’s desire that occurs through the eyes metaphorises language’s capacity for constituting and conducting desire. Majnun glances at Layla generate desire in him yet his eyes also betray to others his infatuation for her. Language and gaze are both causes and stages of the love-quest. In the medieval Arabic discourse on love, the glance (*lahza*) could actually be interpreted as a metaphor for word or expression (*lafza*). Both words and glances have the same function in that they generate desirable images in the mind²².

The sudden glimpse of the beloved could have a great effect on the lover. ‘Urwah expresses his feelings in such a situation:

It is just that, as soon as I see her, unexpectedly,
 I am struck dumb, so that I can hardly answer;
 I abandon any ideas that I might have had before
 and forget whatever I had resolved when she was absent.
 My heart shows to me her excuse and assists her
 against myself: I am not longer master over my heart²³ [9]

Once again, glances are a substitution for conversation. So ‘Urwah ‘can hardly answer’. He is moved by the sight of his beloved to the extent that he forgets whatever he ‘had resolved when she was absent’. This scene of desire and destruction in these verses is caused entirely by his gaze. It is the gaze of the lover at the beloved that smites his own heart²⁴; he is no longer master of his heart. Thus, it

²¹ Kuthayyir, p. 197.

²² Khan, p. 156.

²³ Urwah, pp. 22-23, trans. Van Gelder, Unpublished translation, given in a private communication from Prof. Van Gelder.

²⁴ In an anecdote cited in *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn*, the idea of the one being smitten by his own gaze is evident. Al-Aṣma’ī was reported to have told the following anecdote: during the circumambulation of the Ka‘bah, I saw a girl who was like a wild cow and I began to watch her and to fill my eye with her beauty. Then she said to me: ‘Hey you! What is the trouble with you?’ ‘What is it to you if I look at you?’ I said. Then she recited:

And you, when you sent your eye scouting for your heart one day,

could be argued that in the *'udhrī* tradition, the representation of the lover's gaze can be the subject or the object between male and female characters²⁵. Moreover, keeping the aforementioned verses by Jamīl and Kuthayyir in mind, the interchange occurs as a shared gaze between the two lovers.

Glances relate to the poetic image of piercing. The eye of the beloved reaches the lover's and reaches his heart through a glance. There is a familiar conceit in the Arabic *ghazal*: the lover's or the beloved's gaze that penetrates as an arrow, through the eye, to wound the heart²⁶. This conceit establishes the link between gazes and death. Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī's verse reads:

It is me whose eye outer angle evoked fatality,
Thus, who is the enquirer, when the victim is the killer?²⁷ [10]

Khalīl al-Ṣafadī in *Sharḥ lamyyiat al-'Ajam* says, commenting on al-Mutanabbī's verse:

Hence, look at how Abū al-Ṭayyib claimed that the eye is behind the evocation of fatality. According to all poets, it is the eye which is guilty, because, with its capacity of seeing, the eye leads to the annihilation of the heart. Poetry books, however, are full of such meaning and it is well-known enough and needs no more quotations to prove it²⁸.

Indeed, as al-Ṣafadī declares, poetry books are full of such meaning.

Imru' al-Qays, for example, says:

Saw something over the whole of which you did not have power,
Nor with part of which were you able to rest content
Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, p. 95, trans. Giffen, pp. 123-124.

²⁵ On the contrary, in Medieval Western narratives, Stanbury argues, 'the sight lines of desire are most often projected by a male viewer'. A growing body of research has demonstrated that 'in Western culture this aggressive masculine eye dates from at least the classical era'. Sarah Stanbury, "The Lover's Gaze in Troilus and Criseyde", in *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde Essays in Criticism*, ed. R. A. Shoaf (New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992), p. 228.

²⁶ It is noteworthy that, in Medieval Western literature a similar conceit of the gaze as an arrow is a familiar one. For example, in a roundel ascribed to Chaucer the beloved's gaze sends a dart that penetrates to wound the heart. Stanbury, p. 226.

²⁷ Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, vol. 3, p. 264.

²⁸ Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *al-Ghayth al-musjam fī sharḥ lamyyiat al-'ajam*, vol. 2, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-'ilmyyah, 1990), p. 13.

Your eyes only shed those tears so as to strike and pierce
With those two shafts of theirs the fragments of a ruined heart²⁹ [11]

The famous verses of the poet Jarir read:

The eyes whose corners are white have slain us
And then do not bring our dead to life again
They fell the man of wit and leave him motionless,
While they are the weakest of God's creation³⁰ [12]

The 'udhri poet Qays Lubnā declares, moreover:

If I die, then seek blood requital from every virgin girl
With languid eyelids and listless eyes³¹ [13]

The murderous glance is associated with the image of the beloved as a gazelle in several lines of classical Arabic poetry. For example, al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf says:

A fawn (*rīm*) shot with its eyeballs, aiming at my heart,
my heart's hunter, whose ransom and protector I am³² [14]

In another verse by the same poet the mere appearance of the gazelle makes the hunter die:

How could a man as powerless as the like of me hunt
a gazelle which kills those who behold her³³ [15]

Regarding the connotations of the metaphor of the female gazelle and her "murderous glances", Bürgel explains that this animal can 'evoke an uncanny feeling, due to its close links with the realm of fairies and demons'³⁴. Through several examples, he shows how the gazelle was sacred among ancient Arabs, the image traditionally holding a sense of magic and numinosity. Indeed, this reminds us of the magical power ascribed to the beloved, especially in Majnūn's poetry. Therefore, the gazelle metaphor 'expresses the strange mixture of fear and

²⁹ Imru' al-Qays, in *The Seven Odes*, trans. A.J. Arberry, p. 62.

³⁰ Al-Qurashī, *Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arab*, vol. 1, p. 140.

³¹ Qays, p. 46.

³² Al-'Abbas b. al-Aḥnaf, p. 319, trans. Bürgel, "The Lady Gazelle and Her Murderous Glances", p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 102, trans. Bürgel, "The Lady Gazelle and Her Murderous Glances", p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

fascination evoked by the irritating fusion of weakness and power in woman³⁵.

Bürgeġ maintains that love poetry

created a realm where woman existed not only unsubdued but ruling, even tyrannically, and yet adored. This realm is that of an ideal love, somewhat crazy, somewhat perverse, it is true, but with all the features of an elaborate system like a philosophy and indeed a religion, the religion of love, in which man adores a Lady Gazelle and willingly submits to her whims, even to the extent of being killed by her murderous glances³⁶.

In a previous chapter, the significance of the beloved's smell as shown in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* was noted³⁷. Here, however, I would argue that this odour, carried by the zephyrs, is also depicted in *'udhri* poetry as a channel to communicate with the beloved. Kuthayyir declares:

The east wind brings her scent to me every night
And we are together in our dreams wherever we sleep³⁸ [16]

Majnūn also says:

If ever riders come from near his land he breathes
in seeking relief from the scent of the riders³⁹ [17]

The smell, even from the beloved's land or direction is depicted as a cure from the agony of ardent love. Therefore, the body of the beloved is presented in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* through symbolic channels both of gestures and smell. Its presence is also depicted through speech as we shall see in the following section.

5.2.2 Speech

Jamīl's famous verse reads:

Women's converse is (*bashāshah*) real bliss
And women's victims are martyrs⁴⁰ [18]

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 9.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 10.

³⁷ See the chapter "The Representation of The Beloved's Body" of this study, p. 107.

³⁸ Kuthayyir, p. 86.

³⁹ Majnun, p. 45.

In this verse, Jamīl signifies the importance of the conversation with the beloved in *al-ghazal al-'udhri*. His use of the word '*bashāshah*' is significant as it alludes to joy and happiness. In another verse he says, addressing Buthaynah:

She is beautiful, smiling,
Her speech resembles a string of pearls, unloosed and scattered⁴¹ [19]

Here, Jamīl uses the metaphor 'a string of pearls, unloosed and scattered' to describe the beauty of Buthaynah's speech. 'This metaphor is a play upon that often employed by medieval Arab critics in describing poetry as "a string of pearls"⁴². It is perhaps not surprising that we find so many allusions in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* to women's speech and the joy of conversation between the women and their lovers. Al-Jāhiz states clearly that this kind of conversation was common among Bedouin men and women:

Among Bedouin men and women there was no veiling of women; yet in spite of the absence of the veil, they disapproved of sly glances and secret ogling. Nevertheless, they were accustomed to foregather for conversation and evening parties, and might pair off for whispering and joking (the man who was addicted to this being termed *Zīr*, [a word] derived from [the verb meaning] to visit). All this will take place under the eyes of the women's guardians or in the presence of her husband, without these taking exception to conduct not in itself exceptional, provided they felt secure against any misbehaviour occurring⁴³.

Moreover, he also states that such conversations were the cause of the passion between '*udhri* lovers:

Men continued to hold converse with women both in pre-Islam and [in the beginning of] Islam, up to the time when the veil was imposed as a particular duty on the wives of the prophet. Such converse was the cause of the association between Jamīl and Buthaynah, 'Afrā and 'Urwah, Kuthayyir and 'Azzah, Qays and Lubna, Asma' and Muraqqish, Abdallah b. 'Ajlan and Hind. Moreover, noble ladies used

⁴⁰ Jamīl, p. 27, trans. Kinany, p. 288.

⁴¹ Jamīl, p. 45.

⁴² Khan, p. 154.

⁴³ Al-Jāhiz, *The Epistle on Singing –Girls of Jahiz*, p. 16.

to sit and talk to men, and for them to look at each other was neither shameful in pre-Islam nor illicit in Islam⁴⁴.

In Ibn Qutaybah's '*Uyūn al-akhbār*', a chapter is devoted to 'the discourse of women', in which the author presents an abundance of romanticized tropes to describe the words of women as they appear in Arabic poetry. For example, Ibn Qutaybah quotes Ibn al-A'rabī's verse:

Her speech is like a shower of saving rain heard by a shepherd
After long years of drought
Who faints wishing to live and out of joy says 'more, O Lord.'⁴⁵ [20]

And he also quotes Bashshār b. Burd's verses:

As *Hārūt* delivers his magic in her tongue
And her speech is like flowers in verdant meadows⁴⁶ [21]

Therefore, women's words are like 'a flow of clouds' and 'flowers in verdant meadows'. In other verses that Ibn Qutaybah provides, women's words are like 'the glitter of gold and silver' and 'a string of pearls, unloosed and scattered' and 'honeyed wine'⁴⁷. Khan argues that:

Women's words, like their bodies, are objectified as ornaments of seduction and deceptive allurements. The analogy between their words and ornaments is important. This analogy suggests how, by making signification ascribed to women's words suspect and ambiguous, their language is rendered enigmatic and secretive⁴⁸.

In '*udhrī*' tradition there are many references to the conversation, which is considered a kind of *wiṣāl* with the beloved. In many senses the '*udhrī*' lover is portrayed as incapable of withstanding the beauty or the lethal effect of his beloved's words. In one account given by Ibn Qutaybah, Jamīl and a friend of his went to Buthaynah's campsite. Hearing of his arrival, she came out accompanied by other women to meet

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁴⁵ Ibn Qutaybah, '*Uyūn al-akhbār*' (Cairo: al-Mu'asasah al-miṣriyyah al-'ammah li al-ta'līf wa al-tarjamah wa al-tiba'ah wa al-nashr, 1964), vol. 4, p. 82.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

⁴⁸ Khan, p. 154.

him. They all sat together to talk and after a while the women left the two lovers alone. They spent the whole night talking until the morning, when they had to bid farewell to each other. When Jamīl was about to mount his camel, Buthaynah asked him to come close to her, which he did. She whispered something to him which caused him to faint and then she left. When he finally woke up he recited:

Neither a storm cloud in a heavy millstone,
Nor what bees keep in their stores
Are sweeter than what you said
After the saddle was placed on the breast of my camel⁴⁹ [22]

The loss of control by fainting can be seen as a metaphor for reaching the height of desire. Manzalaoui has pointed out that in the later collection of stories, *The Thousand and One Nights*, ‘the mutuality of the simultaneous faint is the sentimental romance’s surrogate for sexual intercourse’⁵⁰. The pure water, ‘a storm cloud in a heavy millstone’, is a metaphor for the beloved’s speech, it is ‘a flow of clouds’ in the aforementioned verse by Ibn al-‘Arabi. And so the dual nature of thirst and the quenching of thirst arises again in *al-ghazal al-‘udhri*. It is not just kisses from the beloved’s delicious mouth that quenches the poet’s thirst; but also her sweet words. In a similar context, al-Quṭamī, the Umayyad poet, declares:

They kill us by a talk
that is not known to whom they are scared of
and what is hidden of this talk
is not obvious to others.
This is so because their talk
is like water
for a thirsty person⁵¹ [23]

⁴⁹ Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Shi‘r wa al-shu‘arā*, p. 438. A similar version of the story is given in *Tazyīn al-aswāq*, in which Jamīl described Buthaynah’s speech as more delicious than the pure rain water in high mountains, p. 63.

⁵⁰ Mahmoud Manzalaoui, “Swooning Lovers: a Theme in Arab and European Romance”, in *Comparative Criticism*, 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 75.

⁵¹ ‘Umayr b. Shaym Al-Quṭamī, *Diwan al-Quṭamī*, ed. Ahmed Maṭlub and Ibrahim al-Samrā’ī (Beirut, Dar al-thaqāfah, 1960), p. 80.

Back to Jamīl's verse: 'not even whatever bees hid in their dwellings', we notice here how Jamīl uses the image of the luscious honey produced by bees in reference to the sweet words that his beloved hides and tells only to him. This image directs us to a similar one related also to the beloved's mouth; it is the image of the luscious honey of her saliva. It is the honey that the poet receives or wishes to receive while kissing the beloved. Therefore, can we suggest that the mouth area is presented in the 'udhri poetry as a desirable area, either in the physical form, i.e. in kissing, or in the immaterial form, i.e. in speaking? The image of the beloved's 'honeyed speech' or being even more luscious than honey, is very popular in Arabic classical poetry. Abū Hayyiah al-Numayrī refers to the capacity of the beloved's speech in curing⁵² not only sickness but even for saving one from the last inhalations of death⁵³.

Another anecdote from the 'udhri tradition shows how Majnūn was fond of women's conversation. The anecdote also reveals his extreme reaction to Laylā's words. Ibn Qutaybah provides the following anecdote about Majnūn:

He would sit and talk to her among some of his people. Handsome and gracious, he was brilliant in conversation and poetic recitation. But she would shun him and converse with others, to the point where he was hurt. When she realized that, she turned to him and said:
In front of other people, we both display hatred,
While each of us is entrenched in the other's heart
Things worsened for him so much that his reason left him, and he
wandered aimlessly with the wild beasts⁵⁴.

In this anecdote, Majnūn is portrayed as a man who takes pleasure both in listening to women's conversation and in reciting poetry to them. But what do the women's words in general, and Laylā's in particular, signify? The narrative, as Khan notes,

⁵² 'Then to eat of all the produce (of the earth), and find with skill the spacious paths of its Lord: there issues from within their bodies a drink of varying colours, wherein is healing for men: verily in this is a Sign for those who give thought'. Al-Nahl (16: 69).

⁵³ See his verses cited in Salamah, p. 352.

⁵⁴ Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Shi'r wa al-shu'ara'*, p. 565, trans. Khairallah, p. 136. In *al-Aghani* Majnūn is described as 'addicted to the conversation of women and enamoured of them', vol. 2, p. 356.

ascribed to this discourse a role in the genesis of male desire. Women's speech reflects poetic speech and mirrors it, which is why he is so fond of hearing their words⁵⁵. So the male poet's listening is not so much an act of hearing the women's speech as one of hearing his own words reflected in her language. His attention to her words is thus ultimately a self-referential activity⁵⁶. Nevertheless, Majnūn's excessive reaction to Laylā's verses is significant. It provokes an even more public display from him⁵⁷.

In his treatise about love, *The Ring of the Dove*, Ibn Ḥazm considers conversation as the first device employed by those who seek union:

The first device employed by those who seek union, being lovers, in order to disclose their feeling to the object of their passion, is allusion by means of words. Either they will quote a verse of poetry, or despatch an allegory, or rhyme a riddle, or propose an enigma, or use heightened language⁵⁸.

Sometimes, it seems that the content of the beloved's speech does not matter to the poet. Just the mere fact that she actually spoke to him, even if only to curse him, is what matters because all the beloved's talk is beloved. Jamīl illustrates this by saying:

Buthayna has said it,
And all of her words to me are sweet even if she speaks ill⁵⁹ [24]

He also says:

A false word from one whose speech I love,
is more precious to me than one I hate speaking the truth⁶⁰ [25]

⁵⁵ Khan, p. 152.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁵⁷ Khan, p. 157.

⁵⁸ Ibn Ḥazm, p. 65.

⁵⁹ Jamīl, p. 113.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

In some contexts when the choice is made between actual physical touch and a woman's whisper, the poet confesses that whispers bring him the greatest pleasure: 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah claims: 'I was in between two women, one was whispering to me and the other was biting me, yet I could not feel the bite for the enjoyment of the other's whisper overwhelmed it'⁶¹.

Also, the enjoyment of talking to the beloved sometimes refers to the purity of relations between the 'udhri poets and their beloved. In numerous narratives, the lovers get together and talk until morning. A verse by Jamīl describes a similar desire:

I know nothing of what lies beneath her clothes,
nor have I ever kissed her,
I have never touched her.
We just talked and were lost in each other's eyes⁶² [26]

'Talking and looking' in contrast to the actual physical interaction; looking which does not exceed the edges of the outer dress, and speaking, from the mouth that he has not tested. Nevertheless, Jamīl composed other verses that could be seen as challenging this purported link between conversation and chastity. For example, in one verse, he links his beloved's words and her saliva:

Ah me! Shall we ever spend another night like our night
until we see the rising of the dawn;
she showering her words upon me,
and oft times showering her saliva upon me from her mouth?⁶³ [27]

The first verse recalls a similar one of Majnūn, in which he also links the conversation with his beloved to the night:

Ah me! Shall I ever spend the night whispering to you
until I behold the rise of the dawn⁶⁴ [28]

⁶¹ Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Abshīhī, *al-Mustāṭraf fī kull fanin mustāḍraf* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-maḥmūdyah al-tijāryah, 1929), vol. 2, p. 219.

⁶² Jamīl, p. 49.

⁶³ Jamīl, p. 38.

Beyond their descriptions of their beloveds' speech as pure water and honey, 'Udhri

poets also ascribe extraordinary effects to their words. Majnun claims:

If I were blind, walking using a stick, and deaf
when she calls me, I would respond to her⁶⁵ [29]

Jamil also expresses a peculiar wish:

I wish I were blind and deaf while Buthaynah is guiding me,
not a word from her speech is hidden from me!⁶⁶ [30]

There is an insistence on Buthaynah's words not being hidden from him. Her words could act place of his sight and hearing. Furthermore, love at a distance, as Bouhdiba demonstrates, is based almost exclusively on hearing or hearsay and is fed on fantasy⁶⁷. The famous verse by Bashshar b. Burd reads: 'Sometimes the ear falls madly in love before the eye'⁶⁸. In any case, these kinds of verses incite al-Washsha' to comment on them by saying:

They [the poets] claim that women's speech is a cure for blindness, and it makes the deaf hear, and enlivens the dead, and raises people from graves before their due time. Some Bedouin said: Some of women's speech is like water that quenches thirst⁶⁹.

Moreover, 'udhri poets claim that the beloved's words could affect even the non-human world. Majnun, for instance, maintains:

You kept me close until you put a spell on me
with words that bring the mountain-goats down to the plains
When I had no way out, you shunned me,
But you left what you left within my breast⁷⁰ [31]

He also says:

If she called to the doves they would answer her
And were she to speak to the dead they would speak back to her⁷¹ [32]

⁶⁴ Majnun, p. 114.

⁶⁵ Majnun, p.234.

⁶⁶ 'Abd al-Qadir al-Baghdadi, *Khizanat al-adab wa-lubb lubab lisan al-'Arab*, ed. 'Abd al-Salam Harun (Cairo: al-Hy'ah al-misriyyah al-'ammah lil-kitab, 1977), vol. 6, p. 400.

⁶⁷ Bouhdiba, p.39.

⁶⁸ Bashshar b. Burd, *Diwan*, ed. Muhammad al-Tahir b. 'Ashur (Tunis: al-Sharikah al-Tunusyiyah li al-tawzi', 1976), vol. 3, p. 217.

⁶⁹ al-Washsha', p. 91.

⁷⁰ Majnun, p. 64

Kuthayyir depicts his beloved's speech in a similar image:

And if Umm al-Walīd were to talk to the mountain goats on mount Raḍwā,
They would draw near to her and come down to her
From the mountain passes of Ḍa's and Aylah
Even when the hunter is there with his dogs⁷² [33]

In these verses the poets use the words: *qawl*, *ḥadīthaha*, *kallamat* which indicate that it is not just the sound, but that the beloved's words and speech are magical.

Both poets use the image of *'uṣm*, the mountain-goat, which belong to the pricket (*wa'ī*) species that always stay in the mountains and never venture down to the plains. So, the effect of the beloved's speech goes beyond the poet himself, to embrace other creatures. Her speech is powerful enough to make the wild mountain-goats relinquish their well-fortified location and descend to the plains. Here, these animals could even recklessly ignore the surrounding dangers like the intimidating hunting dogs. The amusements these aloof animals find in her speech leads to their 'rapprochement' and make them 'descend', transforming any aloofness into a world of amiability.

5.3 Bodily Absence

5.3.1 The Phantom of the Beloved

The phantom of the beloved (*tayf al-khayāl*) is a 'constantly mentioned convention of amatory preludes'⁷³ in classical Arabic *qasīdah*. It could be defined as a 'vision of

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁷² Kuthayyir, p. 42.

⁷³ Charles James Lyall, *The Mufaḍḍaliyat: Vols. 1-2. an anthology of ancient Arabian odes compiled by al-Mufaḍḍal, son of Muhammad; according to the recession and with the commentary of Abū Muḥammad al-Qasim b. Muḥammad al-Anbarī* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1918), p. 2.

the beloved appearing by night'⁷⁴. *Ṭayf* is a verbal noun deriving from *ṭafa/yaṭifu*, 'to appear [in sleep, phantom]', while the second form of the verb, *ṭafa*, means 'to circuit, go around'. The verb *ṭafa* is used to describe the phantom's night visit. *Khayāl* derives from *khāla/yakhālu*, 'to think, suppose, fancy, imagine'⁷⁵. So, *Ṭayf al-khayāl* is purely imaginary, an imaginative projection in a dream or dream-like state. In classical Arabic, *qasīdah* the phantom of the beloved functions as an abandoned campsite that arouses the poet's emotions⁷⁶. Some scholars have drawn a distinction between *ṭayf* and *khayāl* based on their linguistic origins and their literary use⁷⁷. However, it is remarkable that it is a traditional literary convention to use a combination of the two words for the term *ṭayf al-khayāl*⁷⁸. For example, Jamīl uses both terms in different contexts while Majnūn focuses on the word *khayāl*, which will be highlighted in this section. Jacobi notes that:

[*Ṭayf al-khayāl*] was first conceived as an apparition or ghost, confronting the poet in the external world, not always welcome, and sometimes even terrifying him. Later, from the early seventh century onwards, it was referred to as a vision the poet sees in his dream, longed for and fulfilling his secret wishes, granting favours the beloved herself refused⁷⁹.

Clearly, *ṭayf al-khayāl* acts as a symbol of the beloved's bodily presence, thereby indicating her absence. As soon as *ṭayf al-khayāl* reaches the lover, it arouses his hidden yearning and sadness; Kuthayyir expresses the effect that 'Azzah's phantom had on him:

Khayāl from 'Azzah' has passed (*ṭaf*)

⁷⁴ Renate Jacobi, "Al-Khayālān-- A Variation of the *Khayāl* Motif", in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, XXVII, 1996, p. 2.

⁷⁵ John Seybold, "The Earliest Demon Lover: The *Ṭayf al-Khayāl* in al-Mufaḍḍaliyāt", in *Reorientation/Arabic and Persian Poetry*, p. 181.

⁷⁶ Seybold, p. 182.

⁷⁷ See: Ḥasan al-Banna' 'Izz al-Dīn, *Al-Ṭayf wa al-khayāl fī al-shi'r al-'arabi al-qadīm*, 3rd edition (Beirut: Dār al-manāhil, 1994), p. 69.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁷⁹ Jacobi, p.2.

by in the dark and during still times
 and has stimulated my grief
 and her *khayāl* has deranged all way
 from *Buwayb* to reach *Thi'dawranī*⁸⁰ [34]

Ṭayf al-khayāl only passes by night. Khuthayyir further explains by using “*ba'd al-hudw*” which indicates times of tranquillity and stillness. That is because tranquillity and darkness allow for the revelation of the beloved's phantom, which evokes his grief and brings forth memories, along with the nostalgic wish to relive the past which can only be achieved through dreams and imagination. It is also remarkable that the poet uses the verb “*ṭafa*” meaning “passed” when describing the phantom's visit to him because this verb is itself derived from the noun *ṭayf* which has often been used by poets to evoke feelings of fear, insecurity or even suspicion towards nature⁸¹. In addition, some ‘*udhrī*’ poets link the noun *ṭayf* with Jinn in their usage of terms like “*ṭayf Jinnah*” or “*ta'if Jinnah*”- ‘Urwah, for instance, says:

I am not mad, I have no jinn inside me.
 It's this, my friend: my uncle has belied me⁸² [35]

Qays says, addressing Lubnā:

Your *ṭayf* has visited me in the evening and caused me insomnia
 So I dropped endless tears⁸³ [36]

Also in his speech, *ṭayf* is linked to the night, causing sadness and continual tears, and eventually preventing the poet from sleeping, as if this symbiosis of the beloved with the *ṭayf* indicates the absence of her physical body and the impossibility of her physical presence except through symbolism and the imagination.. The poet's grief over her absence is reflected in flowing tears. The *ṭayf* visits the poet during his

⁸⁰ Kuthayyir, p. 235. *Buwayb* and *Thi'dawranī* are names of places.

⁸¹ A *ṣu'luk* poet's mother says after his death:

‘He traversed the land seeking safety from death but he died’.

Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad al-Marzuqī, *Sharḥ Diwān al-ḥamasah li Abī Tammām*, ed. Aḥmad Amin and others (Cairo: Lajnat al-ta'lif wa al-tarjamah wa al-nashr, 1951), vol. 3, pp. 370-372.

⁸² ‘Urwah in Ibn Qutaybah, p. 624, trans. Gelder.

⁸³ Qays, p. 109.

sleep only to fade away when he awakes; therefore, ‘sleeplessness is a keyword, a prerequisite for the appearance of the phantom’⁸⁴. A subsequent poet, Jarīr, uses a similar image of a phantom of the beloved visiting at night, yet he links it with the motif of *ṭalal*:

Is it the phantom of Khālīdah
Coming through the night?
No looming shape [campsite ruin] could I see dearer
Than such a nightly vision⁸⁵ [37]

In other situations, *ṭayf al-khayāl* does not pay the poet a direct visit, but rather makes a long journey that starts from the actual location of the physical presence of the beloved to reach the actual location of the poet. In other words, the beloved’s body symbolically turns into *khayāl* that takes on the journey on her behalf, as Jamīl Buthaynah says:

khayāl from Buthaynah has haunted me,
Longing for me and agitating my longing
It has penetrated through *Tilā‘al-ḥijr* and reached me
Despite *al-Ash‘arūn and Ghāfiq* in between⁸⁶ [38]

The power that his beloved lacks to take such a long journey and to cross *Tilā‘al-ḥijr* to reach the location of the poet is further hindered by *al-Ash‘arūn and Ghāfiq*, her *ṭayf al-khayāl* possesses this power instead⁸⁷. The question of how her *khayāl* was able to reach the poet in spite of the distance is hardly relevant within the context of

⁸⁴ John Seybold, p. 184.

⁸⁵ Jarīr b. ‘Aṭīyah, *Diwān* (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1964), p. 314, trans. Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The zephyrs of Najd: the poetics of nostalgia in the classical Arabic nasīb* (Chicago ; London : University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 85-86.

⁸⁶ Jamīl, p. 68.

⁸⁷ Since Pre-Islamic times, poets have expressed their surprise at the phantom’s “courage” and ability to travel so far in order to reach the poet. See, for example, Ṭarafah b. al-‘Abd, *Diwān* (Beirut: Dār Beirut li al ṭibā‘ah wa al-nashr, 1979), p. 76.

The phantom is also connected with the idea of travel from afar: al-Muraqqish al-Akbar says:

At night a phantom came from Sulayma
And kept me awake while my companions slept
I spent the night revolving the matter in my mind every which way
Awaiting her people though they are far away
Al-Muraqqish al-Akbar, “Al-Mufaḍḍaliyah no.46”, in *The Mufaḍḍaliyat*, Lyall, vol. 1, p. 460.

dreams, but it gives the *khayāl* more reality and even more substance⁸⁸. Jamīl here uses the verb “haunted” and Salamah notes that the poet’s use of this verb is quite normal to describe the *ṭayf* of the beloved as it is the same verb associated with the Jinn and the *ṭā’if* of the Jinn. It is also linked to other names of love like *mass* and *lamam*. So, the lover goes insane because he falls in love with a human that resembles a Jinni⁸⁹. Regardless of the jinni-like power that characterise this *ṭayf*, it is described using the same terms as those used to describe the beloved like “longing” and “agitates longing”. In any case, the distance that the phantom overrides is paradoxical; Seybold argues that:

The lady is far away while her phantom is near. Distance is nearly always spatial, and the phantom’s triumph is finding the right way over endless rough terrain. But distance also has a temporal dimension: the lady exists in the past as a memory while the phantom appears in the present as a desire. Simultaneously far and near, past and present- again, two views of a single reality⁹⁰.

Jamīl Buthaynah expresses his surprise by the phantom’s night visit while he was asleep:

O Buthaynah, does your phantom *ṭayf* visit me gently in sleep?
And my heart was inflamed with longing and it poured forth
I was astonished that it would visit my bed in sleep,
and were it to visit me awake it would be more astonishing⁹¹ [39]

Particularly fascinating in these verses is the key verb *sarā*, ‘to travel by night’, which is used to describe the phantom’s night visit. In contrary with Seybold’s argument I will maintain that *ṭayf al-khayāl* is portrayed as a visitor while the poet is asleep, not only when he is awake. As seen in Jamīl’s verses cited above, Jamīl clearly says that Buthaynah’s *ṭayf* visited him while he was asleep, though in the last verse he includes not only *ṭayf al-khayāl* but also the actual figure of Buthaynah

⁸⁸ Jacobi, p. 2.

⁸⁹ Salamah, pp. 189-190.

⁹⁰ Seybold, p. 185.

⁹¹ Jamīl, p. 19.

when he says: ‘and were it to visit me awake it would be more astonishing’. The real meeting arouses his surprise because of the distance between himself and Buthaynah, so he is only hoping to meet her phantom by trying to sleep, even though he is not sleepy:

Although I am not sleepy,
I am trying to be drowsy,
Hoping to meet her in my sleep⁹² [40]

A similar verse is attributed to Majnun:

I cover my head with my garment,
Although I am not sleepy,
Perhaps a *khayāl* from you will meet my *khayāl*⁹³ [41]

Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 1044) in his monograph *ṭayf al-khayāl*, describes the second *khayāl* in Majnun’s verse as the poet’s emaciated body⁹⁴. However, *ṭayf al-khayāl* becomes a means of realising dreams that are unachievable in reality because desires become real in dreams:

Have I seen you Laylā in my night dreams,
or during my day where I have witnesses?
I have held you close to me until I thought
My fire was extinguished,
But it wasn’t; it was instead agitating⁹⁵ [42]

So, the appearing of *ṭayf al-khayāl* is a result of longing and desire. The comparison between the gracious behaviour of the *khayāl* and the un-obliging attitude of the

⁹² Jamīl, p. 98. It is interesting that, among some other poets, there is a reference to more than one *khayāl* as the poet is involved in a love affair with two women, who send their *khayāl* at the same time. Al-‘Ajjaj b. Ru’bah says:

Two *khayāl* moved about and caused affliction,
The *khayāl* (of a woman) named, and that (of a woman) kept secret
See Jacobi’s discussion of the motif of *khayālān*, p. 3.

⁹³ Majnun, p. 233, trans. Jacobi, p. 5.

⁹⁴ Jacobi, p. 5.

⁹⁵ Majnun, p. 76.

beloved is implied in this verse. That shows that *ṭayf al-Khayāl* 'has not always been conceived as exactly the same thing'⁹⁶.

Majnun links the hindrance made by the society that prevents him from contacting his beloved to the inability of this society to prevent contact with her through her phantom and his imagination:

Since you deny me her words,
why not forbid her image (*khayāl*) from coming freely to me,
despite the distance⁹⁷ [43]

Unlike the beloved herself, her *khayāl* is capable of challenging all social and natural obstacles which hinder their meeting. This allows the poet to make contact with the *khayāl* that is almost equivalent to her own self. In *al-hawāmil wa al-shawāmil* by Abū Ḥayyian al-Tawḥīdī (d.1023), the author presents a conversation between himself and Miskawayh (a philosopher) reveals. This dialogue is an attempt to comprehend the poets' obsession with the phantom and its relation to the imagination, while the interlocutors try to understand the psychological role of the phantom in facing this longing⁹⁸.

Hence, using the *ṭayf* as a means to reach impossible dreams is a common trait of classical Arabic poetry. In a poem by Husayn b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk, he describes the visit of a gazelle's *ṭayf* in the darkness, as if the gazelle was perfumed by odours and longing for the poet. The poet achieves his desire with the gazelle after the creature held out and acted flirtatiously⁹⁹. According to Abū Tammām, *ṭayf al-khayāl* visited him because of the poet's own intention:

⁹⁶ Jacobi, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Majnun, cited and translated by Khairallah, p. 91.

⁹⁸ Abū Ḥayyian al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Hawāmil wa al-shawāmil*, ed. Aḥmad Amin and al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo: Maṭba'at lajnat al-ta'lif wa al-nashr, 1951), p. 140.

⁹⁹ Al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk, *Diwan*, ed. 'Abd al-Sattar Aḥmad Farrāj (Beirut, 1960), pp. 94-95.

A *khayāl* from her visited (you),
 No, but a thought caused you to visit it
 When man sleeps, his mind does not sleep
 A gazelle whom I caught, after I had set up for it,
 Towards the end of the night, snares of dreams¹⁰⁰ [44]

Here, Jacobi observes, ‘the initiative rests with the poet; his intellectual and imaginative faculties are envisaged as a hunter chasing the *khayāl* and finally ensnaring it by dreams’¹⁰¹. Nevertheless, sometimes *ṭayf al-khayāl* appears in classical poetry as a figure who is capable of anger. So, it would act as the beloved herself would do, Abū Nuwās says:

My *ṭayf* desired him in sleep, but he vanished,
 And one day I kissed his shadow, but he blamed me for it¹⁰² [45]

Moreover, the poet seems to be aware that *ṭayf al-khayāl* partly symbolises the beloved, but it is still just a dream which vanished when in the morning:

O you two lovers! You get reconciled in sleep,
 And in the morning you are both angry again.
 Such are dreams, they deceive us,
 But it also happens that they come true¹⁰³ [46]

The phantom form of the beloved symbolises the absence of her body, and at the same time, it is capable of travelling long distances to reach the poet. It is also able to fulfil the desires that the beloved herself is unable to achieve.

5.3.2 The Place of the Beloved

Many of the dominant motifs in the *nasīb*, the opening section of the *qaṣīdah*, a classical Arabic poem, such as the ruined campsite, the beloved’s *ṭayf* and her departure, create a sense of longing and sorrow. The poet may elaborate on any of

¹⁰⁰ Cited and translated by Jacobi, p. 8. It is noteworthy, however, that ‘the dream interpretations mentioned in al-Damiri’s gazelle chapter all refer to various kinds of appropriation of a woman: acquiring a gazelle through hunting means to become the owner of a slave-girl by way of a ruse or a fraud, or to marry a wife. Killing a gazelle means to deflower a slave girl etc’. (Burgel, “The Lady Gazelle and Her Murderous Glances”, p. 10).

¹⁰¹ Jacobi, p. 8.

¹⁰² Abū Nuwās, *Diwān*, ed. Schoeler (Wiesbaden, 1972), IV, No. 35, v. 1.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, No. 318.

these motifs; Kuthayyir, the ‘*udhrī*’ poet, preserved these conventions to express his yearning not just for his beloved, but also for her belongings and any traces of her. We come across lines in his poetry that explicitly relate ‘Azzah’s departure to his sorrow¹⁰⁴. As Stetkevych explains,

There are equally unending insistences on motifs of arrivals at abandoned campsites, of departures from the tribal grounds, of sorrow at such arrivals and departures and over the emptiness that always lies before and after them, and of the glimpse of happiness in between – just enough happiness to reduce everything else to unceasing yearning¹⁰⁵.

However, *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī*, in general, divests itself from such motifs; visiting a place connected with the beloved replaces the scene of the poet halting at the ruined campsite, and this form of poetry does not generally have the motif of the departing woman. Moreover, the yearning for the place of the beloved is not limited to the opening section of the *qaṣīdah* as, in a sense, the entire ‘*udhrī qaṣīdah*’ is a love *qaṣīdah*. The representation of the place of the beloved in ‘*udhrī*’ poetry indicates her absence, on the one hand, and the poet’s endeavour to overcome this absence, on the other. Her place acts as a symbol of her actual body; ‘Urwah, says conveying his longing to ‘Afrā’:

Do you every day aim for her country
with eyes in which the pupils are drowning?
O, carry me, may God bless you,
to the settlement of *al-Rawḥā*’, and then leave me¹⁰⁶ [47]

Hence, the place of the beloved is portrayed in ‘*udhrī*’ poetry as a symbol of her concrete presence. The body of the beloved is absent, and even its attributes such as gestures and speech are absent. The poet cannot surmount this absence, he cannot retrieve either his beloved, her actual figure, gestures and voice, and hence, he

¹⁰⁴ See examples in his *Diwān* on pp. 64, 67, 78, 137, 145, 164 and 183.

¹⁰⁵ Stetkevych, p. 103.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Urwah, pp. 34-35, trans. Gelder.

symbolises all these. Her absent body is represented by symbolic channels and in ‘*udhri*’ poetry it is her place or location that comes to replace the body. The place of the beloved is rendered as a substitute for her presence. Stones, walls and even traces in the sand are components that indicate her presence in the past despite her absence in the present. Pure absence can be observed in Majnūn’s verses:

O house
 That I do not visit though this desertion is an offense (fault).
 I desert you though I am longing and visit you though I am scared
 And in you [house] observers watch me through time¹⁰⁷ [48]

Majnūn uses the lexicon of ‘visit and desert’, ‘longing and observers’ to reveal his being torn between the absence and presence. The beloved’s presence is not real, but it becomes real in the form of something material such as her house. In Majnūn’s endeavour to surmount the total absence of his beloved and to gain her presence, he heads for her house, but he is unable to conquer this absence entirely as the observers ‘watch him through time’, so he is torn between visiting and deserting. In another verse, Kuthayyir reveals:

I turn away from your home while I madly long for you,
 Just to show gossipy people that I have deserted your home¹⁰⁸ [49]

Other ‘*udhri*’ poets express the struggle to conceal their desire to visit their beloved’s places. They maintain that they would visit the houses of the beloved’s neighbours even if they do not like their inhabitants, while their hearts remain in the house that they are forced to abandon¹⁰⁹. Because of a lack of social protection, the poet’s journey to his beloved becomes full of dangers. ‘The idea of the withdrawal of any social protection normally accorded to the individual is common to this restriction’¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Majnūn, p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ Kuthayyir, p. 99.

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance, Kuthayyir, pp. 36, 103 and Jamīl, p. 48.

¹¹⁰ Khan, p. 189.

as one can observe in Qays and Jamil's stories. In the following verses Majnun reproaches his friends for refusing to accompany him on his journey to see Layla:

And should I leave Layla
when there is nothing between me and her save one night journey;
Indeed I would then be patient
Assume that I am a man from among you who has led his camel astray
[Yet] he has a contract of protection,
Indeed this right due is great
But the friend who has been left behind is [surely] more of an obligation
Than [the case of] a camel going astray
May God forgive Layla today, indeed she has gone astray
[she has acted] wrongfully,
If she condemns me to die of love¹¹¹ [50]

It seems that Majnun was aware of the grave dangers in visiting Layla, but still the path to her is preferable for him. In other verses, Majnun clearly maintains that he is not fond of the places themselves, but of who lives in them:

I pass by places (Layla's places) kissing this wall and that wall
Longing for she who lived in these places
Not the places themselves¹¹² [51]

The phrase 'kissing this wall and that wall' acts as a clear symbol of kissing the beloved herself. She is absent, so cannot be held or kissed, but the walls that enclosed her symbolise her body and act as a metaphor of her actual presence. In a poetic moment, Majnun discovers that kissing the walls is in fact a questionable act so he tries to defend himself by declaring that he longs for she who lived in the places, and not for the places themselves. A similar idea may be found in Qays's poetry; he declares that:

I am not fond of your homeland,
I am kissing the footprints of the one (his beloved)
who stepped over its soil¹¹³ [52]

Kissing the beloved's footprints indicates submission in love to the beloved to the extent of worship. Hence, the beloved is, as Majnun claims, a creature made of light

¹¹¹ Majnun, p. 101, trans. Khan, p. 190.

¹¹² Majnun, pp. 127,128.

¹¹³ Qays, p. 19.

who, when stepping on the soil of the earth, makes it more aromatic, even years later¹¹⁴. Qays explains his obsession as being with his beloved's footprints rather than being in love with the earth itself. Thus, anything that the beloved touches or steps on becomes sacred and it becomes almost an obligation for the poet to touch and kiss it. Furthermore, Kuthayyir asks his companions:

My friends, this was the encampment of 'Azzah
 Stop and touch the earth which may have touched her skin
 and remain spending the night where she stayed and spent the night
 And do not doubt that God will forgive your sins,
 if you pray where she prayed¹¹⁵ [53]

Therefore the 'udhrī poet goes to extreme lengths in searching for the traces of his absent beloved. He has no doubts that God will forgive people's sins if they follow his beloved and pray where she prayed. The place in which she once prayed, becomes the channel between the poet and God. Hence, the poet has no doubts that God will forgive his sins because of his love. Here we notice that the concept of place has different meanings in 'udhrī love, and through this we find the common element which brings the two bodies - the body of place and that of woman – together is the place. For 'udhrī poets there are two kinds of places; the material one and the abstract one. Both are intertwined in the 'udhrī poem.

Majnūn's following verses 'celebrates to an equal degree the beloved Laylā and Najd'¹¹⁶:

As nights go by, even as I despair of ever returning,
 I yearn for Najd.
 Were there no Laylā and no Najd, admit
 That you'd forsake all till Judgment Day¹¹⁷ [54]

¹¹⁴ Majnūn, p. 40

¹¹⁵ Kuthayyir, p. 54, trans. Kinany, p. 290.

¹¹⁶ Stetkevych, p. 116.

¹¹⁷ Majnūn, p. 82, trans. Stetkevych, p. 116.

He also sang:

O East wind of the highlands,
When did you stir from Najd?
Your journey through the night
And passion upon passion add¹¹⁸

[55]

Considering these and similar verses, Stetkevych has noted,

The Bedouin poet began possessing Tihāmā, Hījāz and above all, Najd, when he stepped out of them: and when he had lost these regions in the dispersion of the empire, these places, these names, then possessed him. Such possession implied the awareness of loss through the great paradox of nostalgic seizing of time-of time one once had and also of that much larger time to which one's soul feels a compelling affinity, to which it must return because it itself is possessed¹¹⁹.

Indeed, 'As landscape, Najd has been arrested and transformed in a poetic vision'¹²⁰.

But, especially for Majnūn, the Najd signifies the path to the beloved. Khan observes that the depiction of Majnūn as lost in the space between two opposing geographical peripheries, without being able to find a way out, mirrors his spiritual and moral bewilderment. His geographic roaming from al-Shām to al-Yemen 'symbolises not just the fluctuations (lows and highs) in his myriad other states of being out but also foregrounds his spiritual and moral liminality'¹²¹. The contours of a terrestrial topography, Khan continues, take on a linguistic and sexual significance.

Linguistically, the wandering of the poet towards Najd symbolises the proclivity of 'udhri verse for revelation since Najd also means 'the manifest or visible'. So Majnūn's roaming between al-Shām and al-Yemen 'can symbolically be interpreted as evidence for the dialectic of secrecy and revelation that characterizes 'udhri

¹¹⁸ Majnūn, p. 79, trans. Stetkevych, p. 116. This verse is also ascribed to the poet Ibn al-Dumaynah.

¹¹⁹ Stetkevych, p. 116.

¹²⁰ Stetkevych, p. 117. He also argues that later poets will reduce the Najd motif to its purely abstract, symbolic value. It will be the aim and the road of all yearning, p. 118. See his discussion of the symbolic crystallization of Najd on pp. 119-121.

¹²¹ Khan, pp. 183-184.

romance',¹²² since al-Shām is identified as the highland, whereas al-Yemen is described as the hidden lowland. Jamīl's story, likewise, contains this dialectic of al-Shām and Najd. In one of his verses he declares:

My heart sinks when she leaves
And when she is in Najd my heart yearns for Najd¹²³ [56]

There are many associations between land and the dialectic of revelation and secrecy in the Arabic language¹²⁴. Majnūn's roaming also represents the tragic wandering of his desire; Khan argues that:

Sexually, the lover-poet's wandering toward the Najd and away from al-Yemen also represents the romance lover's tendency to defer or postpone the consummation of his desire. The link between the female erotic and topography implicit in the etymology of the word 'al-Najd' is indicative of how even the poet's geographical wandering is occurs on a sexual terrain. Al-Najd also means the 'breasts of a woman' and if we extend this metaphor, then al-Yemen, as *al-ghūr* meaning 'the belly, lowland, or hole', is the hidden female erogenous zone¹²⁵.

Therefore, the body of a woman is a ground of adventure like the earth itself. The poet compensates the absence of her body by aiming for her place. The land—of which her places are a part—acts symbolically as the beloved's body to imply her presence.

5.4 Presence through Absence: The Beloved's Presence in Nature

In addition to a presence found through the location of the beloved, she is also present in the natural world. Although absent in body, signs of her can be discovered by the poet in every aspect of nature surrounding him. Jacobi argues that

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

¹²³ Jamīl, p. 31.

¹²⁴ Khan observes that 'Majnūn frequently seems to be either perched on a hill or roaming in a valley'. For more details see her study, p. 184.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

it is characteristic of a later age (after the pre-Islamic era) that the romantic attitude towards nature allows every object to be imbued with the poet's emotion¹²⁶.

Majnun's romance is a typical case in this regard. Andre Miquel demonstrates that no independent sheer image of nature occurs in Majnun's poetry. However, certain elements of nature are described in referring to Majnun, to Laylā and to their love. These depictions of nature are obtained through the personal adventures of the lover that made him associate his love with nature¹²⁷. Names of places from nature like *Tubāḍ*'s mountain, *Nu'mān* and *Najd* have become symbolic references to past memories of happy days:

When *Tubāḍ* saw me weeping he welcomed me
I said: where are those who used to camp here
and enjoy happiness and security?¹²⁸ [57]

Laylā's image in Majnun's poetry is conjured up through various elements from the worlds of animals, plants and inanimate forms. Noteworthy here is the comparison he often makes between Laylā and the gazelle¹²⁹. However, Laylā is also referred to through other natural elements such as unstable sand dunes, so as to symbolise the passing time that destroys everything¹³⁰:

Though unreachable, the single dune of sands,
located in *al-Himā*, is still beloved to me¹³¹ [58]

The *ṣabā* zephyr is always described as a carrier of the beloved's memory. Its journey through the night, according to Majnun, adds passion to passion¹³². Another favoured image is of the shackled bird:

¹²⁶ Jacobi, "Time and Reality in "Nasib" and "Ghazal", p. 7.

¹²⁷ Andre Miquel, *Majnun Laylā wa Tristan*, trans. Ghassan al-Sayyid (Damascus: Dār al-awā'il), p. 71.

¹²⁸ Majnun, p. 212, trans. Kinany, p. 238.

¹²⁹ See, for example, his *diwan*, pp. 212, 215, 221.

¹³⁰ Miquel, p. 73.

¹³¹ Majnun, p. 26.

The night they said: ‘Come morning or come evening,
 Laylā al-‘Āmiriyah will have left,’
 My heart was like a sand-grouse
 Gulled into a snare
 She tugged at it all night,
 The wing already trapped¹³³ [59]

He continues, portraying himself in an image of trapped bird:

O When will my tortured heart be cured (of your love)
 The arrows of death are between me and seeing you
 Despite the exile, the pain, the longing, the shivering
 You don’t come closer but I don’t go further
 I am like a bird within the swinging palms of a child
 The bird suffers death and the child enjoys the game
 The child is too young to feel for the bird
 And the bird has no feathers to fly away¹³⁴ [60]

Among the other images of the birds in Majnūn’s poetry is the image of a sad singing dove, whose sadness is rendered as a comparison with the poet’s sorrow¹³⁵, and he also compares his poetry and her songs¹³⁶. In his poetry, lovers are transformed into gazelles and Laylā is transformed into the sun or a star. In an attempt to regain his dream of lost love, Majnūn refers to nature and to the animate world in his poetry:

If only we were two gazelles, grazing
 On meadows of *Hwazan*, in desolate land
 Oh, were we two doves amidst a wide waste,
 We’d fly and fly, and at evening time seek the sheltered nest
 Oh, were we two fishes swimming in the sea,
 Darting even farther into waters deep
 Oh, were we one now,

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 79. ‘Of the Arabian East Wind, poetically associated so closely with Najd, the encyclopaedist al- Nuwayrī (d. 733/1332) reports the tradition that “never has God sent a prophet without sending with him the East Wind—*al-ṣabā*”. The prophet Muḥammad, too, was supported by the East Wind’. Stetkevych, p. 125. So, this tradition may have something to do with the religious lexical language of Majnūn about *al-ṣabā* and its association with Laylā, keeping in mind the sacred nature of Laylā in his poetry.

¹³³ Majnūn, pp. 61, trans. Stetkevych, p. 162.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

¹³⁶ Within Medieval Western literature, the dove is characterised as being true, faithful, honourable and trustworthy. Some authors connect doves with the written word and they allude to the organisational aspect of the dove’s secretarial skills and to its devotion to its mate. From antiquity onwards the widowed turtle-dove was traditionally connected with mourning and weeping. The dove was also the bird of the goddess Venus whose chariot was drawn by a flock of doves. For detailed discussion of these ideas see: Regina Scheibe, “The Major Professional Skills of the Dove in The Buke of The Howlat”, in L.A.J.R. Houwen (ed), *Animals and the Symbolic in Mediaeval Art and Literature* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1997), pp. 107-137.

And would that when death comes
One grave were our bed¹³⁷ [61]

Hence, a variety of natural elements serve to unite the lovers, while their actual bodies cannot be united: ‘Jamīl looked at the sky in the hope that Buthaynah was looking at it at the same time, so that both their looks might meet’¹³⁸. And when Qays lost the hope of his beloved’s presence he consoled himself by saying:

However, the breeze still keeps us in touch with each other
We behold the sunset, every evening, at the same time;
And our souls still meet in dreams¹³⁹ [62]

In a later stage of his life, when Laylā is lost to him forever, Majnūn suffers from insanity and consequently escapes to live in the desert in the company of gazelles. Majnūn goes to the same places where he used to find happiness, but this time to find certainty from Laylā’s presence. These places become his kingdom of the desert, insanity and poetry: this kingdom is like a secret garden that is removed from this world¹⁴⁰. Another poetic image refers to the wild Majnūn with whom the deer finds company and freedom. So this image of Majnūn, who lives, eats and runs with the gazelles, suggests that he goes beyond comparing Laylā with gazelles, to suggesting that the image of the gazelle reflects his own self and his beloved, Laylā. His beloved is portrayed through the magic of poetry and he is depicted through the life he has chosen for himself¹⁴¹. The gazelle, according to the poetic canon, is consecrated for freedom. In one anecdote, among many, Majnūn would sacrifice almost anything to set a gazelle free:

Majnūn passed by two men that had hunted a gazelle. They had bound her with a rope and were taking her away. When Majnun saw her thrashing her feet in the rope, his eyes teared and he said to them:

¹³⁷ Majnūn, pp. 122-123, trans. Stetkevych, 144.

¹³⁸ Kinany, p. 284.

¹³⁹ Qays, p. 102, trans. Kinany, p. 284.

¹⁴⁰ For more details on this, see Miquel, pp. 52-54.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Replace her and take in her place a ewe from my sheep. (And Maymun̄ in his narrative related: Take in place of her a young she-camel from my camels). So he gave the [ewe] to the two men and they freed [the gazelle]. She made her escape running away (...). Majnun̄ said gazing at her while she was running with great speed, fleeing fearfully:
 O likeness of Laylā̄, do not fear me
 for I today am a friend the female wild beast
 O likeness of Laylā̄, were you to tarry awhile,
 perhaps my heart would recover from its ravages
 She flees, having been liberated from her bond by me.
 You—if only you knew—have been freed for Laylā̄¹⁴²

Therefore, as Dols notes, ‘the portrayal of Qays [Majnun̄] among the animals- unique in Arabic poetry- is quite lovely ... supernaturally, Qays is able to see the signs of love in nature and speak with the animals’¹⁴³.

In any case, an initial superficial view of Laylā̄’s depiction indicates that her presence is scattered and fragmented among the natural elements of stones, wind and water. However, a more profound observation of her portrayal suggests that her existence includes all the natural elements of the universe which are written about her. As Khairallah notes, Majnun̄ is depicted in the image of a person totally integrated into the natural animal world. His unity with nature is expressed positively through numerous points which portray him as completely at home in his desert environment. He is at peace on both a sub-rational and super-rational nature level¹⁴⁴. Khairallah also states that Majnun̄ ‘communes with super-human forces, a communion symbolised by his being possessed by Laylā̄, but this communion is achieved through his sensitivity to the subhuman elements in nature’¹⁴⁵. As one can observe in his *Diwān*, Majnun̄’s poetry

succeeds in conveying the impression of fundamental intimacy between Majnun̄ and the world of symbols that surround him and always revive in him the memory of the beloved. Mountains, plains, and valleys,

¹⁴² Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 382, trans. Khan, pp. 248-249.

¹⁴³ Dols, p. 337.

¹⁴⁴ Khairallah, p. 87.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

wells, trees, and the wind, gazelles, doves, and even locusts; all nature is a book replete with variations on Laylā's name¹⁴⁶.

Throughout this stage, Laylā unites with nature due to her frequent presence within the elements of nature, which in turn become reminders of Laylā:

The rising of the guiding star and the sun,
agitate her memory¹⁴⁷ [63]

Therefore, 'Majnun's references to nature were not merely conventional'¹⁴⁸. His frequent association of Laylā with natural elements such as wind, gazelles and so on 'suggest the omnipresence of Laylā in nature and in the mind of Majnun'¹⁴⁹. He says:

I am distracted from understanding any talk,
Except what is about you, for that is my concern
I keep staring at those who talk to me so they may believe
That I understand, but my mind is with you¹⁵⁰ [64]

And every attempt to escape her overwhelming presence is in vain:

I try to forget her remembrance, and yet
It is as though Laylā is typified for me everywhere¹⁵¹ [65]

Reading Stanbury's analysis of Troilus and Criseyde's romance, I would likewise argue that in Majnun's romance, Majnun's mind, mirroring Laylā's image, becomes a reflecting surface, 'a passive screen on which her image is recorded'¹⁵². The image printed on Majnun's mirroring mind is his picture of Laylā, garnered by his own imagination. In this light we can understand the anecdote told about Majnun, when he is roaming in the desert and suddenly sees Laylā, but says to her: 'Go away, your love preoccupied me and distanced me from you!'¹⁵³. The famous sufi Ibn 'Arabī reported this anecdote and commented enthusiastically on it. In fact, it is no wonder

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Majnun, p. 227.

¹⁴⁸ Khairallah, p. 77.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁵⁰ Majnun, p. 179, trans. Khairallah, p. 78.

¹⁵¹ Cited and translated by Khairallah, p. 77.

¹⁵² Stanbury, p. 233.

¹⁵³ Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Arabī, *al-Futuḥāt al-makkiyyah*, p. 1467. www.alwaraq.net, 3March 2007. See my full discussion of this anecdote in the following chapter 'Poetry vs. Possession'.

that Majnūn's legend became very popular among sufis later on¹⁵⁴. 'The figure of Majnūn was attractive to mystics because Majnūn's rapture was analogous to their ecstatic states'¹⁵⁵. Al-Shiblī gives Majnūn as a sufi example:

Whenever Majnūn of the Banū 'Āmir was asked about Laylā, he would say, 'I am Laylā'. Thus, by means of Laylā, he would absent himself from Laylā, until he remains present to his vision of Laylā, and absent to every sense except Laylā, and (thereby) sees everything present through Laylā¹⁵⁶.

Ibn 'Arabī conceived of Majnūn as an ideal lover and considered his madness a symbol of beatific vision, but he was not the only one; al-Ghazālī interpreted his passionate love symbolically, and al-Junayd considered him as one of God's saints¹⁵⁷.

5.5 Conclusion

The duality of the present and absent bodies of the beloved in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* has been the primary concern of this chapter. The 'udhri poet depicts the physical body of his beloved by portraying her as the image of ideal beauty. Nevertheless, he also portrays her body symbolically or through symbolic channels. Symbolising the body of the beloved can be observed in many 'udhri poetic themes such as the longing for the place of the beloved and the depiction of her in the form of a phantom. These themes reveal an attempt to regain the absent body of the beloved and to overcome this absence. On the other hand, the bodily presence of the beloved takes the forms of gestures and speech. Gestures act in the 'udhri tradition as a means of

¹⁵⁴ For a discussion of 'udhri love in link with sufi love, see: Adunīs, *al-thābit wa al-mutaḥawwil*, vol. 1, pp. 284-287.

¹⁵⁵ Dols, p. 322.

¹⁵⁶ Abū Naṣr al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-luma'*, cited and translated by Khairallah, p. 102.

¹⁵⁷ See Kahirallah, pp. 101-102.

communication between the lovers and speech is a potent factor in igniting love and in continuing to inflame passion. This presence-through-absence is also discussed in this chapter by examining the presence of the beloved in nature. An initial superficial view of the beloved's depiction indicates that her presence is scattered and fragmented among the natural elements of stones, wind and water. However, a more profound observation of such descriptions suggests that her existence actually absorbs the natural elements of the whole universe within which she is mentioned. Her remarkable omnipresence is illustrated in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. Hence, is it important for her physical body to be absent in this stage, so as to enable her to be omnipresent? In other words, does the absence of the beloved enhance poetry written about her? This is the question we shall examine in the next chapter.

Textuality versus Reality

6.1 Introduction

The Umayyad poet Dhū al-Rummah was once asked: ‘What would you do if your genius did not help you to compose poems (*inqafal dūnak al-shi‘r*)?’ Dhū al-Rummah answered that it could never happen since he knew an ever-effective way of arousing his genius. ‘It is’ he said, ‘just to remember your beloved while you are alone’¹.

Dhū al-Rummah is known as a lover-poet who lived in the Umayyad age. This anecdote about him shows the complicated relationship between love and poetry, neither of which is shown to be simply a result of the other. The remembrance of the beloved inspires the poet to compose poetry, but that presupposes the beloved’s absence in the first place. It is her memory, rather than her actual figure, the loss of her rather than the union with her, that inspires poetry. The poet here is aware that his intense emotion leads him to a place in the realm of the poets.

The earlier chapters have discussed both the physical and symbolic depictions of the beloved’s body in *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī*. The duality of the presence and absence of the body was of primary focus in the previous chapter, which leads us to question the link between the absent body and poetry. Hence, in the following chapter I will first look at the concept of ‘one ideal beloved’ in the ‘*udhrī*’ tradition. The characteristic of having only one beloved is a core element of the ‘*udhrī*’ tradition. Secondly, I will examine how *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī* addresses the idealization of womanhood; specifically, the connection between this idealization and the concept

¹ Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī. *al-‘Umdah fī šinā‘at al-shi‘r wa naqduh*, ed. Al-Nabawī ‘Abd al-Wāḥid Sha‘lān (Cairo: Maktabat al-kānjī, 2000), p. 331, trans. Kinany, p. 60.

of the inaccessible woman and the trope of inaccessibility. The trope of unfulfilled love – all-consuming only by nature of its being unfulfilled -- and its being a goal in and of itself will be explored in detail. Next, I will discuss the paradox of the ‘*udhri*’ poet’s complaint about love and his embracing of it. Then, I aim to offer an argument about the discourse of cultural value developed around poetry, the reception of the poet as a hero and the representation of poetry as the ultimate goal.

6.2 One Ideal Beloved

As noted in a previous chapter, the ‘*udhri*’ poets transpose every aspect of the beloved’s body into perfect and beautiful detail, and personify her as the imaginary model of the ideal woman. This model is firmly engraved in both the collective consciousness and the literary tradition. In this chapter, it will be argued that raising the beloved to the level of the ideal implies that she is the subject of imagination. Idealizing the beloved in this way makes her into a fantasy. The question to be asked here is: does the idealization of the beloved in the ‘*udhri*’ poem imply that she is inaccessible? Or in other words: does the poet wish to present above all an image of his supposed virtue as inspired by the presence of such a unique beloved?

Sufyān b. Ziyād narrated: ‘I asked a woman from the ‘Udhrah tribe, who was suffering so intensely from fatal love that I feared it would kill her: "Out of all of the Arabian tribes, why is love killing the people of ‘Udhrah?"’ She replied: “We are beautiful and chaste. Beauty leads us to chastity. Chastity yields softness in our hearts. Such love causes death. Yet, we see eyes you cannot see”². It is to be observed, from the woman’s reply, that she first links beauty to chastity, and then

² Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Rawḍat al-muḥbbīn wa nuzhat al-mushtaḥiqīn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-jami‘ah, 1973), p. 337.

explains the connection by saying, 'Beauty leads us to chastity'. She declares that this is what leads her people ultimately to death. 'We see eyes that you cannot see'. Thus, this woman provides an explanation of love unto death that emerged from her tribe, 'Udhrah, by connecting the extraordinary beauty, especially of the eyes, with chastity that is achieved by this presence of perfection. Therefore, chastity, in her statement, is a result of a deep respect for ideal beauty.

When the beloved becomes an abstract idea, she unavoidably becomes unattainable. That means, in all respects, the poet evaluates her as being above or beyond all other women, whether a wife or, even, a mother. The beloved in 'udhri poetry is the only one³. It is only Laylā for Majnūn, just Buthaynah for Jamīl and only Lubnā for Qays ... and so on⁴.

A part of idealizing the beloved is to keep her as the only one. To avoid the idea of bearing children, this oneness must stay intact. Any reference to any aspect relating to the image of an attained woman will necessarily imply her ability to have children and thus will damage the image of her remote solitude. This suggests a parallel with monotheism. The beloved in the 'udhri tradition is the only one, and she must remain so. Thus, she must be and remain removed from the act of reproduction.

As we have seen in a previous chapter, there is an insistent rejection of the notion of marriage between 'udhri lovers. Thus, if any of them were previously

³ Jayyusi sees that the metamorphosis of the beloved as an ideal of womanhood was a rebellion against polygamous marriage, and against the rejection of celibacy professed by Islam. Jayyusi, p. 423.

⁴ While 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah, for instance, says: "Peace (*salām*) be upon her - if she should accept it, And if she should dismiss it, then peace (*salām*) be upon another woman!". 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah, *Diwan*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Miṣṭawī (Beirut: Dar al-ma'rifah, 2007), p. 162.

married, as were Qays and Lubnā, the love story must separate them again⁵. The explanation that is given here is that Lubnā could not bear children. In this story, society insists that the consummated union between lovers must bear fruit observed, and life must continue into the new generation. In contrast, Qays believes in love itself, and nothing can change that love. He describes his love by saying:

Your love is ingrained in my heart
just as fingers are attached to the hands⁶ [1]

Before obeying his father, Qays suggested to him that he (his father) should marry again and have more children. Just as his father demands that his son take another wife, the son ironically requests that his father take another wife and refuses to divorce Lubnā⁷. However, his poetry portrays his deep regret about obeying his father and divorcing Lubnā:

Do you weep on Lubnā,
while you left her of your own accord?
I see now that you were like a man,
who goes to death of his own accord
O, my heart, admit that you love her,
And then try to forget her; no, O love,
Do whatever you will
O my heart, tell me what you will do,
when Lubnā goes very far away
You seem as you have not been inured
to separation and misfortunes⁸ [2]

The romance fans the flames of his love and, therefore, his poetic inspiration by isolating him from his beloved. Nevertheless, on the narrative level, this refusal to continue their physical union implies that the lovers should never have children. The only possible offspring for the ‘*udhri*’ lover is poetry. It is a linguistic creation, not

⁵ Qays Ibn Dhariḥ was forced by his parents to divorce his dear but sterile wife, and was not able to do without her afterwards. See their story in *al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'ara*, p. 628, and *al-Aghani*, vol. 9, pp. 124-150.

⁶ Qays, p. 65.

⁷ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 9, p. 126.

⁸ Qays in al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghani*, vol. 9, p. 148, trans. Kinany, p. 299.

biological. Therefore, poetry is the only outcome of ‘*udhri*’ love, as the lovers’ involvement with each other results in poetry and not in offspring.

This is a crucial aspect of the ‘*udhri*’ tradition as it contrasts with the Bedouin norms that ‘*udhri*’ poets largely belong to. Reading Abu-Lughod’s analysis of Bedouin society⁹, I would argue that ‘*udhri*’ poets present a different position regarding a women’s childlessness than does their society. Abu-Lughod observes that [in Bedouin society] women are associated with nature; ‘as reproducers, women are responsible for giving birth to the children that are so desired and adored (...) fertile women are valued, admired, and envied. Barren women face a sad life’¹⁰. In contrast, in the ‘*udhri*’ tradition, the beloved woman is idealized and as such does not fulfill the role of women as ‘reproducers’ because she is unique and cannot have her image emulated by her offspring.

6.3 Desire towards Possession

The structure of the ‘*udhri*’ romance reflects the dominant theme of longing, the strong desire to possess the dream/ beloved, and the linguistic form within which this desire is shaped. There is not one single verse ascribed to Qays while he was with Lubnā as her husband. His entire *diwān* exposes his torment and love for Lubnā just after he lost her. Apparently, she had to become unattainable for the poetry addressed to her to flower. I shall argue that the idealization, the distance and the solitude of the beloved enable her to play her decisive role: inspiration. The whole

⁹ Although Abu-Lughod’s study is concerned with a contemporary community of Bedouin in the Western Desert of Egypt, I argue that it may be partially useful to offer a wide-ranging framework to understand Bedouin society in general.

¹⁰ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled and Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), p. 125.

'*udhri*' experience unconsciously distances the beloved in order to detonate the force of the poetry.

In Majnūn's romance it is noticeable that it is his distance from Laylā rather than his proximity to her that agitates his heart with love. In one account, al-Iṣfahānī states that when news of Laylā reached Majnūn, he fell in love with her after she was described to him¹¹. Thus, it was her absence, on the one hand, and the language that was used to 'describe' her, on the other hand, which engendered his desire for Laylā. Bloch demonstrates that: 'the object must be absent for desire to be fixed on it'¹². It seems that Majnūn recognizes the conflict between the 'attainment' and 'losing heart' as he says:

Why, you madman, have you lost your heart
for one for whose attainment you have no hope¹³ [3]

But soon after this censure to his heart he states that 'the most desirable thing to a man is what he is forbidden'¹⁴. So, there is a permanent state of longing; 'the expression of male desire absents the female object of desire because this desire is anchored to the absence of the female in the first place'¹⁵, as will be discussed in the following section.

This poetic flux among '*udhri*' lovers, and the frequent complaint about the deprivation and distance, could be a form of expressing their desire for the beloved, and a reprise of it in a highly remarkable manner. One of Freud's students, Marie Bonaparte, has stated that, '[works of art or literature] govern the manner in which our strongest, though most carefully concealed desires are elaborated, desires which

¹¹ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 365.

¹² R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 137.

¹³ Majnun, p. 153, trans. Khan, p. 150.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁵ Khan, p. 150.

often are the most repugnant to consciousness, also govern the elaborations of a work of art'¹⁶. In many 'udhri stories, the relationship between the lover and his beloved has grown since their childhood. Then, the longing for their sweet past shaped his experience as a lover and a poet. 'udhri poetry embodies the wish to become reunited with the childhood sweetheart. For instance, it is stated in *al-Aghani* that:

Majnūn was in love with Laylā...whose nickname was Umm Mālik, when they were children. Each fell in love with the other while they were out tending the flocks of their families. They continued thus until they grew up and then she was veiled from him. And the following saying of his indicates this:
 I fell in love with Laylā when she
 Was just a girl with forelock
 When the swelling of her breasts had not yet
 Been manifest to playmates
 Two children tending the lambs
 Would that we never grown up, nor had
 The lambs grown old!¹⁷

Freud states that 'the relation established between memory and reproduction is different for every case'¹⁸. *Al-Aghani* also provides a similar story regarding Kuthayyir's love for 'Azzah, in which the poet saw his girl first when she was still a child¹⁹. The implicit desire for what he once knew, and then lost, is evident. Even the bizarre daydreams the poet espoused depicts the excess of his emotion, and show how the repressed desires return in a repulsive poetic form. We might recall Freud's

¹⁶ Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984), p. 40. Referring to Freud here does not mean that we necessarily applied his framework. Also, we are not going to treat the works as symptomatic. Nonetheless, the mere idea of the aesthetic of id-psychology which grounded in the notion that the work of art is the secret embodiment of its creator's unconscious desire is worth considering here. Richard Wollheim even argues that Freud was fully aware of the difference between treating art as biographical evidence and treating it as aesthetic object. Cited in: Wright, p. 29.

¹⁷ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 335, trans. Khan, p. 101.

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (London: The International Psycho-Analytical Press, n.d), p. 18.

¹⁹ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 9, p. 19.

statement: ‘the poet composes his verses as the dreamer creates his day dreams’²⁰.

Kuthayyir says:

O, ‘Azzah, I wish we were a couple of scabby camels-
grazing away in an empty place
He who would see us would say:
These are two scabby animals, whose disease is contagious,
Even though the female is beautiful
If we should approach a watering place,
Its people would shout out to us and beat us
I wish that our owner were a man of great wealth,
So he would neither care for us
nor miss us when we ran far away²¹ [4]

Kuthayyir was heavily criticised for these verses. One of the critics told him: ‘You had wished for her and yourself the agony of being enslaved, humiliated and disfigured. What else have you left? What you had wished for her is rightly expressed by the saying: having animosity with a sane person is much better than befriending a fool’²². However, this kind of criticism neglects the excessive desire to be with the beloved under any condition or circumstances, even if repulsive.

Khairallah observes that ‘the desire to reconnect with the past can be satisfied only through symbolic channels. Hence, the archetypal character who achieves this kind of reconnection finds universal appeal, and is usually represented by a great variety of forms’²³.

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, “Creative Writers and Day Dreaming”, in *20th century Literary Criticism*, ed. David Lodge, 13 impression (London and New York: Longman, 1989), p. 75.

²¹ Kuthayyir, p. 42, trans. Kinany, p. 292.

²² Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Ḥamdun, *al-Tadhkirah al-ḥamdunyyiah*, p. 880, www.alwaraq.net. 1 August 2008.

²³ Khairallah, p. 22.

6.4 Poetry and the Absence of the Desire's Object

It is noteworthy that so many *'udhri* lovers were poets²⁴. This is essentially what earned these lovers a place in most Arabic collections of poetry. Yet, I would argue that their deep consciousness of the fact that they are poets itself shapes their romances. If the beloved is the feminine ideal, or is depicted as such, she is unattainable and so her lover will suffer from his ardent love forever. Therefore, the lover will continually compose poetry to express the torture and repression caused by such love. Whether poetry is a sort of remedy, as several *'udhri* verses have suggested²⁵, or is an object in itself, its presence in this tradition is essential.

When the beloved becomes a part of the dream world, this necessarily implies her potential as a source of inspiration, as the poet-lover admits in the following anecdote: A woman denigrates the poet Kuthayyir by saying to him: 'God has demeaned you, since he made you known only by the name of a woman', meaning 'Azzah. Kuthayyir says: 'God has not demeaned me. By her, my reputation was enhanced, my life matters were enlightened, and my poetry became powerful'²⁶. This anecdote shows that some people perceive Kuthayyir as bearing a low status, by associating his fame with a woman's name. Nevertheless, the poet himself views this association in a different light: 'my reputation was enhanced, my life matters were enlightened, and my poetry became powerful'. As Khan notes, 'Kuthayyir is shown mentioning the benefits accruing to him in the field of poetry perhaps suggests that

²⁴ As I have mentioned in the introduction, my study concentrates on five *'udhri* lovers: Majnūn, Qays, 'Urwah, Kuthayyir and Jamīl. They are all poets, whose collections of poems (*diwāns*) have been edited and published. Nevertheless, in some sources dealing with the theme of love one can find several narratives about other *'udhri* lovers, where few verses are ascribed to them. I am not sure if they are considered as poets or not as we do not have evidence that they composed entire poems.

²⁵ Majnūn says: If you deny me Layla and the beauty of her conversation, you will not deny me rhymes and tears. Majnūn, p. 228, trans. Khairallah, p. 66.

²⁶ Ibn Qutaybah, p. 415, trans. Khairallah, p. 66.

‘*udhrī* poet-lovers risked being “enslaved” to a female beloved primarily in order to experience an “ennobling transformation” in their literary careers’²⁷. In another story given in *al-Aghānī*, some of the literary critics suggested that: ‘living on the spirit of anticipation was more agreeable than the meeting of the beloved’. Commenting on two lines of poetry composed by the Umayyad poet al-Aḥwaṣ—in which he said that he knew two kinds of nights, a happy one spent with the beloved, and a restless one full of sorrow and cares, Ibn Jundab, a contemporary of al-Aḥwaṣ, said: ‘I prefer the restless night to the other’. Al-Ḥaramī, the reporter of the story added: ‘That was because the sorrowful night gave him the opportunity of yearning, hoping and composing *ghazal*’²⁸.

The assumption that this story asserts, that of avoiding marriage or any sort of physical union between ‘*udhrī* lovers, suggests several points, which will be discussed in the following section. In fact, the narrators of stories were preoccupied with the idea of sensuality, and its connection with love; therefore, they heightened it by dwelling so frequently on its absence. Also, the absence of consummation between the ‘*udhrī* lover and his beloved continuously inflames his passion. This passionate love inspires beautiful poetry within the ‘*udhrī* poet-lover. In addition, the poet or the narrators are aware that the unattainability of the beloved is in fact essential for composing poetry. Khan demonstrates:

The more absent, occulted and elusive the female ideal, the more prominent and intense is the lover’s desire for this ideal. If male’s expression results in the loss of the love object, this loss or absence of the beloved merely intensifies and perpetuates male desire and its revelation. When the object is concealed, when Layla’s words or body are veiled, the revelation of Majnun’s desire increases. The

²⁷ Khan, p. 294.

²⁸ Cited and translated by Kinany, pp. 276-277.

unavailability and inaccessibility of the love object merely increases its desirability in the eyes of the lover'²⁹.

Here we observe textuality verses reality; by creating obstacles between the lovers, the trope fans the flame of their love. Hence, the questions that al-'Aqqād posed: 'Why did Jamīl compose love poems for Buthaynah while he was aware that by doing so he would be prevented from marrying her? Was it because he was too aesthetic? Or was he too weak willed? Or was *al-ghazal* above everything else, and an end in itself?'³⁰. These questions are worth considering. At the heart of these questions, I would argue, lie the seeds of their answers. However, al-'Aqqād's conclusion is less impressive than the questions he poses, as he claims: 'Whatever the reasons that caused Jamīl to take this path, it is not a straight path, and, thus, Jamīl deserves the dilemma in which he finds himself'. Clearly, Jamīl's dilemma is not about possession. It is, I would rather suggest, about loss. Then, again, loss inflames love, and love inspires poetry³¹. A similar suggestion should apply to Majnūn: 'It is the obsession itself which creates the distance here, Majnūn's behavior—as a poet, one might add—that will drive them (Majnūn and Laylā) apart'³².

This parallel does not escape the notice of some scholars: al-'Aẓm maintains that '*udhri* love is in fact a sensual love, of which physical attraction is an integral

²⁹ Khan, p. 159.

³⁰ Al-'Aqqad, pp. 44-45.

³¹ It is worth noticing that some modern poets emphasise the absence of the beloved: 'Yeats even suggests that a male poet cannot possibly achieve both forms of "love": possession of the woman and of the poem are mutually exclusive, if the poet must lose the beloved to gain the desire that sustains his poetry-- an economic trade-- off that Yeats foregrounds in his work. He often implies that the beloved must be absent, incapable of reciprocation or receiving his desire, so that he may work up the poetry's desire in language...Although the poems often protest the loss of the beloved, they also betray an awareness that this loss creates the "space" of desire that engenders them'.

www.questia.com\PM.qsta. 21 September 2006.

³² Maria Rosa Menocal, *Shards of Love Exile and the Origins of the Lyric* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 146.

part. However, no physical contact actually takes place³³ because the lover chooses to keep his love alive by creating more obstacles between himself and the object of his desire³⁴. There are many narratives that illustrate this point: Jamīl composes love poems for Buthaynah in spite of the fact that the Bedouin convention would prevent a lover, who has dishonoured his beloved by flirting with her in public, from marrying her³⁵. Moreover, she was proud of his poetry and swore to meet him whenever he came to see her, as al-Iṣfahānī states: ‘Then Buthaynah learned that he had paid court to her so she swore by God that whenever he came to her alone she would go out to him and not hide herself from him’³⁶. Both of them, thus, were creating obstacles between their matrimonial union. As the sources suggest, Jamīl was a noble, brave, rich, handsome gentleman³⁷ from a powerful tribe which protected him, even after the ruler had outlawed him³⁸. On the other hand, Buthaynah’s husband was an ugly, one-eyed man and, of course, not a poet. Thus, the opportunity for Jamīl to take Buthaynah or elope with her was always there, but he did not take it.

In al-‘Az̄m’s opinion, the ‘*udhri*’ lover enjoys the suppression of love. He avoids marriage or any possible union in order to keep his love at boiling point. To support his argument further, al-‘Az̄m refers to the concept of love and the Don Juan character within Western literature³⁹. There is a conflict between Don Juan and ‘*udhri*’ lovers on the one hand, and the established conventions of the society on the

³³ This idea is established according to some narratives and verses, but we should keep in mind that such narratives and verses have always appeared with their contrary as we have observed earlier.

³⁴ Al-‘Az̄m, p. 81.

³⁵ However, this convention is questionable as several statements suggest that poetry composed for a Bedouin woman should never prevent the poet, or any other man from marrying her.

³⁶ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 8, p. 294.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 288-290

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 311

³⁹ Al-‘Az̄m, pp. 52-60.

other. They believe that married love is static and would utterly destroy the acute emotion they enjoy. However, the difference between them is that the ‘*udhri*’ lover keeps his destructive love not by jumping from one woman to another, as Don Juan does. Instead, he concentrates all his emotions on one unique beloved. He hopes to possess her, but, at the same time, he creates all kinds of possible obstacles to prevent himself from having her. Afterwards, passion leads the ‘*udhri*’ lover to madness and to roaming the desert, as the fire of love melts his body and mind. Hence, he achieves what Don Juan achieves not by moving from one woman to another, but by placing himself in a condition of repressed and unfulfilled desire. Naturally, al-‘Azm continues, this condition leads the ‘*udhri*’ lover to experience suffering and torture. Nevertheless, he jealously guards his pain, because it is an essential part of the core of his experience⁴⁰.

The theme of love, which lasts forever, is a central theme in the ‘*udhri*’ tradition. ‘*udhri*’ love is endless love, and nothing can detract from it, not even the mean reactions of the beloved; Jamil says:

And it is not because she surrendered to me that I loved her;
but she captured me by flirtation and withholding⁴¹ [5]

Thus, I am inclined to agree with Khan in her observation that

[i]n fact, all the ‘*udhri*’ romances are about this endless deferral of desire’s fulfillment. True love or desire in these romances is defined as that which ought not to be consumed... Union is ultimately not sought because it means the end of desire and pleasure... Ostensibly, the ‘*udhri*’ poet-lovers frame themselves as seeking fulfillment and marriage with the beloved, but then they thwart their chances to achieve these goals and portray themselves the victims of fate, social mores or the beloved’s caprice⁴².

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁴¹ Jamil, p. 74. Another ‘*udhri*’ poet, Kuthayyir ‘Azzah, says: ‘Do me good or do me harm, I shall not blame you, not hate you, even when you make yourself hateful’. kuthayyir, p. 57. trans. Kinany, p. 291.

⁴² Khan, p. 198.

Moreover, I would argue that this passion grows separately from the beloved and it is in fact an obsession in itself. The object of love is not the real Laylā or Buthaynah, who as a human could change or get older; it is rather, the desire itself. The ideal image of the beloved is meant to fan the flame of destructive emotion. One cannot help but examine this striking anecdote: One day, while Majnūn was roaming in desert, stricken by madness, accompanied by beasts, and surrounded by deer, Laylā, his beloved, appeared to him. Surprisingly enough, Majnūn said to her: ‘go away, your love has overcome me, and isolated me from you’⁴³. Accordingly, it is not ‘you’ -- not Laylā--but ‘your love’ which had obsessed him.

In another anecdote, Majnūn has said: ‘Were I able to divert desire from her [Laylā] to you, I would turn it away from her and from each one after her and would live among people, harmoniously and with ease’⁴⁴, in responding to some women’s offer for him to fulfill his desire with them instead of with Laylā. In commenting on his response to the women, Khan argues that

Majnūn’s reference to “each one after her” can be interpreted as an indication of how it is upon an unrequited love, a fantasy beloved, that his desire is founded. Though the beloved image in this fantasy may change, it remains just that--a fantasy or an absent love object. Indeed, the object must be absent--it must not yield a presence or hold a promise of fulfillment--for desire to fixate upon it. Majnūn portrays himself as unable to divert his desire to the women in the group only because they offer hope of requital and satisfaction in the love affair. His true love is a love that privileges the deferral rather than the consummation of union. Ultimately, it is with the phantom or fantasy of his own desire that he is in love⁴⁵.

⁴³ Ibn ‘Arabi, *al-Futuḥāt al-makkiyyah*, p. 1467. www.alwaraq.net, 3 March 2007. Khairallah notes that: ‘This sufi anecdote adds to Majnūn’s attitude a dimension hardly explicit in the *diwan*. Yet already Majnūn’s condition, supported by his inflamed imagination, was pointing in this direction (...). Even though the *diwan* does not formulate an anecdote like Ibn ‘Arabi’s one, such an anecdote is latent in the text’. Khairallah, p. 79.

⁴⁴ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 383.

⁴⁵ Khan, p. 197.

Indeed, the ‘fantasy of his own desire that he is in love’ is evident in the anecdote in which Majnūn said to Laylā: ‘Go away, your love preoccupies and distances me from you’. The statement made by Jeopardy in her study of ancient French romances can be useful to quote here: ‘to take woman as metaphor and to make of her a pretext for literary discourse, is to appropriate and displace the subjectivity of the absent real woman’⁴⁶. Thus, it is understandable that later on Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240), the great sufi figure, became interested in Majnūn’s statement and commented delightfully on it by saying:

This is one of the rare instances, where domineering love is manifested as pleasant. As her presence came between his envisionment of her as a fathomed being, and her actual physical being. To him, her image is much nicer than her actual presence. Having lost that sense of pleasure of seeing her, he said, ‘Just disappear’⁴⁷.

It is worth noting, however, how ‘*udhri*’ love in general and Majnūn’s love in particular were eventually prized by sufis as an expression of mystical love. As some sufis saw in human love the entrance to the Way, Majnūn’s legend reaches the symbolic level. Hence, Majnūn is presented as a sufi example:

Whenever Majnūn of the Banū ‘Āmir was asked about Laylā, he would say, ‘I am Laylā’. Thus, by means of Laylā, he would absent himself from Laylā, until he remains present to his vision of Laylā, and absent to every sense except Laylā, and (thereby) sees everything present through Laylā⁴⁸.

In any case, the transformation of Majnūn’s legend into an allegory of sufi love is found particularly in Persian poetry. Starting from Niẓāmī, the touch of mystical love is found in his adaptation of Majnūn’s love story. ‘Preserving the outline of the romance, he retained the prominent episodes and added a number of his own

⁴⁶ Double Jeopardy, “The Appropriation of Woman in Four Old French Romances of the Cycle de la Gageure, Robertal Kueger”, in *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance writings Essays in Feminist contextual Criticism*, ed. Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), p. 23.

⁴⁷ Ibn ‘Arabī, p. 1467.

⁴⁸ Abu Naṣr al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-Luma’*, cited in Khairallah, p. 102.

invention. Inevitably, Niẓāmī modified considerably the form and content of the legend⁴⁹. Niẓāmī's poem was widely imitated wherever Persian culture spread and the later poets borrowed heavily from his work. The most important feature of this works was the mystical rendering of the Romance⁵⁰. However, in Khairallah's view, Jamī is considered the leading light in this adaptation in his 'Laylā u Majnūn'⁵¹.

6.5 Complaint and Embrace

It is remarkable to observe how often those lovers complain about their suffering in love. They usually portray it as a form of magic energy that captivates and enchants them. They 'proclaim that love was their fate and, using fatalistic arguments declare that they could not help loving their damsels'⁵². Jamīl, for example, says:

He (the blamer) said: "Sober up!
How long will you be mad about Buthaynah,
without being able to do anything about her?"
I said : "Concerning her,
God passed upon me the sentence that you see.
Can God's decree be controverted?
Whether to love her means to be guided aright or to stray,
I stumbled upon this love without intent"⁵³ [6]

In these verses Jamīl ascribes his love and its consequences, 'without being able to do anything about her', to fate. Therefore, it is understood that he is helpless in his love for Buthaynah, as what God has decreed cannot be altered. It does not matter then if love 'means to be guided aright or to stray'; as the poet has to follow it

⁴⁹ Dols, p. 322.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

⁵¹ For detailed discussion of Persian versions of Majnūn's story and its connection with the Arabic version see Ghunaymi Hilāl's work: *al-Ḥayāh al-'atifiyah bayna al-'udhriyah wa al-ṣufiyah: dirasat naqd wa muqaranah ḥawla mawḍū' Laylā wa al-Majnūn fī al-'adabayn al-'arabī wa al-farīsī*. Khairallah also offers a discussion on the sufi elements in Majnūn's legend in Persian, especially for Jamī's poetry: pp. 107-125.

⁵² Kinany, p. 258.

⁵³ Jamīl, pp. 30-31 . trans. Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, p. 42.

anyhow. Nevertheless, expressing the desire to escape from it, he says in exasperation:

I wish I were rid of you, love,
Will you leave me no rest?⁵⁴ [7]

Moreover, Jamīl reaches the point of cursing Buthaynah:

My God cast motes into Buthayna's eyes!
May he blacken her brilliant teeth!⁵⁵ [8]

This is the only time he uses a negatively-charged poetic verse towards his beloved. Apparently this verse casts doubt on the (true love) that Jamīl proclaims. Buthaynah herself is reported to have said to him: 'Oh Jamīl, you claim that you love me, while you said: My God cast motes....?'. His reaction to her rebuke is crying and saying: 'I am the one who said:

I wish I were blind and deaf while Buthaynah is guiding me,
Not a word from her speech is hidden from me!⁵⁶ [9]

However, this strange verse, a pray *du'a'* against Buthaynah's beauty has raised a debate among the classical literary authors as well as among contemporary scholars. Many Arab exegetes argue that this *du'a'* could bear a positive meaning. When a thing becomes so perfect, one might pray against it to provide a kind of protection for it. Some say that the actual meaning of the verse is: what stunning eyes and mouth she has! It is the same as saying: 'May God damn him, what a brave man he is!'⁵⁷ Some even interpret Buthaynah's eyes as her protectors, as in Arabic the word '*ayn* could be used to signify the visual organ, as well as referring to a spy. They also argue that her teeth represent her relatives who deny him the right to visit Buthaynah, as, again, the word *anyāb* could bear two meanings: teeth, and people in high

⁵⁴ Jamīl, p. 37. trans. Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, p. 42.

⁵⁵ Jamīl, p. 23. trans. Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, p. 45.

⁵⁶ 'Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-adab wa lubb lubāb liṣān al-'Arab*, ed. 'Abd al-Salam Ḥarūn, vol. 6, (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-miṣriyyah al-'ammah li al-kitāb, 1977), p. 400.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

positions. Another interpretation suggests that Jamīl is praying for her to have a long life, so the moles and black are hints of getting old, and living a long life⁵⁸.

However, taking into account all the arguments, my position is that the basis of Jamīl's *du'a* is not hatred, but rather the violence of his love for Buthaynah. At some point, it became clear to him that her excessive beauty was the cause of his misery. That is why this verse lashes out at her beautiful eyes and delicious mouth-- because they caused him so much pain. The beauty of the beloved is defined as the origination of the poet's suffering. This is what the classical exegetes have overlooked while trying to interpret this verse within the framework of praise for the beloved's beauty. I would rather argue that bodily beauty is not just portrayed in vivid depictions; it is also regarded as the source of fatal love. Likewise, the motif of wishing to get rid of love is frequently apparent in Qays b. Dhariḥ's *diwan*; for instance, he says:

I said to my heart when love tormented me
and became unbearable:
O heart that has been led by desires,
awake, may God curse you for a heart⁵⁹ [10]

and Jamīl often uses the metaphor of bondage:

O Buthaynah,
your snares entrapped my heart the day of the hunt,
but you escaped my snares⁶⁰ [11]

In fact, the theme of bondage and captivity runs through the '*udhri*' poems⁶¹. This can be observed in the common use of such terms as prisons, traps, and chains. The

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Qays, p. 28.

⁶⁰ Jamīl, p. 88.

⁶¹ Juyyusi criticised the beloved in the '*udhri*' tradition as she never gives: 'the woman is hardly more than a recipient of love. She promises, but never fulfils. She loves, but in this literature. She never gives' (Juyyusi, p. 426). In fact, this quality is popularly considered as a positive feature of a beloved in Arabic tradition in general. In spite of this convention, I would argue that the beloveds in the '*udhri*' tradition offered a great love and even composed verses to their lovers. The sources confirm to us that the beloveds were not as aloof and careless as some might think. As Juyyusi has noted, it is true that

image of the bond of love as a chain is prevalent in ‘*udhri*’ poetry. Hamori notes, ‘the complaint that love is a prison parallel the execrations, in the old poetry, of time, in which the speaker is caught as in current that pulls steadily towards the falls’⁶².

On the contrary, one should hear the undertone beneath this complaint and so-called fatalism: the latent desire for this love to continue and last. While Majnūn is expressing his discontent with his fate by reciting:

God who decreed that she would be for somebody else,
Afflicted me with my love for her
Why would he not afflict me with something else?⁶³ [12]

It is fundamental, though, to notice that some narratives associate Majnūn with madness, according to this verse specifically. They claim that once he composed it, a voice in darkness shouted at him: ‘You who are discontent with Allah’s fate! You are the one who interferes with his decisions’. Consequently, his mind is gone since that night⁶⁴.

Majnūn seems far away from the true wish to afflict him with something else.

As we read in *al-Aghani*:

When Majnūn’s parents tried to cure him by taking him on pilgrimage, they demanded Majnūn to ask God to cure him from his passion for Laylā. Interestingly, Majnūn grabbed Ka’bah and implores God to intensify and magnify his passion. He said: ‘Oh God, increase my passionate love for Laylā, and do not let me forget her forever’⁶⁵.

In his poetry, Majnūn clearly shows his devotion to his beloved asking God to help him in his seeking for her:

elopement is not a feature of these stories, but that does not mean that ‘the code of honour in these stories proved itself stronger than love and life’. If that is the case, how can we explain the extensive anecdotes about the lovers meeting even after the beloved’s marriage? In fact, there are many verses and narratives that portray the beloved as equally passionate as her lover. For instance, in a meeting between Laylā and Majnūn she revealed to him she loves him more than he loves her and she promised him that she would never willingly be with another man. See, *al-Iṣfahānī*, vol. 2, pp. 355-356.

⁶² Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, p. 45.

⁶³ Majnūn, p. 18. trans. Kinany, p. 259.

⁶⁴ *al-Iṣfahānī*, vol. 2, p. 373.

⁶⁵ *Al-Iṣfahānī*, vol. 2, p. 342.

At Mecca, by night, the pilgrims prayed to God
 Beseeching forgiveness for their sins,
 While I called O God, the first thing I ask for myself is Laylā,
 Then be my reckoner.
 If Laylā is given to me in my lifetime,
 no worshipper's repentance will be greater than mine⁶⁶ [13]

Moreover, the 'udhri lover's persistence on his love goes so far as Majnūn says:

How excellent is the work of Satan,
 if my love for her is the work of Satan⁶⁷ [14]

Kuthayyir confesses:

They said that she departed
 And that I had to choose between forgetting her
 Or continuing to weep;
 I said that the latter would better soothe my pain⁶⁸ [15]

Although he knows it is a dead end, Majnūn's only solution to rid himself of this
 love is to have more of it:

For Laylā's love I treat my self with Laylā,
 For wine a drunkard treats himself with wine⁶⁹ [16]

Does the 'udhri lover accept his fatal love and complain about it at the same time?

Or, is he in fact confining his love so as to avoid the excessive consequences of it,
 challenging the norms of society by claiming that his love is his fate decreed by
 God? It is not a choice. Nevertheless, it is a desirable fate, so much so that he asks
 his love to give him more of it every night:

O love for Laylā, each night double my grief
 O solace of love, we shall meet on the Last Day⁷⁰ [17]

In other contexts also, describing the torment is a fundamental element in depicting
 love, as Bataille puts it: 'Only the beloved in this world can bring the continuity

⁶⁶ Majnūn, p. 41, trans. Khairallah, p. 140.

⁶⁷ Majnūn, p. 17. trans. Hamori, p. 47. However, Ibn Qutaybah in *al-shi'r wa al-sh'ra'* states that this
 verse is falsely attributed to Majnūn. Ibn Qutaybah, p. 566.

⁶⁸ Kuthayyir, p. 180, trans. Kinany, p. 258.

⁶⁹ Majnūn, p. 120, trans. Khairallah, p. 76.

⁷⁰ Majnūn, p. 94.

between two discontinuous creatures. Hence, love spells suffering in so far as it is a quest for the impossible ... We suffer from our isolation in our individual separateness'⁷¹.

Ibn Ḥazm confirms: 'Love is a delightful malady, a most desirable sickness. Whoever is free of it likes not to be immune, and whoever is struck down by it yearns not to recover'⁷². In Ibn Ḥazm's statement, one observes the link he has made between love and sickness. Love is fate like 'sickness', but, it is a 'desirable' one. In fact, the theme of love treated like sickness is particularly prominent in the *diwān* of 'Urwah and the *diwān* of Qays, a theme to be explored in the final chapter of this study, on the lover's body.

Kinany correctly notes that 'udhri lovers hid a remarkably free and powerful will behind their so-called fatalism. They did not want to get rid of their pain because pain is the only genuine criterion of true love'. Nevertheless, he draws a parallel between the 'udhri lovers' resignation and the resignation of the ascetic Muslim as both hope for a better life in the world to come. He says, 'Most of the 'udhri lovers renounced the joys of life for the sake of their hopeless passion'⁷³. He also claims that 'udhri lovers were capable of resigning themselves to hard living in the hope of deserving a better one in the future, the hereafter. He compares 'udhri lovers and pagan lovers, whose lives lack any idea of the afterlife, so they do not show any sign of resignation'⁷⁴.

However, one of the limitations with Kinany's explanation is that it does not explain the conflict between Islamic resignation and 'udhri lovers' insistence on their

⁷¹ Georges Bataille, *Erotism Death and Sensuality*, trans. Nary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), p. 20.

⁷² Ibn Ḥazm, pp. 100-101.

⁷³ Kinany, p. 259.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

burning passion, and it assumes that ‘*udhri*’ lovers are automatically ascetic Muslims and perfectly chaste. I would rather suggest that as much as the lover complains about his destiny, he also embraces it. Evidently, Kinany’s interpretation overlooks many of the ‘*udhri*’ verses which reveal the desire for love’s joy in this life. For instance, Jamīl declares:

I have given up all desire involving this world
except the love of her
Thus, I make no requests of the world,
nor do I feel that I must have an ampler portion⁷⁵ [18]

Jamīl has no request of the world, except his love for Buthaynah. He not only embraces it, he wishes for it. In fact, his love is the only wish that he has since Jamīl has ‘given up all desire involving this world’, as he declares in the verse quoted above.

In this light, we could understand the decisive role played by the motif of the blamer *al-‘adhil* within ‘*udhri*’ poetry. Jamīl’s father summarized the argument of the blamers in these words: ‘Women are replaceable’⁷⁶. For Jamīl, of course, they are not. He declares:

Blamers took me to task (lit. excoriated me)
because of my love for her.
If only they suffered as I suffer!
When they kept on reproaching me on account of you,
I said to them:
Do not exceed the proper bounds;
Hold back some of this reproof and be moderate⁷⁷ [19]

Love, for the ‘*udhri*’ poet, is fundamental in his life but the blamer does not understand this because, according to Jamīl, he does not suffer from love. Hamori notes that:

⁷⁵ Jamīl, p. 33, trans. Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, p. 43.

⁷⁶ Al-Iṣfahānī, p.192.

⁷⁷ Jamīl, p. 32 . trans. Hamori , p. 39. See similar themes in *diwān* Jamīl, pp. 74, 98, 100.

The blamer has been a straw man of caution. His job was to try to prevent the protagonist from making the heroic gesture(...)the lines by Jamīl are shot through with irony. The apostrophe to the blamers is in the old style. Unbridled speech is objectionable; the blamer should practice moderation...the blamers must be accusing Jamīl of that very thing: lack of moderation⁷⁸.

Interestingly, the figure of the blamer sometimes becomes a desirable figure in the romance, since he confirms the strength of love by blaming the lover. Whereby Ibn Ḥazm describes *al-‘adhīl* as a ‘tough business, and a heavy burden to bear’⁷⁹, he also indicates that:

I have seen a lover so violent in his emotions, and so overwhelmingly infatuated, that he loved to be reproached more than anything in the world, in order that he might show his reproacher [blamer] how stubbornly he could rebel against his scoldings. He took a positive delight in opposing him, in provoking him to resistance and doubled reproof, and then in triumphs over his opponent⁸⁰.

Thus, the *‘udhri* poet jealously guards his love, and while he ostensibly complains about it, in fact he recognizes how fundamental it is to his life experience, and, furthermore, to his poetry.

6.6 The Heroic Gesture

There is no doubt that a pre-Islamic poet like ‘Antarah, presents a defining symbol of the ambivalence in the “poet/hero” image. ‘Antarah was described as a hero, not only because he was a knight, but also by virtue of his being a poet. His poetry allowed him to immortalise both his status as a knight, and his great love for his cousin, ‘Ablah. It is not surprising that ‘Antarah became a legendary hero, immortalised through enduring folk tales that survive--both in written form and as oral traditions -- even to the present day. Thus, in the classical Arabic culture, the

⁷⁸ Hamori, p. 40.

⁷⁹ Ibn Ḥazm, *The Ring of the Dove*, trans. A.J.Arberry (London: Luzac and company,LTD, 1953), p. 96

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

poet was ‘a cultural hero because his socio-political as well as spiritual status placed him in the leading position’⁸¹. In the pre-Islamic period, a poet was, as Hamori notes, ‘the pride and ornament of his people, for he alone would perpetuate the fame of their noble deeds, dignify the memory of their dead, and trap their enemies in songs of mockery’⁸².

Nevertheless, with the emergence of Islam, the “poet/hero” image began to fade, giving way in the popular imagination to the “devout hero”, who would sacrifice all to strengthen and glorify the new religion.

The relationship between Islam and poetry has become a popular theme for academic debate. While some believe that the emergence of Islam weakened poetry, others argue that, on the contrary, it opened entirely new and interesting vistas for the medium⁸³. The Umayyad period saw the emergence of a new group of poets: they too sought the status of folk heroes through their poetry, but through references more intimate than glorious: theirs was a return to love poetry (*ghazal*). Unlike their pre-Islamic forebears, however, the Umayyad poets benefited from the advent of singing as entertainment, and the plethora of composers and female singers to be found for inspiration. This phenomenon continued to grow and evolve through subsequent eras.

The heroic gesture of the ‘*udhrī*’ lover is that of being a poet. ‘If one is inclined to believe that Majnūn’s legend grew around, and in a way for the sake of, his poetry, then one could claim that his poetic daemon was also at the source of his

⁸¹ Khairallah, p. 34.

⁸² Hamori, p. 4.

⁸³ For more elaborated discussions on this issue, see Sāmī Makkī al-‘Anī, *al-Islam wa al-shi‘r* (al-Kuwait: al-Majlis al-waṭānī li al-thaqāfah wa al-funūn wa al-ādāb, 1983).

love'⁸⁴. For Majnūn, he lost everything but his poetry. He lost Laylā, his health, his relatives, his status in the tribe and, eventually, his mind, but he never lost his ability to compose love verses. His story is 'the story of how hopeless love can make great poetry, even if so much else is destroyed along the way'⁸⁵.

Is it really Laylā that he longed for? We shall bear in mind his words to Laylā: 'go away, your love has overcome me, and isolated me from you'⁸⁶.

Nevertheless, his love does not isolate him from poetry. While he was roaming the desert, people would go to him just to listen to him reciting his poems. Khairallah has noted:

Poetry as a crisis, a dilemma, is as much of a fatal possession as love or madness proved to be. Psychologically, the positive effects of language in general and of poetry in particular are manifold (...). Poetry could function as a charming power, or as a medium of psychological relief⁸⁷.

Therefore, is it the search for poetry, the search for inspiration, that characterises the 'udhri' lover? Is it for poetry that he creates the deferral of union within the 'udhri' tradition? Khan conceives this essential link between language and the deferral of union:

This wandering of desire or deferral of union is precisely what constitutes the pleasure of the lover. For the male lover, fulfillment of desire is equated with the end of pleasure for one very important reason. Fulfillment of desire would mean the end of his ability to luxuriate in the eloquence of language in the courtship ritual- whether the language be his own or that of/about the beloved. Certainly, the lover's literary prowess constitutes his desire so that desire attainment would result in an end to the pleasure of his discursive identity and performance. Hence, a deferral rather than an achievement of union is sought⁸⁸.

Thus, through language and poetry, poets achieve their poetic gesture. If the ability to recite old Arabic poetry was the quality that helped endear Majnūn to Laylā in the

⁸⁴ Khairallah, p. 66.

⁸⁵ Menocal, p. 148.

⁸⁶ Ibn 'Arabi, p. 1467.

⁸⁷ Khairallah, p. 66.

⁸⁸ Khan, p. 201.

first place, his own poetry about her played a significant role in their love story later on. People around them focussed their attention on his poetry and acted accordingly. It was the fame of his poetry about Laylā that caused her parents to refuse his marriage proposal. But, it seems that it does not matter if Majnūn's love poetry proves to be a curse of sorts because of his self-consciousness as a poet⁸⁹. Even the anecdotes that appear in the classical books about Majnūn 'were invented for an explicative purpose, so it is normal that they focus on the poetic fragments, for which they are meant to provide a context'⁹⁰. As we have already noted from Kuthayyir's reply to the woman who condemned him for composing poetry solely on a woman (his beloved 'Azzah), it is clear that Kuthayyir was aware of the heroic gesture he had achieved through poetry.

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have offered a discussion of the notion of 'one ideal beloved' as a core element of the 'udhri tradition. The lover is attached only to his unique beloved to whom he devotes his love and poetry. Therefore, the concept of matrimonial union between the lovers is absent from these romances in order to maintain the beloved's uniqueness and to avoid replicating her in a sort of offspring. On the one hand, the various images expressing desire in the poems indicate the beloved's depiction as an object of desire in *al-ghazal al-'udhri*. On the other hand, the fulfilment of this desire means deferral in various levels. While framing themselves as seeking marriage, the 'udhri poets thwart their chances to achieve their aim and then complain about their

⁸⁹ There are many anecdotes that suggest this poetic consciousness. For example, Majnūn's story with Qays b. Dhariḥ in which Majnūn had a competition with him even though he was in his desert isolation at the time. He said to Qays: 'I still am a better poet when I say...'. See Abu Bakr al-Walibī, *diwān Majnūn Laylā*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ḥalibī (Beirut: Dār al-najm, 1994).

⁹⁰ Khairallah, p. 63.

fate. However, the poets' complaint of their suffering in love is accompanied by a wish for their love to last forever. They frequently state that the blamers, in fact, intensify their love, rather than defeat it. Hence, passionate love, I would argue, is a means for the poet-lover to make a heroic gesture. Love poetry is inseparable from love, as 'udhrī lovers are poets themselves. In classical Arabic literature, works on passionate love are, in fact, works on *ghazal*. A poet is often considered as a lover; al-Washshā' says: 'whom who loved among poets are numberless'⁹¹. In the 'udhrī romances, the lover loses everything, including his beloved, except his ability to compose poetry. Being a poet seems to be his ultimate goal and heroic achievement.

⁹¹ Al-Washshā', p. 83.

The Representation of the Lover's Body

7.1 Introduction

In *Lisān al-‘Arab* the following definition is provided for the word ‘*ishq*’: ‘*Ishq* is excessive love. The excessive lover is called ‘*Āshiq* because his intense feelings make him melt like the ‘*ishqah* tree. ‘*Ishqah* is a green tree that becomes yellow when crushed. It is, therefore, claimed that the noun ‘*Ishq* is derived from ‘*ishqah*’¹. In Arabic, it is noticeable that many nouns refer to love. Nonetheless, about half of them link love with sickness or mental diseases. ‘A high proportion of the words express the woes of love—the longing, the pain, the grief, melancholy, confusion, and illness—rather than its pleasures’². Thus, in a symposium that took place in the ninth century, in the palace of Yaḥyā al-Barmakī, love was defined as based on the like-mindedness of the partners and it was a major cause of suffering, capable of subjugating, intoxicating and humiliating the lover to the point of annihilation³.

Undoubtedly, the representation of the beloved's body is the main concern of the ‘*udhri*’ tradition. In previous chapters we have examined the symbolic and physical representations of the beloved's body. This does not, however, indicate the absence of the lover-poet's own body; the ‘*udhri*’ tradition rather puts great emphasis on it, considering it the greatest recipient of the effects of profound emotion. It is his body that is malnourished, sick, suffering from insomnia and prematurely aged. The ‘*udhri*’ lover sometimes even reaches the point of madness, but death alone seems to be the ultimate path resulting from excessive passion. Hence, the vocabulary of

¹ Ibn Manẓūr, (ع ش ق), p. 252.

² Lois Antita Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs: The Development of the Genre* (London: University of London Press Ltd; New York: New York University Press, 1971), p. 93.

³ Abouseif, p. 66.

sickness, healing, the doctor and magic—all of which affect the body—is frequently repeated in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. Some verses even confirm that the lover has become blind, mute and paralysed, simply due to his passion. It is remarkable that the concept of eternal beauty of the beloved contrasts with the concept of the mortal lover in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. As we have seen in a previous chapter, the beloved in *'udhrī* poetry is depicted as the most perfect human from head to toe; Qays declares:

O most perfect of people from head to toe,
and most beautiful of people clothed or unclothed⁴ [1]

We have also discussed how the beloved's beauty in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* is beyond nature and associated with many extraordinary effects. In many cases, it surpasses human beauty as there are more astonishing effects attributed to it⁵. However, whereas the body of the beloved is presented as an eternally perfect example of beauty, that of the lover continues to deteriorate, growing old, ill and thin, and is therefore in direct contrast to the image of the beloved's body. Jamīl clearly illustrates this point:

Buthaynah said,
when she saw
locks of red hair (on my head)
Oh Jamīl, You become older and your youth's gone.
I said,
O please stop it, Buthaynah
Have you forgotten our times at Lewa and Ajfari?
When my locks were (black) just like a crow's wing,
Daubed with Musk and ambergris
Your youth will never fade
as you are a precious pearl
We are from the same time,
So how can I have grown old while you have not?⁶ [2]

⁴ Qays, p.109.

⁵ See chapter two of this thesis: 'The Representation of the Beloved Body', Section 2.8: 'The Ethereal Nature of Beauty'.

⁶ Jamīl, p. 44.

In Jamīl's verses, the beloved's beauty goes beyond time itself. It is therefore timeless beauty, which is eternally youthful; she is removed from time altogether by the image of eternal youth. In contrast, Jamīl himself, the lover, is affected by passion, which means that he becomes old and loses his youth. The vicissitudes that are ascribed to him never touch her because she is the one who has perfect eternal beauty.

7.2 Love as Malady in Classical Arabic Literature

In the Qur'an, surat Yūsuf used love to explain the somatic consequences of human emotions; to end their gossip 'Azīz's wife invites the women of the city to her house for a feast. Joseph comes in and all the women 'slash their hands' because of their excessive admiration for him; they cannot distinguish between the fruit and their hands. Thus, the effect on them is expressed in a bodily way. 'Indeed the emotion felt by the sight of Joseph was so great that the charming assembly was seized by a collective physiological pain'⁷.

In the classical Arabic tradition, when dealing with the theme of love, whether from medical or literary perspectives, it has been frequently stated that (*'ishq*) passionate love is a kind of sickness. This idea was not new at the time⁸, as it seems that Arab authors were influenced by Greek philosophy in this matter. In the fourth and seventh centuries CE, chapters on love were included in the sections on mental illnesses by two Byzantine authors, where they merely reproduce traditional

⁷ Bouhdiba, p. 25.

⁸ Old medical visions linked lovemaking, lust and ecstasy with moderation (or temperance or reasonability) and the old medical diagnoses. For more on this see: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

lists of symptoms and therapeutical suggestions⁹. Moreover, ‘the difficulty of a medical diagnosis and treatment of an enervated and depressed young man or woman who suffered from lovesickness can even be found in ancient Egyptian literature’¹⁰. Arabic medical literature shows similar tendencies in the discussion of love as a malady. In the general medical world, *‘ishq* is included among the traditional mental sicknesses. For example, al-Majūsī (d. 372/982) groups love with melancholy and provides a list of medicaments. Apart from Ibn al-Jazzār (d. ca. 395/1004), who characterises lovesickness as a kind of critical intensification of the natural desire of the soul for all beautiful things, love stays within the traditional frame of references¹¹. In his medical book *al-Qānūn*, Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) dedicates a chapter to love sickness, in which he portrays *‘ishq* as a sort of illness similar to melancholia. He describes the characteristics of the illness as

hollowness of the eyes and their dryness, the lack of moisture except when weeping, continuous movement of the eyelids, and laughing as if he sees something pleasant or hears happy news or jokes. His psyche is full of alienation and withdrawal, so that there is much deep sighing. His condition changes from exhilaration and laughter to sadness and weeping when he hears love poetry, especially when he remembers the separation and distance from his beloved (...) His behaviour is disordered, and his pulse is irregular, like those who are anxious¹².

The link provided by Ibn Sīnā between the lover’s sadness and love poetry is noteworthy. By establishing such a link, he suggests a bond between emotions and language. The language, especially in form of poetry, revives the passionate feeling. Therefore, the role played by poetry in love is significant.

Ibn Sīnā goes on to give advice to doctors on how to cure the patient. He suggests, for instance, the uniting of the lover with his beloved, saying about to one

⁹ Hans Hinrich Biesterfeldt and Dimitri Gutas, “The Malady of Love”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 104, N. 1, (1984), p. 22.

¹⁰ Dols, p. 316.

¹¹ Biesterfeldt and Gutas, p. 23.

¹² Ibn Sīnā, *al-Qānūn fī al-Tibb*, www.alwaraq.net, 15 October 2010, trans. Dols, p. 484.

case, ‘when he experienced union with his beloved, recovery occurred in a very short time’¹³. He also suggests several different treatments, depending on each individual condition such as: preoccupying the lover’s mind so that he forgets what caused him to be seriously ill¹⁴, or joining the lover with someone other than the beloved in order that he forgets the latter, or giving the lover sincere advice or warning, or increasing sexual intercourse with slave-girls. Ibn Sīnā also states, ‘Some people are consoled with entertainment and recitation, while for others it only increases their infatuation; it is possible to discover which is which’¹⁵. Consequently, Ibn Sīnā’s statement shows that *‘ishq* became a typical topic in Islamic medical textbooks, alongside other mental disorders¹⁶.

In belles-lettres the malady of love was a subject frequently treated. For example, al-Jāhīz (ca. 776-869) states that:

I propose to describe *‘ishq* for you, so that you may know how it is defined. It is a sickness that attacks the soul and spreads to the body by direct contagion, the soul being weakened by the violence done to the body and physical exhaustion being followed by moral weakness¹⁷.

In al-Jāhīz’s statement, cited above, he sharply distinguishes between the soul and the body, though he does observe the mutual effects between them. Love, in his view, attacks the soul first and then spreads to the body, but once the body becomes weak, the soul is affected by this weakness. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Dā’ūd (255/868-297/910) devotes a chapter, ‘The body’s pining is a sign of agony

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ The famous physician al-Rāzī (d. 313/925) suggests a similar treatments for melancholia, which include active endeavours such as hunting, chess, drinking, singing, competitive sports, travel and other things. See Dols, p. 55.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 485. Interestingly, the practice of pulse-diagnosis, which has been suggested by Ibn Sīnā to know the identity of the beloved, was employed with considerable effect by the great mystical poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, in one of his allegorical stories. See Dols, p. 317.

¹⁶ However, the medical interpretation of *‘ishq* was especially welcomed by those writers who wished to discourage passionate love. See Giffen, p. 64.

¹⁷ Al-Jāhīz in Charles Pellat, *The Life and Works of Jahiz*, trans. D.M.Hawke (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 263.

(*kamad*)’, to this aspect in his book, *Kitāb al-zahrah*. He explains the effect of emotion on the body, from a medical perspective: ‘the heat that is engendered by grief flows into the heart from all parts of the body and then ascends to the brain’¹⁸. He also mentions the particular role played by tears in this matter: ‘vapours from which tears are produced when they (scil. the vapours) are liquefied by the natural heat they possess’¹⁹. Abū Bakr al-Kharā’iṭī (d. 327/938) was also tempted to write on the subject, but rather adopted a more critical point of view; he entitles his treatise *I’tilāl al-qulūb* (*The Malady of Hearts*). From the title it is apparent that the author views love as a malady, and a chapter of his treatise is even entitled: ‘On the condemnation of *hawā* (desire) and the following of it’. ‘Four centuries later, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah and al-Mughulṭai cite him as an authority on love theory’²⁰. In *Kitāb al-riyād* by Muḥammad al-Marzubānī (384/993 or 378/987) a definition of *ishq* that links it with malady is provided; ‘Someone said to Zuhayr al-Madīnī: “What is *ishq*?” He said: “Madness and submissiveness, and it is the malady of refined people”²¹. Abū Ḥayyian al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023) in *al-Muqābasāt* suggests that love feeds the soul, but weakens the body²².

In any case, the literary production on this subject is too abundant to be documented in detail here. However, I will concentrate on one text, anonymously authored, quoting it at length because it provides a comprehensive view on the subject under discussion and has been frequently quoted by many authors:

Love is a desire which is born in the heart and in which gather elements of avidity. Whenever it gains in strength the lover becomes more agitated and

¹⁸ Ibn Da’ūd, p. 400.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

²⁰ Giffen, p. 16.

²¹ Muḥammad al-Marzubānī cited in Giffen, p. 19.

²² Abū Ḥayyian al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Muqābasāt*, ed. Ḥasan al-Sandūbī (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘ah al-raḥmanyiah, 1929), p. 364.

persistent, his disquiet intensifies and his insomnia increases. When this happens his blood burns and changes into black bile, and his yellow bile is inflamed and transformed into black bile. The excess of black bile impairs thinking, and impaired thinking is accompanied by blunted wits, diminished reasoning, hoping for the impossible, and wishing for the unfeasible, to the point that it all leads to madness. Then, the lover sometimes kills himself and sometimes dies of grief, or he goes to his beloved and dies of joy or perishes of distress. Sometimes he moans heavily, causing his spirit to remain concealed for twenty-four hours. He continues [in his state] until he is taken for dead, and he is then buried while still alive. Sometimes he heaves a deep sigh and his soul is stifled in his pericardium. The heart then closes then on the soul and does not release it until he dies. Sometimes during moments of relaxation he raises his eyes to look around and he suddenly sees the person he loves his blood drains and his colour changes. The person who is in such a state can be relieved through the grace of the Lord of the Worlds, not through the ministrations of any human. This is because a malignant state which occurs from an isolated cause arising by itself is susceptible to through elimination by the elimination by its cause, But when two causes occur in such a manner that each one of them occasions the other, there is no way in which either one of them can be eliminated. And since black bile causes continuous thinking and continuous thinking causes the burning of the blood and the yellow bile and their transformation into black bile, then whenever the black bile predominates it intensifies thinking, and whenever thinking becomes intense it reinforces the black bile. This is an incurable disease which doctors are unable to treat²³.

This text has had a long and influential life in the literary tradition. It appears in different lengths and in several different versions, and is reproduced in many Arabic books beginning in the third century AH, such as *Nawādir al-falāsifah* by Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (d. 260/877), *Kitāb al-zahrah* by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Dā'ūd al-Iṣfahānī (d. 297/910), *Muruḥ al-dhahab* by al-Mas'ūdī (d. 354/956), *Dhamm al-hawā* by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), *'Uyūn al-anbā'* by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah (d. 668/1270). It is said to be copied from the Greek²⁴, though the Greek original is absent²⁵. In any case, this text presents well-structured aspects and it shows the great awareness of the emotional effects on one's own body. I would argue that it proves that the lover's body was a theme of interest on a theoretical level according to the popular subject of love in classical Arabic belles-lettres. The text suggests a mutual relationship

²³ Anonymous text cited and translated by Biesterfeldt and Gutas, pp. 40-45.

²⁴ Some of the Arab authors ascribe the text to Hippocrates.

²⁵ Biesterfeldt and Gutas, p. 45, and see detailed discussion on the origin of the text on pp. 51-53, in which the author tends to believe that it is diverted from a late Alexandrian text.

between the lover's excessive emotions and his body. Once the love 'is born in the heart', it attacks the lover's body; his insomnia increases and 'his blood burns'. At this point the effect will return to 'thinking' that causes 'blunted wits, diminished reasoning and hoping for the impossible', which will eventually lead the lover to madness or death. The concept of death is a crucial aspect of passionate love (*'ishq*) and it is clearly emphasised here. Death, the text suggests, will undoubtedly reach the lover, either as a result of his grief or of his joy if he suddenly beholds his beloved²⁶.

Biesterfeldt and Gutas provide the following commentary on the text:

[this text] ascribes to the lover a number of symptoms(...). It has a medical framework. It analyses love by means of humoral etiology; and it makes use of popular and literary commonplaces about love much as the as a genre deal with everyday concerns²⁷.

If that is the case, it is no wonder that the lover, as shown in Arabic literature, is treated as a patient, as we have already observed in some medical texts, such as *Treatise on Love* by Ibn Sīnā, in which he provides a discussion of the symptoms and suggested treatments for the lover. Moreover, it seems that Arabs used to carry out particular practices when dealing with suffering lovers; their love would be treated either as a sickness or as a kind of magic. Therefore, the lover would be taken to physicians and diviners, as we shall see in 'Urwah and Majnūn's stories. In some cases, the lover has to drink '*sulwānah*', which is believed to be a cure for '*'ishq*. *Sulwānah* is an amulet in a crushed bead whose liquid is drunk by an afflicted lover to cure him of this love²⁸. Seeing love from this angle explains the motif of dedicating prayers to the lover, as one would pray for a sick man. Interestingly, al-Washshā' considers praying for lovers as a duty of *udaba'*; he provides many

²⁶ This chapter will elaborate the theme of love unto death within the '*udhri*' tradition.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁸ Salamah, p. 456.

narratives about people who offer *du‘a* for the lovers while they circumambulate the ka‘bah²⁹. He even states that: ‘It is claimed that no sins will be inflicted on lovers and that the pains they endure compensate for their sins’³⁰. Answering a question about lovers, the Judge Shurayk b. ‘Abdullah said: ‘whoever possesses the most intense feelings of love will receive the biggest share of the rewards’³¹.

7.3 The Effect of Love on the Lover’s Body in the ‘*Udhri* Tradition

Above, we have sketched the classical Arabic theoretical perspective on the effects of emotion on the body³². Yet the physical presence of the lover’s own body can also be traced in poetry. In fact, most of those authors who deal with the theme of love in their writing rely on Arabic poetry as a primary source for their theoretical formulations. ‘The best discussion of love turns frequently to verse to illustrate aptly the ideas under discussion, to reinforce the author’s statements, or to express his thought more subtly’³³. This chapter focuses on the depiction of the lover’s body in the ‘*udhri* tradition while making reference to classical Arabic poetry in general. Several aspects of the effect that love has on the ‘*udhri* lover’s own body are depicted in *al-ghazal al-‘udhri*. These aspects are intertwined, but for the sake of this analysis we separate them into categories each of which is discussed below.

²⁹ Al-Washsha’, pp. 106-107.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

³² It should be borne in mind that the awareness of the bodily effect of love as shown in literature is not unique to the Arabs. In the introduction written by John Jay Parry of the book *The Art of Courtly Love* some of the relevant ideas within the Western culture are presented. The poet Ovid, who lived in Rome in the time of the Emperor Augustus and among his poems are *The Art of Love* and *The Cure of Love*, states that for love of a woman the lover must become pale and thin and sleepless. See Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. John Jay Parry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 5.

³³ Giffen, p. 57. Giffen points out that some authors such as; Ibn Da‘ūd began to collect verses on a subject or idea, comparing different ways of expressing the same idea. This critical activity lent itself to refined awareness of the whole spectrum of emotions, situations, and experiences of love, p. 58.

7.3.1 Crying

Tear-shedding is no doubt a response to the body's agitation as it releases the burden of emotions on the body. It is also one of the bodily responses to emotions³⁴. The theme of weeping is one of the oldest themes in classical Arabic poetry. It is considered an essential motif in the opening section of the *qasīdah*; the poet stops at the ruined campsite, which evokes his memories and leads him to weep over his now departed beloved. In fact, weeping and asking friends to weep became a core element of the classical *qasīdah* after Imru' al-Qays said:

Halt, friends both! Let us weep,
recalling a love and a lodging by the rim of the twisted sands
between al-Dakhul and Ḥaumal³⁵ [3]

More broadly, but with relevance to the trope of weeping, Sells demonstrates that there are dynamic polarities of water within Arabic love poetry. Water could suggest sexual union and climax or purification,

fertility and growth or erosion and effacement; the poet (through tears) or the beloved (through her wet mouth); the interior, subjective world (through the *shu'ūn* or tear channels behind the eyes) or the exterior world (through the torrent beds *madaḥ*) or the tent trench (*nu'y*)³⁶.

In 'udhrī poets' *diwāns* there are numerous allusions to weeping. It seems that shedding tears -- according to 'udhrī poets' -- functions in several ways: divulgence, resistance, evidence and healing. Tears are a divulgence and a disclosure of the poet's feelings, and of what his heart is incapable of bearing. His feelings are expressed in the form of tears, revealing a hidden pain and a concealed love. No

³⁴ Al-Yūsuf sees the tears in poetry as the most common element between 'udhrī poets in Arab culture, and the metaphysical poets in Western culture, by giving the example of the poet John Donne (1572-1631). See al-Yūsuf, p. 176.

³⁵ Imru' al-Qays, "Mu'allaqah", trans. A. J. Arberry, p. 61.

³⁶ Sells, p. 157.

matter how this lover struggles to conceal his love, tears remain the most vivid traces and indicators of love; Jamīl says:

Oh my friends, what I conceal of this love,
tears will soon reveal³⁷ [4]

Weeping is evidence and proof of the poet's sincere feelings. In the above stanza the poet uses the word *shahīd* to mean *shāhid* which means proof, and Majnūn explicitly refers to this:

The representation of the passion of youth is made through tears
and these tears are the fairest evidence³⁸ [5]

Kuthayyir not only indulges in tears; he also invites his eyes to drop tears to prove his love and concealed passion:

I ask the water of the eye to continue
hoping that it will be a witness to that concealed passion³⁹ [6]

Qays even linked the level of love to the amount of tears dropped, making the relationship between them mutual:

Is love but a sigh then a sob, and a heating in the guts
that finds no cooling
And a river of running tears when I behold a hint from your land⁴⁰ [7]

Moreover, according to 'udhrī poetry, weeping is a cure and a comfort. It is a means to healing the acute pains of love:

I was told of her abandonment,
and asked to choose between patience and weeping
And I chose to weep for its immediate effect to heal my burns⁴¹. [8]

However, weeping does not always indicate weakness and disclosure; it sometimes becomes like a weapon of the lover, used to resist his society's oppression.

Therefore, even if this oppressive society stops Buthaynah from meeting Jamīl and

³⁷ Jamīl, p. 25

³⁸ Majnūn, p. 77. Note how he used the word *dalīl*, proof, and the link he made between this word and the word tears, p. 170.

³⁹ Kuthayyir, p. 78.

⁴⁰ Qays, p. 43.

⁴¹ Kuthayyir, p. 180.

Lubnā from meeting Qays, it cannot stop them from expressing their emotions and weeping in agony⁴². Majnun ‘provides us with a poetic image that endows tears with a significant psychological dimension:

What runs down from the eye is not its water
But a soul which melts and drips⁴³ [9]

The ‘*udhri*’ poem presents tears as the destined and inevitable fate of lovers. Tears represent disclosure, resistance, witness, or a means of healing from the agonies of love; they are present on a permanent basis. The ‘*udhri*’ poet asserts the continuity of his tears through a range of figural possibilities, as tears are like a river that does not stop flowing and a well that does not dry up⁴⁴. The simile between the tears and the clouds depends on related imagery, of flows⁴⁵. Qays presents a rather distinctive image of the lover who is indifferent to the shift from day to night. As soon as his night tears dry up, his day tears replace them:

If we run out of tears in the evening,
a new wave of tears will come along with the dawn⁴⁶ [10]

This frequent reference to weeping in ‘*udhri*’ poetry does not seem to require further justification from the poet. We already have seen how Qays describes it as equal to love itself. Tears are stimulated by memories:

O Laylā, the flow of tears is rather spontaneous
when I remember you alone⁴⁷. [11]

And is also stimulated by the absence of the beloved:

I never knew before ‘Azzah what weeping is,
nor did I know what agonies of the heart are until she left⁴⁸ [12]

⁴² Jamil, p. 46, Qays, p. 51.

⁴³ Majnun, p. 96, trans. Khairallah, p. 92.

⁴⁴ Kuthayyir, pp. 112, 114.

⁴⁵ Kuthayyir, p. 180, Jamil, p. 97, Majnun, p. 159

⁴⁶ Qays, p. 66.

⁴⁷ Majnun, p. 147.

⁴⁸ Kuthayyir, p. 54.

Qays confirms that he cries over the loss of his beloved and he sees tears as a natural response to the absence of the companion:

I cry, yes I cry as all other lovers
who cry over the loss of their beloved ones⁴⁹ [13]

‘Urwah also says:

Do you every day aim for her country
with eyes in which the pupils are drowning?⁵⁰ [14]

In the case of the absence of his beloved, the poet never lacks reminders of her that stimulate his tears and the ardour of his love. These reminders could be natural elements like fire⁵¹, air⁵² and water⁵³. These reminders could also be animal creatures like doves⁵⁴ and crows—as Majnun’s eyes, for instance, drop tears when hearing the sound of crows⁵⁵. The blowing of the breeze, the cooing of the dove, the cawing of crows, the glittering of the thunder; all these are also reminders that stimulate the poet’s nostalgia and passionate feelings. It is enough to Majnun to hear the name Laylā to make him wet his shawl with tears⁵⁶.

However, the stimulation of tears is not confined to the absence of the beloved; it is also attributed to her presence:

As soon as the eyes behold her,

⁴⁹ Qays, p. 112, and look at his *Diwān*, p. 74. Majnun also relates his image to that of a child when weeping for Laylā, Majnun, p. 132 and look at his *Diwān*, p.75.

⁵⁰ ‘Urwah, p.34, trans. Van Gelder. Unpublished translation, given in a private communication from Prof. Van Gelder.

⁵¹ Jamil, p. 48.

⁵² Majnun, p. 37.

⁵³ The flowing stream moves Majnun to tears, Majnun, p. 28. But the same poem is also attributed to al-‘Abbas b. al-Aḥnaf, p. 47 .

⁵⁴ Jamil, p. 37, Majnun, p. 39.

⁵⁵ Majnun, p. 62. For their indication of the black omen of separation, Salāmah explains that crows in Arab culture refer to two different indications: 1. the Quranic crow that is seen as a post bird, delegated by God to Qabil to teach him funeral rituals and that delegated to Noah to obtain news of the flood; 2. the literary crow that brings the bad omen of separation and loss when it makes sounds, and that is often signified in Arabic poetry. Salāmah, pp. 297-298.

⁵⁶ Majnun, p. 227.

they drop tears while keeping a still look towards her⁵⁷ [15]

The lover does not see any conflict in this as long as weeping forms a genuine element of his overall perception of love and self-expression. Whether his beloved is present or absent, he is always agonised and facing tears and sadness. He cries in fear of her alienation or abandonment⁵⁸. He cries when she approaches and when she departs as there is no limit to his sadness and no hindrance to his tears. He cries until the tears turn into blood:

My eyes would still drop running tears or blood –
if my eyes accede to my wishes⁵⁹ [16]

The poet even attributes to his beloved the ability to make him sad and make his tears turn into blood:

Oh ‘Afra’ how much bitterness you made me feel
and how many times you made my eyes tear
If one lover’s eye is to drop blood instead,
my eye would be the first⁶⁰ [17]

The theme of tears turning into blood became a popular one in love poetry later on; Abū Tammām (d. 232/846), for instance, says:

You have taken me past the limits of pain
Because of you my tears of blood never cease⁶¹ [18]

We should bear in mind that such poetic images contain violence where passion is linked to blood. Blood bears indications of killing and bloodshed. Love causes blood to drop from the eyes and the body of the lover when targeted by the arrows of lovesickness and deprivation. This idea is also linked to the idea of passion itself as a

⁵⁷ Kuthayyir, p. 64.

⁵⁸ Majnun, p. 133.

⁵⁹ Majnun, p. 24.

⁶⁰ ‘Urwah, p. 48. Poetic hyperbole in depicting tears occur frequently in classical Arabic poetry; for example, al-‘Abbas b. al-Aḥnaf cries until his tears irrigate the soil and the grass grows, al-‘Abbas b. al-Aḥnaf, *Diwan*, p. 62.

⁶¹ Abū Tammām Ḥabīb b. ‘Aws al-Ṭā‘ī, *Diwan Abi Tammām bi sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrizī*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abduh ‘Azzam (Cairo: Dar al-ma‘arif, n.d), p. 275, trans. Hamori, “Love Poetry (*Ghazal*)”, p. 217.

power that is closer to hatred than to affection in its violence and intensity⁶². Within the same context Bataille wonders: ‘What does physical eroticism signify if not a violation of the very being of its practitioners?- a violation bordering on death, bordering on murder?’⁶³

It is impossible in this context to avoid thinking of tears as liquid that extinguishes fires. It means that the connotation of tears contradicts that of fire. Fire is seen as the main image adopted by the power of love. Fire, according to human imagination, has different connotations, such as purifying fire or lust fire. Other synonyms of love that bear a similar power to that of fire are burning, the ardour of love, and acrimony⁶⁴. Fires inside the lover reach the extent of being capable of melting iron with the lover’s frenzied breaths⁶⁵. The image of the passionate fires recalls the image of thirst and the need for cooling water. Hence, ‘*udhri*’ poets describe themselves as thirsty in expression of their thirst and yearning towards the beloved. Qays explicitly describes himself as thirsty when referring to his yearning for Lubnā:

See the parched birds which circle round the water night and day,
but for fear being beaten never drink their fill
or come close to the cool ponds
They see the froth of the water and death together
and are attentive to the voices of the water bearers
They are no more afflicted than I am
with the heat of longing and ardour
but the enemy has hindered me⁶⁶

[19]

⁶² The lover might reach levels of hatred towards his beloved, as described in the ‘*udhri*’ poetry: the ‘*udhri*’ poet who wished death to his beloved, Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 1, p. 155.

⁶³ Bataille, p. 17. This is understandable even with the passion fulfilled itself as it ‘provokes such violent agitation that the happiness involved, before being the happiness to be enjoyed, it is so great as to be more like its opposite, suffering’. Bataille, p. 19.

⁶⁴ For the link between love and fire, see Salāmāh, p. 54.

⁶⁵ Majnun, p.30.

⁶⁶ Qays, p. 155. See my comment on these verses in chapter ‘‘*Udhri*’ Tradition: Between Chastity and Sensuality’, p. 70.

Majnūn links the image of water with that of fire in a contradictory poetic depiction:

If my sighs are to reach the sea;
the sea will dry up due to its burning flame⁶⁷ [20]

Jamīl links Buthynah's fire to the water of his eyes:

Your tears become plentiful
as Buthynah's tent fire loomed up ahead of you⁶⁸ [21]

It is important to note that the fire attributed to Buthynah refers to two different things: one is that the fire that is lit for warming or guiding and that is the apparent meaning; the second and deeper meaning is the metaphoric fire that inflames the poet's feelings which he tries to confront by plentiful tears. Through the tears of lovers, we can attribute love, passion and thirst to a power generated by fire. Tears are seen not only as expressions of love; they rather represent the overall power of love, for tears are the water that quenches fire. But tears are also the result of this burning power of love⁶⁹.

It is noteworthy that the theme of fire is prominent in some of the anecdotes ascribed to the 'udhrī poets. For example, *Kitāb al-aghanī* presents a scene in which fire and nudity of the lover's body are connected. Majnūn--the anecdotes shows--was seeking fire while wrapped in a cloak, Laylā brought out the fire in a rag for him and they stood conversing. When the rag burned out, Majnūn tore a piece from his cloak and lit it instead. Then he tore another and another until nothing remained of the cloak⁷⁰. Khan observes that:

The exchange of words (language) between the lovers is made simultaneous with the burning of fire as well as the denuding of the male's lover's body. Burning of fire and baring of body her act as metaphors for linguistic expression

⁶⁷ Majnūn, p. 30.

⁶⁸ Jamīl, p. 48.

⁶⁹ Salamah, p. 58.

⁷⁰ Al-Iṣfahāni, vol. 2, p. 348

(...). Laylā is both the spark that ignites his desire and the night that is unveiled by his passion⁷¹.

The theoretical paradigm enhances the theme of the crying lover; one of the chapters in Ibn Dā'ud's book *al-zahrah*, is entitled: 'who could not find the solace, his weeping increases'. In this chapter he explains that the only true tears are those of a genuine lover; an artificial lover could claim love but without any explicit evidence of tears from his eyes. On the other hand, Ibn Ḥazm, relying on his personal experience, argues that it is true that 'weeping is well-known sign of love'; he explains by adding:

except that men differ very greatly from one another in this particular. Some are ready weepers; their tear-ducts are always over flowing, and their eyes respond immediately to their emotions, the tears rolling down at a moment's notice. Others are dry-eyed and barren of tears; to this category I myself belong⁷²

Salāmāh's claim that for the sake of theorise the passionate love, it has been prated from the individual's experience⁷³. However, Ibn Ḥazm's statement quoted above contradicts with Salāmāh's assertion by confirming that those who wrote on the subject of love did not ignore individual experiences in their endeavour to theorise love.

7.3.2 Malady and Wasting Away

The language that contains references to sickness, wasting away, paleness, malady, (*kabid maqrūḥah*) the damaged liver, and physicians is very conventional in Arabic love discourse. Salāmāh refers to two main aspects in the relationship between love and moderation, where love is either linked to other known diseases or is seen in

⁷¹ Khan, p. 159.

⁷² Ibn Ḥazm, pp. 42-43.

⁷³ Salāmāh, p. 319.

itself as an illness⁷⁴. The other manifestation of love's link to diseases is in the vocabulary that is commonly used to refer to both love and disease: *shagaf*, *jawā*, *'amad*, *khābal*, *kalaf* and *wala*⁷⁵. The word *huyām*, for example, means passion but is also used to refer to a type of fever that affects camels and causes them to experience a burning thirst. 'Urwah begins by describing his *huyām* as a disease:

I am attacked by either despair or the disease of passion (*huyām*)
So you ought to refrain from approaching me lest the disease affects you⁷⁶ [22]

Love seems to be linked to tuberculosis, Muḥammad b. al-Zubayr said: 'while with 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr, I heard him saying to a fellow from 'Udhrah's tribe: You people have the most tender hearts. The fellow replied: Yes, I have left over thirty there with tuberculosis and they have no disease but love'⁷⁷. The link between emotions and tuberculosis is not confined to love, but also to hatred which indicates the bodily influence of emotions. Ziyād b. Abīh in his sermon said: 'If I learnt that some of you died from tuberculosis that was a result of hating me, I would not reveal your secrets unless you acted upon this hatred'⁷⁸.

The *'udhrī* poet 'Urwah's story is typical in this manner. He was promised his beloved cousin 'Afrā' if he became wealthy; so he went away to seek wealth, but during his absence 'Afrā' was married off to another man who took her to Syria. Her father went to an old grave, restored it and put it in order and asked the tribe to keep the matter secret. When 'Urwah arrived, 'Afrā's father told him that she had died and took him to the grave. 'Urwah remained there for several days, wasting away and

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁷⁵ See Salamah's diagram for these terms and their links to other diseases, pp.133-134.

⁷⁶ 'Urwah, p. 53. This verse is also ascribed to Majnūn, p. 229. 229. Note his use of the adjective *Ha'im* (passionate) in association with the noun *'aṭab* (wreck) that tatters his body, p. 25.

⁷⁷ Da'ūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq* (Beirut: Dar al-biḥār, 2003), p. 19. This text also contains a story of a slave girl who was deserted by her master and suffered from tuberculosis until death, Ibn Ḥazm, p. 259.

⁷⁸ Ibn Qutaybah, *'Uyūn al-akhbār*, p. 243.

slowly perishing, until a girl from the tribe came to him and told him what had happened⁷⁹. There are several accounts of what followed, but it is significant how all the accounts insist on ‘Urwah’s sickness and death. In these verses, addressing his friends, he reveals the desperate physical condition of his body:

If you would take off my shirt from me you would clearly see
how much I have suffered on account of ‘Afrā’, my friends!
Then you would see little flesh, decaying bones,
and a heart perpetually palpitating⁸⁰ [23]

His relatives tried to cure him as they would any sick person. In one version of his story in *al-Aghānī* it is stated that

he left ‘Afrā’ and returned to his people, wasted and thin. He had sisters, a maternal aunt and a grandmother, who began to admonish him, but it did not have any effect. They took him to Abū Kuḥaylah Rabāḥ b. Shaddād, the client of the Banū Thu‘aylah, who was the diviner of Ḥajr, so that he could treat him. But his treatment did not have any effect on him⁸¹.

In another account, he

would go to the water cisterns where the camels of ‘Afrā’ would come to drink, and then would press his breast against them. People would say to him, “Take it easy, for you’ll kill yourself! Fear God!” But he would not accept their advice, until finally he was nearly done for and felt death approaching. Then he said, I despair: I have been given to drink the sickness of passionate love. Be warned by me, lest you will have what I suffer⁸².

Of ‘Urwah, it has often been said that ‘nothing but his shadow (ghost, phantom) was left’. The attention that the narrator (*raḥwī*) focused on ‘Urwah’s bad health as a result of passionate love is significant in these accounts. In the last account quoted above, his relatives seek the medical advice of an expert, but the latter is useless in curing such a great sickness. We might recall here what Ibn Dā’ūd said about those who are

⁷⁹ See the full story in *al-Iṣfahānī*, vol. 24, pp. 283-298.

⁸⁰ ‘Urwah, p. 36. trans. Van Gelder.

⁸¹ *Al-Iṣfahānī*, vol. 24, p. 293, trans. Van Gelder.

⁸² *Ibid.*

love-sick: 'This is an incurable disease which doctors are unable to treat'⁸³. 'Urwah puts his story, detailing the attempt to cure him, in a poetic form:

I left it to the diviner of al-Yamāmah to name his fee,
and the diviner of Ḥajr, if only they could cure me.
They have left no trick they knew untried,
no potion but they gave it me to drink.
They sprinkled water on my face for a while
and were quick to visit me, with those who visit the sick.
They said: May God cure you! By God, we have no power
over what your ribs contain⁸⁴ [24]

In fact, the word (*marad*) illness is frequently associated with the word physician (*tabīb*) in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. Apparently, as 'Urwah declared in the verses above, the suffering lover is seeking the cure from the physicians or the diviners. But the lover-poet then states that both physicians and diviners are hopeless in his case. On one hand, he has no choice but death or patience; Majnūn says:

Two physicians!
Were you to treat me I would reward you both,
so why do you forgo the fee?
They said sadly:
'Nothing can help you so either die of grief,
or strengthen yourself with patience.'⁸⁵ [25]

On the other hand, the lover-poet implies that he knows his cure; it is not medical treatment but his beloved:

Laylā's family have made me long for her
and today I have no cure except in Laylā⁸⁶ [26]

Jamīl also declares:

O Buthayna, show some generosity
and requite your suffering lover and salve his maladies and pains!⁸⁷ [27]

⁸³ Ibn Da'ūd, cited and translation by Biesterfeldt and Gutas, p. 45.

⁸⁴ 'Urwah, pp. 39-40. trans. Van Gelder.

⁸⁵ Majnūn, 123, and see also Qays, p. 23.

⁸⁶ Majnūn, p. 29.

⁸⁷ Jamīl, p. 53.

If the beloved blessed the lover just once with a visit while he was sick, because of his love for her, then there would be nothing left for him to desire in this life and would therefore be happy to die. Qays says:

Qays was treated for the love of Lubnā,
which was his sickness, and love is a terrible sickness.
When the women came to visit me one day my eye said:
'I see not the one I desire.'
If only Lubnā would visit me, then I would gladly die
but she comes not amongst those who visit⁸⁸ [28]

Qays believes love to be (*dā' shadīd*), a terrible malady. According to 'udhri poetry all the malady's symptoms are obvious in the lover: paleness, thinness, feverous and thirst. As for paleness and wasting away, Qays illustrates this point:

Love has signs that are patent in a youth
He becomes pale and his knuckles stick out from his hands⁸⁹ [29]

His usage of the word 'signs' is noteworthy in this context; it shows that the idea of proving love by using bodily symptoms was already circulating in Arabic culture in Qays's time. One should bear in mind that this idea became very conventional in Arabic love theory. Both Ibn Dā'ūd and al-Washshā', for instance, consider the emaciated body to be evidence of true love: in his book, *Kitāb al-zahrah*, Ibn Dā'ūd devotes a whole chapter to this, entitled: 'The body's pining is a sign of agony (*kamad*)'. He explains the effect of emotion on the body from a medical perspective: 'the heat that is engendered by grief flows into the heart from all parts of the body and then ascends to the brain'⁹⁰.

There are many tales in *Maṣāri' al-'ushshaq* that enhance the theme of the sick-lover. In one account, al-Sarraḡ narrates that a slave girl who is loved by a pious youth sends him a red rose, which he straps to his upper arm as he lies on his death-

⁸⁸ Qays, p. 41.

⁸⁹ Qays, p. 66. Kuthayyir also says: 'That Dūmri's daughter is asking me: why you are pale'. Kuthayyir, p. 223.

⁹⁰ Ibn Dā'ūd, vol. 2, p. 400.

bed⁹¹. Considering the ‘*udhri*’ tradition, there are frequent references to the theme of wasting away in Majnūn’s story and his poetry alike. For example, he claims:

I have had so much hardship with her
that I melted with passion and my bones turned to dust⁹² [30]

Here he ascribes extraordinary effects to love. Love is like death in which the bones become feeble. Sura 36 in the Quran reads: ‘And he makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own (origin and) Creation: He says, “Who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?”. Say, “He will give them life Who created them for the first time! for He is Well-versed in every kind of creation”⁹³. Majnūn’s use of religious lexicon is also evident when he enquires about whether it is lawful for Laylā to hurt his body or not⁹⁴. Jamīl, likewise, pleads Buthaynah to fear God and not to kill her lover⁹⁵.

We have already emphasised the theme of thirst in ‘*udhri*’ tradition⁹⁶. In this context it seems that the thirst is one of the signs of malady caused by love, Qays cries:

I have suffered such a trial with Lubnā
that no drop will pass my lips⁹⁷ [31]

The love-sickness is so intense that it can even melt the lover’s soul and not just his body, ‘Urwah declares:

We suffer in the breast a love-pain (anguish) from the sickness of sorrows
for which a pitying soul would almost melt.
But a once strong body has left only the last breath of someone
who laments over what he suffers⁹⁸ [32]

⁹¹ Al-Sarrāj, vol. 1, p. 16.

⁹² Majnūn, p. 201.

⁹³ Ya Sin (36: 77-78).

⁹⁴ Majnūn, p. 137.

⁹⁵ Jamīl, p. 52.

⁹⁶ See chapter 2 and the previous section in this chapter.

⁹⁷ Qays, p. 20.

⁹⁸ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 24, p. 297, trans. Van Gelder.

Jamīl clearly associates ‘*udhri*’ love with slenderness, he says, criticising a man called

Ja‘far who was eating while claiming that he is in love:

Ja‘far surprises me! He avidly eats my loaf of bread, while
shedding tears because of Jumī [a girl’s name]
If your attachment were ‘*udhri*’ you would not eat your belly full: love would
have made you forget gorging yourself⁹⁹ [33]

In any case, it is significant how the theme of emaciation of the lover becomes essential in classical Arabic ghazal poetry. There are endless examples that confirm the importance of this theme, but studying them is beyond the scope of this chapter. I would rather give a few examples from some famous Abbasid poets. Al-‘Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf, for instance, declares:

All that love for her has left of me is
a last gasp in a gaunt body¹⁰⁰ [34]

In this verse, al-Mutanabbī is not only wasting away, because of love, but he is also proud of this thinness and indeed of anyone who is thin:

For love of you I truly love my emaciation,
and every emaciated man¹⁰¹ [35]

Bashshār b. Burd took the image of a thin lover to a new extent:

In my cloak there is an emaciated body
Were you to lean upon it, it would crumble¹⁰² [36]

⁹⁹ Jamīl, p. 82, cited in Greet Jan Van Gelder, *Of Dishes and Discourse Classical Arabic Literary Representations of Food* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), p. 112.

However, in other reports active love and a good appetite are deemed perfectly compatible. The famous ‘Ayshah b. Ṭalḥah is impressed by one of her several husbands and says to him admiringly the morning after their wedding night: ‘I have never seen anyone like you; you have eaten as much as seven men, prayed as much as seven men, and fucked as much as seven men’. See Van Gelder, p. 112.

¹⁰⁰ Al-‘Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf, p. 130, trans. Hamori, p. 213.

¹⁰¹ Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Diwan*, sharḥ Abū al-Baqā’ al-‘Ukburī, ed. Kamāl Ṭālib (Beirut, Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmyyah, 1997), vol. 3, p. 24.

¹⁰² Bashshār b. Burd, *Diwan*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. ‘Ashūr (Tūnis: al-Sharikah al-tūnusyyiah lil-twzi’, 1976), p. 188.

Interestingly, although Bashshār was reported to be a large man in real life, he abides by the poetic conventions, which depict the lover as emaciated. Some subsequent poets provided more hyperbole images; al-Ḥasan b. Wahab, for instance, said:

You have worn out my body which was once strong –
now your eye can barely perceive it ¹⁰³ [37]

7.3.3 Insomnia

The lexicon of the long nights, the sleepless lover, the unrelenting stars and the abandoned beds is common in the ‘*udhri*’ poets’ discourse. As passionate love associates the lover’s body with sickness, weeping and wasting away, it also links it to insomnia. Majnun addresses his companions or the travelers ‘who spent their nights in melancholy contemplation of the starlit sky’¹⁰⁴:

O herders of the nightly flock,
What has the morning done,
And what is spritely heralds?
And those who hold captive my heart,
What do they care
Whether they alight or once again set out?
And unrelenting stars, suspended
From a lover’s heart,
What do they care?(...)
O herders of the nightly flock,
Mind me no more,
My fated love has slain me well¹⁰⁵ [38]

Majnun’s expression: ‘unrelenting stars, suspended from a lover’s heart’ is worthy of notice here. Stars are pieces of nature yet they are linked with the lover’s suffering; they do not exemplify light and shining, they merely illustrate how long the lover’s night is. However, it seems that the motif of slow-wheeling stars was already

¹⁰³ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (Cairo: al-Mu’asasah al-miṣryah al-‘ammah liltalīf wa al-tarjamah wa al-tibā‘ah wa al-nashr, n.d), vol. 2, p. 260. See more examples on pp. 259-260.

¹⁰⁴ Stetkevych, p. 162.

¹⁰⁵ Stetkevych, p. 162.

¹⁰⁵ Majnun, pp. 61-62, trans. Stetkevych, p. 162.

established in Arabic poetry before the emergence of the 'udhri tradition; the pre-Islamic poet al-Nābighah al-Dhubyanī 'despairs of the morning star, as pastor, ever bringing in his herds'¹⁰⁶:

Leave me, O Umaymah, to wearisome care
And to a night of slow-wheeling
Stars that I bear-
A night that stretched on till I said:
It will not end,
And he who herds the stars will not return¹⁰⁷ [39]

Afterwards, the motif of herders of the stars that have not returned became very common in the Arabic ghazal. Many poets used this image to illustrate their long sleepless nights. The famous Abbasid poet Abū Tammām, for instance, says:

Many a night I spent keeping watch
as if mortally wounded,
Or sleepless over one by viper stung
Of its stars I pastured
white, free-grazing camels,
That do not return to him
who in the pasture frees them
But had you asked the dark of night about me,
I swear,
Of a great passion it would have brought you news¹⁰⁸ [40]

Abū Tammām here uses the image of a wounded or stung person, who cannot sleep because of his physical pain, in order to demonstrate this emotional pain. He asks his beloved to ask the dark night about him to prove that his sleeplessness is because of his great passion. But the image of a wounded or stung person is not new; Abū Tammām was reiterating an earlier Arabic sensibility. Long before him, al-Nābighah

¹⁰⁶ Stetkevych, p. 148.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Stetkevych, p. 148.

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Stetkevych, p. 156. It is noteworthy, however, that many poets link insomnia with pain in different contexts. In elegy poetry, many poets emphasise the theme of insomnia as an integral part of their grief over the loss of a dear person. See, for example, *diwān* al-Khansa' where she enhances this aspect in many ways. On the other hand, al-Nābighah al-Dhubyanī expresses his fear of the king al-Nu'man by demonstrating that he could not sleep as he has been stung by a snake.

al-Dhubyānī used the same image but with more details¹⁰⁹. And then we find the

‘*udhri* poet Qays declaring the following:

It seems that because of Lubnā
I am as one stung and sleepless and walk dizzily,
supported by men’s arms¹¹⁰ [41]

In other verses he wonders how it is possible for a man to sleep while he is suffering from great passion and dolour¹¹¹. ‘Urwah asks his friends to describe what sleep is because his longing for his beloved thwarted his chances of tasting it¹¹². Hence, the longing for the beloved is considered the most essential reason for insomnia among the ‘*udhri* poets; this can be seen when Jamīl reveals that the exhaustive longing and the memory of his beloved have prevented him from sleeping¹¹³. However, when it comes to Majnūn, it seems that the experience of insomnia is a crucial one in his experience of love; thus it is not just associated with the absence of his beloved:

I find no solace in being far away nor any benefit in proximity
My nights are long and my insomnia is hard¹¹⁴ [42]

Similar to some other poets, who present themselves as the star’s herder; Majnūn presents himself as a herder of *al-Thurayyia* and *al-Farqadān*, which are names of stars, simply because he is in love¹¹⁵. Furthermore, while true believers, according to the Quran, abandon their beds because of their fear of God¹¹⁶, Majnūn abandons his bed because of his love for Laylā:

Do you, because of a shining traveler in the darkness of the night,
refuse a soft bed out of fear of separation?¹¹⁷ [43]

¹⁰⁹ When expressing his fear of the king al-Nu‘mān.

¹¹⁰ Qays, p. 121.

¹¹¹ Qays, p. 59.

¹¹² ‘Urwah, p. 51.

¹¹³ Jamīl, p. 70. Similar concepts are available in Kuthayyir’s *Dīwān*, pp. 85, 206.

¹¹⁴ Majnūn, p. 69.

¹¹⁵ Majnūn, p. 72.

¹¹⁶ Al-Sajda (32: 16).

¹¹⁷ Majnūn, p. 151.

7.3.4 Prematurely grey-haired

Becoming grey-haired is considered among the signs of the changing body; either because of age or because of grief. In the Qur'an the process of becoming old is linked to the change in colour of the hair to grey; 'O my Lord! infirm indeed are my bones, and the hair of my head doth glisten with grey: but never am I unblest, O my Lord, in my prayer to Thee'¹¹⁸. However, this change in colour is also used to illustrate the horror of the last day; 'Then how shall ye, if ye deny [Allah], guard yourselves against a Day that will make children hoary-headed?'¹¹⁹. In Arabic literary discourse white hair has gloomy associations; Abouseif argues:

In contrast to youth, it epitomized sexual abstinence, decrepitude, solitude, and despair. The poets lament over and over that white hair provokes the disgust of beautiful women. While some wrote ironical apologies of the aged man, many composed poems where the white-haired lover is being ridiculed by women¹²⁰.

This is clearly evident in classical Arabic poetry where the poets often complained about the aloofness of women, towards them, when they lost their youth or the colour of their hair had changed. For example, in 'Alqamah b. 'Abdah's "*Mufaḍḍaliyah*", he claims:

If you ask me about womankind,
I am indeed
Discerning in their ailments,
eminently skilled:
Should a man's head hoary
or his wealth decrease,
He will find no share
in their affections
They seek abundant wealth
wherever they know it's found
In youth's first bloom alone

¹¹⁸ Maryam (19: 3).

¹¹⁹ Al-Muzzammil (73: 16).

¹²⁰ Abouseif, p. 58.

‘Alqamah composes these verses in the framework of the *nasīb*, where he longs for an irretrievable past. Not only has his beloved gone, his own youth has also fled and other beloveds will spurn him in favor of the younger and wealthier¹²². Thus, an Arabic poet would try to attract women by describing his youth and black hair instead of declaring that he is becoming old and that his hair has turned white. Al-Nuwayirī, for instance, presents several narratives and verses on the condemnation of ageing and the changing colour of hair¹²³.

However, in *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī* we encounter a different image of the lover; the image of somebody who has been affected by great passion to the extent that he looks old and his hair is prematurely grey. The ‘*udhrī* poet does not hesitate to use this gloomy image to convey that his body is changing because of his passionate love. Jamīl states that the fear of separation turns his hair grey¹²⁴.

Although the prevailing view in Arabic literature indicates that old age means the abandonment of love adventures¹²⁵, Majnūn confirms that his heart is increasingly enchanted by love, despite his old age. This indicates that the *udhrī* poet’s love experience is not a temporary one or a passing phase, but an everlasting

¹²¹ ‘Alqamah b. ‘Abdah, “*Mufaḍḍaliyah*”, trans. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, “Pre Islamic Panegyric and the Poetics of Redemption Mufaḍḍaliyah 119 of ‘Alqamah and Banat Su‘ad of Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr”, in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian poetry* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 8.

¹²² Suzanne Stetkevych, p. 11. See her discussion of the metaphorical meaning of these verses, where she argues that the conceit of the lost mistress functions as a metaphorical pre-statement of the explicit statement of the poet’s political situation in the coming verses, p. 12.

¹²³ Al-Nuwayirī, vol. 2, pp. 25-28.

¹²⁴ Jamīl, p. 97.

¹²⁵ Durayd b. al-Ṣummaḥ, the pre-Islamic poet, says:

He recklessly plays around during his youth
But when grey hair overtops his head, he abandons vanity

Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Marzuqī, *Sharḥ diwān al-ḥamasah li Abī Tammām*, ed. Aḥmad Amin and others (Cairo: Lajnat al-ta’līf wa al-tarjamah wa al-nashr, 1951), p. 255.

experience as he attributes his old age to: ‘agonies that wear out my youth’¹²⁶. Jamīl also says:

I wasted my youth,
and all my life waiting for her favours¹²⁷ [45]

Despite the negative reception of grey hair in Arabic culture, especially regarding its connection with love and affairs, we find Majnūn and Jamīl validate their prematurely grey hair as long as it is a consequence of love. They do not fear the mockery of the beloved or her aloofness since they sacrifice their youth for the sake of love. However after this, the lover’s body was presented in different forms in Arabic belles-lettres. One might recall the image of the lover in some Abbasid books which dealt with the theme of love. The lover is described as similar to a gentleman rather than being portrayed as the wasting away, pale and prematurely grey-haired lover, which is seen in the ‘*udhrī*’ tradition. For example, al-Washshā’ describes in detail what a *ẓarīf*, or gentleman, of the ninth century should be like. Some chapters in *al-Muwashshā* even deal with how the *ẓarīf* should talk, sit, eat and walk. The *ẓarīf*’s clothes should be refined and discreet, and only certain perfumes are regarded as appropriate¹²⁸. Nevertheless, in terms of the poetic form, the depiction of the lover as becoming prematurely grey-haired continues to be present in Arabic ghazal. In the Abbasid era, al-‘Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf, for instance, says:

O you who first knew me as a youth then I grew old
when it was not my time to grow old¹²⁹ [46]

¹²⁶ Majnūn, p. 235.

¹²⁷ Jamīl, p. 25, trans. Kinany, p. 288.

¹²⁸ For more details see al-Washshā’, pp. 178-184, 191-198.

¹²⁹ Al-Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf, p. 25.

7.3.5 Fainting

In ‘Urwah’s story, as illustrated in *al-Aghānī*, there is a scene where the lover suffered from fainting and only the smell of ‘Afrā’s veil can awake him:

When he departed from them his condition deteriorated, after having been healthy and on the way to recovery. He suffered from fainting fits and palpitations. Whenever he lost consciousness they would throw on his face a veil that had belonged to ‘Afrā’ and which she had given to him; then he would come to his senses¹³⁰.

Fainting represents the desire not to communicate with the outside world or even feel it. However, when the outside world is represented by the beloved, or anything that relates to her, the lover is revived as if fainting were a mini death and the smell of the beloved alone would enable one to gain life after death. The Quranic scene of the prophet Jacob who regains his sight after his son's shirt is thrown over his face¹³¹ is definitely not absent from the narrators' imagination when it comes to the stories of *udhri* lovers.

Thus, fainting is another example of the physical effects of love¹³² and it is particularly common in Majnūn’s story. There are several scenes in his romance where he faints, for example, after Laylā recited these verses to him:

Both of us appear in front of people
To hate each other
And yet each is entrenched with his friend
The secrets of the glancer are not hidden
If the eyes disclose what he conceals

Hearing this, he fell into a swoon and rose having lost his senses¹³³. The frequency of the scenes of fainting in Majnūn’s romance led Ṭaha Ḥusayn to approach Majnūn’s character somewhat sarcastically:

¹³⁰ Al-*Iṣfahānī*, vol. 24, p. 289, trans. Van Gelder.

¹³¹ See Yusuf (12:96).

¹³² Fainting lovers is a well-established theme in the tales of *The Arabian Nights*. See, for instance, Manzalaoui’s discussion of the tale of ‘Alī b. Bakkār and Shams, in which the two lovers embraced each other and fell down fainting at the door. Mahmoud Manzalaoui, “Swooning Lovers: a Theme in Arab and European Romance”, pp. 74-76.

It was not enough that you would talk to him about Laylā, for him to faint and fall on his face (...) He spent all his life either falling on his face, or wandering at large. He never, or almost never, knew a calm, reasonable life; all his life was full of anxiety, divided between fainting and madness¹³⁴.

However, Ḥusayn's criticism is based on the irrational details of 'udhri stories, he fails to see the literary side of these stories that continues to fascinate the audience and this failure could lead the reader to miss the symbolism it contains. In Majnūn's romance, there is always 'a connection between a fainting spell and the sight or mention of Laylā, and between the fainting spell and the poetry uttered immediately before or after these spells'¹³⁵. Majnūn's poetry emphasises this point:

The wind from her has brought a cool breath,
of her perfume upon my heart
I swooned, for my patience was long gone
and I had had neither answer nor reply¹³⁶ [47]

In these verses, Majnūn is not only completely besotted by the presence or the vision of his beloved, he also faints merely as a result of the moving wind, which acts as a reminder of his beloved¹³⁷. In one account, Majnūn faints out of rage and jealousy when he meets Laylā's husband and asked him if he had ever touched Laylā. Her husband said: 'By God, if you put me under oath, yes'. So, Majnūn grasped two handfuls of embers and held them until he fell unconscious and the embers and the flesh of his palms fell down¹³⁸. Here, an extreme bodily reaction is attributed to the lover, where he burnt his hands and fainted. Amusingly, the reaction of fainting is not just associated to 'udhri poets, their beloveds as well are associated with it at

¹³³ Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 338, trans. Khan, p. 167. See more examples in Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, pp. 341, 370.

¹³⁴ Ṭahāh Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-arbi'a*, 12th edn (Cairo: Dār al-ma'arif, 1976), p. 198, trans. Khairallah, p. 93.

¹³⁵ Khairallah, p. 93.

¹³⁶ Majnūn, p. 67.

¹³⁷ Khairallah points out that the motif of fainting is popular with the sufis, who pass from perplexity to fainting on the way to the vision of, and unity with, the beloved. The highest degree of this experience is expressed by the term *ṣar*' (epileptic fit, or death). Khairallah, p. 94.

¹³⁸ Cited in Khairallah, p. 87.

some points. Ibn Qutaybah narrates an anecdote about a man from the *Murrah* tribe who went on business passing close to Najd, where he was taken care of by a woman. She asked him about Majnūn and he replied to her saying that Majnūn was wandering in the desert with the wild animals, possessing neither sense nor understanding except when Laylā was mentioned to him; then he would weep and recite poetry for her. The man from *Murrah* then said: ‘She wailed and wept until, by God, I thought that her heart would break’. Then she recited some verses and she cried until she fainted, and when she regained consciousness she told him that she was Laylā¹³⁹.

In his comparative study, Manzalaoui shows that the phenomenon of the tearful and fainting lover is common of in Chaucer; the hero of *Troilus and Criseyde* is of this nature and Troilus’s faint does successfully win him Criseyde. Moreover, the fainting lover is not confined to Chaucer; swoons are attributed to the two manliest of all heroes Tristan and Lancelot¹⁴⁰. Manzalaoui declares that ‘the weeping and fainting lover represents, for the figure of the hero in medieval romance, the furthest development from resolute warrior and voyager-hero of epic’¹⁴¹. In any case, among the striking similarities between Arabic tales of *The Arabian Nights* and Chaucer’s *Troilus*, as Manzalaoui points out, are; the similarity in tone and attitude, love at first sight, the topos of the bow and arrow of love that inflicts a wound upon the lover’s heart, the sense that love is a fated disaster and the double faint of the lovers¹⁴².

¹³⁹ Ibn Qutaybah, pp. 566-567, trans. Khairallah, p. 138.

¹⁴⁰ Mahmoud Manzalaoui, “Swooning Lovers: a Theme in Arab and European Romance”, p. 71.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 76-82.

7.3.6 Madness

Among the synonyms of love in the Arabic language, about twenty of them relate love, in varying degrees, to insanity. This list contains words such as, *huyām*, *tabul*, *taym*, *Khabal*, *lamam*, and *mass*¹⁴³. Madness also has its various forms, and one of them is expressed as ‘*ishq*’¹⁴⁴, as noted by the early philologist and lexicographer al-Aṣma‘ī who travelled among the Bedouin Arabs. In this light, one can understand the great emphasis placed on madness in classical Arabic love stories¹⁴⁵. This may explain why Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Qayyim suggested that the first line of defence against falling into *hawā* is to let oneself be guided by reason ‘*aql*, or by the rational soul. And so they stand in these respects in direct conflict with the main *adab* tradition¹⁴⁶.

In comparison with Western literature, Manzalaoui notes that ‘madness is frequently the terminal fate in Arabic tales, while in the occidental ones it occurs (whether in a true or feigned form) as an episode in the life of a lover, rather than as his end’¹⁴⁷. This idea is re-iterated in the following lines by Shakespeare:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ The last word *mass* has multiple meanings including madness, intercourse and passionate love. The link between the *jinn* and madness is also implicated in the word *mass*. For a detailed discussion of the words that link love with madness see Salamah, pp. 163-178. And for the motif of Majnun being touched by *jinn*, see Khairallah, p. 89.

¹⁴⁴ Cited in Giffen, p. 64.

¹⁴⁵ For example, in *The Thousand and One Nights* the tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur is a tale of mutual love-madness. Qamar suffers from madness and pines for his beloved, while Budur is afflicted by violent madness and has to be physically restrained; finally the reunion of the two lovers was the ideal cure for both of them. See: *The Book of The Thousand and One Nights*, trans. Burton, Vol. 3 (New York: Heritage Press, 1962), pp. 1062-251.

¹⁴⁶ Giffen, “Love Poetry and Love Theory in Medieval Arabic Literature”, in *Arabic Poetry Theory and Development*, ed. G.E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973), p. 114.

¹⁴⁷ Manzalaoui, p. 44.

¹⁴⁸ A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Act V, scene I, 4-22).

In Majnūn's romance, after Laylā marries another man, Majnūn completely loses his reason despite all attempts to cure him, and this is the basis of the legend and, of course, also explains the legendarily appellation attributed to him of Majnūn, the madman. Ibn Qutaybah, in one of the early Arabic accounts about Majnūn, states that: 'He was nicknamed al-Majnūn (the madman), since his reason had left him because of the intensity of his passion'¹⁴⁹. In this account, Ibn Qutaybah offers a detailed description of Majnūn's madness:

[Laylā] would shun him and converse with others, to the point where he was hurt. When she realized that, she turned to him and said:
In front of other people, we both display hatred,
While each of us is entrenched in the other's heart
Things worsened for him so much that his reason left him, and he wandered aimlessly with the wild beasts. He would not put on any garment without tearing it to pieces, nor he would understand anything unless Laylā was mentioned to him. Once she was mentioned, he would recover his reason and talk about her without dropping a letter¹⁵⁰.

Dols observes that 'the freedom of the harmless madman and familial care are conspicuous features in the early Arabic accounts'¹⁵¹. However, *al-Aghānī*'s version of this particular account includes some additional details. For example, when Majnūn failed to perform the ritual prayer and his father asked him for an explanation, he would not respond with [even] a word. His father, the narrator, continues: 'we used to confine and chain him, and then he [resorted to] biting his tongue and lips until fearing for him, we let him go his way. And so, he madly wanders'¹⁵². Listening to Laylā's verses led Majnūn to wander in the desert. Khan notes that, in this account, Majnūn is portrayed as being unerringly voluble in

¹⁴⁹ Ibn Qutaybah, p. 563, trans. Khairallah, p. 135.

¹⁵⁰ Ibn Qutaybah, p. 565, trans. Khairallah, p. 136.

¹⁵¹ Dols, p. 313.

¹⁵² Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, p. 338. trans. Khan, p. 176.

language that is highly erring (poetry) and his fluency in poetic speech is compared to his muteness when asked to utter prayers¹⁵³.

In any case, Majnūn's madness, as expressed in several accounts, appears to be a 'break with the commonly accepted norms of behaviour, whether on a personal or on a social level'¹⁵⁴. He wandered in the desert and made friends with beasts, speaking to no one and completely neglecting his physical appearance¹⁵⁵. So, 'however Majnūn's madness is interpreted, it cannot completely conceal the discernible stigma that has commonly been attached to insanity in Arab society'¹⁵⁶. The narrators of Majnūn's story bring to our attention his physical appearance in particular, though they also provide some stereotyped elements of mad behaviour in general. His physical condition 'becomes his distinguishing mark as an incarnation of the love-mad poet, and in contrast to other heroes of the same type of romance'¹⁵⁷. One might recall, for instance, the images used to describe Jamīl; the narratives portray him as a handsome, noble, knight, who wears fine clothes and acts appropriately¹⁵⁸. However Jamīl says:

When I said: give me back my reason (caught by you)
I want to live like other people (without passion)
She said: you are asking an impossible thing¹⁵⁹ [48]

Majnūn, on the other hand, is portrayed as having become childlike and as the archetypal madman. Although Dols claims that 'Majnūn's withdrawal was an

¹⁵³ Khan, p. 180.

¹⁵⁴ Khairallah, p. 82.

¹⁵⁵ In his attempt to define Majnūn's legend within a mystical framework, Khairallah claims that these manifestations have the further significance of being parallel to some mystical states (*ahwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*). Nevertheless, he admits that the mystical interpretation of these manifestations of madness, and the relating of them to the presence of a possessing spirit, is only one way of understanding the legend. Khairallah, p. 94.

¹⁵⁶ Dols, p. 332.

¹⁵⁷ Khairallah, p. 83.

¹⁵⁸ Al-Isfahānī, vol. 8, p. 290. See also al-'Aqqād's discussion on Jamīl's fine appearance, pp. 25-26.

¹⁵⁹ Jamīl, p. 25, trans. Kinany, p. 288.

expression of his rejection of society and his own humanity'¹⁶⁰, it could also be argued that pity was aroused by his act. For example, after tying him up, his family freed him fearing that he would hurt himself when biting his lips and tearing his garments; furthermore, all those who visited him in the desert seemed to show him compassion. Nevertheless, Majnūn's madness appears to be in conflict with the society, as Khairallah points out:

Majnūn seems to be the farthest expression of the glamorized rebellion against social, religious, and intellectual conventions. These alienating conventions seem to have generated a counter-alienation, on outcry for total freedom, and a desire to return to unity with nature, where life is imagined to be beyond good and evil (...). Totally naked, Majnūn lets his hair grow all over his body. He grazes with animals and runs with them, mainly with gazelles, who resemble his God: Laylā. This behaviour marks his irremediable madness. Thus, several anecdotes identify his appearance with that of the jinn themselves. The insistence on this characteristic of Majnūn's appearance, could be interpreted both as an expression of the popular imagination behind the legend, and as a crystallization of Majnūn's identification with the irrational forces of nature¹⁶¹.

Majnūn's unkempt physical appearance: his long nails, his long and unkempt hair, his nudity and the growth of his body hair, all portray an image that is unacceptable for Muslim men. Many critics such as, Andre Miquel, Khairallah, Michael Dols and Ruqayya Khan noted the anti-Islamic tendencies of Majnūn's characterisation as a wild man. Dols declares that: 'the savage would appear as the negator of Muslim social values'¹⁶². While Khan demonstrates that 'Majnūn is both negated against and the negator: he is both the sinful wild man and the romanticized, rebellious wild man'¹⁶³. She sees his bestiality and nudity as bodily signs of a moral decay caused by

¹⁶⁰ Dols, p. 333.

¹⁶¹ Khairallah, p. 85.

¹⁶² Dols, p. 335.

¹⁶³ Khan, p. 93.

his disregard for familial and religious conventions¹⁶⁴. Both Khan and Khairallah point out the romanticized picture of the poet who returns to natural perfection, living outside of society's boundaries, and instead lives in harmony with the animals who have become accustomed to him¹⁶⁵. The use of the image of the 'Bedouin wild man as a means of rebellion against established society itself' is, Khan argues, tragic:

Majnun represents the image of the wild man—the madman in the desert, without a name, a genealogy, a home or a history—employed as an icon of rebellion against the 'civilizing mission of Islam'. His geographical errancy or mad wanderings in search of the Najd are sentimentalized as a nostalgic gravitation toward the pristine Bedouin homeland¹⁶⁶.

However, the emphasis Khan puts on Majnun being Bedouin, thus the representation of Bedouin rebellion against civilizing mission of Islam, is a questionable one. On one hand, mad lovers can be found in Arabic literature as living in big cities such as Baghdad as well as in the Bedouin desert¹⁶⁷. On the other hand, the Bedouin were an integral part of Muslim society so the conflicts they might have had with one aspect or another of Islam are not unique to them just because they were Bedouin¹⁶⁸. I would rather see Majnun's depiction as an individual whose behaviour contrasts with both Islamic and Bedouin norms, establishing his own conduct as an outcast of society.

In his poetry, Majnun tries to deny his madness, linking his ability to compose poetry to his obsession with Layla:

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

¹⁶⁵ Khairallah, p. 87, Khan, p.93. However, Khan emphasises the symbol of gazelles in Majnun's wilderness, but she neglected the other animals, which are not peace-loving animals, like (*waḥsh*) beasts, which are associated with Majnun as well as gazelles in the narratives.

¹⁶⁶ Khan, p. 99.

¹⁶⁷ There are several examples of mad lovers in cities. See, for instance, the story told by al-Sarrāj about a mad lover from al-Baṣrah, who ultimately killed himself. Ja'far b. Aḥmad al-Sarrāj, *Masār' al-'ushshaq* (Beirut : Dār ṣādir, 1958), vol. 1, pp. 19-20.

¹⁶⁸ In spite of Khan's emphasis on Majnun's tribe, the Bedouin tribe of Banū 'Āmir, as an anti-type the Prophet, other sources suggest a contrasting idea about the tribe and their embrace of Islam. See, for example, 'Abdullah b. Muḥammad b. Abī Shaybah, *Kitāb al-muṣannaf* (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1994), vol. 7, p. 560.

They speak of a madman crazed with her memory
 By God, I have no madness, nor am I bewitched
 If I try to compose poetry not in her remembrance
 I swear by your fathers, my verse will not obey¹⁶⁹ [49]

It is worth noticing that while condemning Majnūn for being a madman out of his love, the “wise” men also chase after him in order to hear to his poetry¹⁷⁰. If he is bewitched by magic, Laylā is his magic, and for her sake he composes his poetry that those “wise” men are longing to hear. In short, Majnūn’s mad outpourings are received, to some extent, as a source of knowledge¹⁷¹. Majnūn’s story in the hands of Nawfal b. Musāḥiq, moreover, demonstrates the link between wildness and poetry. Nawfal saw Majnūn naked, playing with earth. He was told that if he wanted Majnūn to talk sensibly, he should mention Laylā to him, and when Nawfal did so, Majnūn gave him his attention, and talked to him about Laylā, reciting his poetry about her¹⁷². This text reveals the collation between Majnūn’s recital of poetry and his becoming wild. When Majnūn becomes wild, he takes on the characteristics of the deer, whereas when he recites poetry, he is brought back to human balance, which makes the deer shun him.

7.3.7 Death

Maṣārī‘ al-‘ushshaq by al-Sarrāj (d. 500/1106) greatly popularised the theme that the consequences of passionate love were tragic. The word *Maṣārī‘* comes from the root that has a connection with “throwing down to the ground”. From this the

¹⁶⁹ Majnūn, p. 118, trans. Khairallah, p. 95.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example, al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 2, pp. 371,386.

¹⁷¹ From the title of Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥasan al-Naysāburī’s book: *‘Uqalā’ al-majānīn’*, [*The Wise Fool*], one could observe the ambiguity surrounding the reception of madman in Arabic culture. The narratives ascribed in this book to mad people imply a great sense of wisdom, and show how “normal” people seek that kind of wisdom. Moreover, many people who have been associated with madness are depicted as lovers, whether of human beloveds or for God and they always seem to be aware of their condition, and sometimes even happy about it. See: Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥasan al-Naysāburī, *‘Uqalā’ al-majānīn*, ed. ‘Abd al-Amir Muhanna (Beirut: Dar al-fikr al-lubnānī, 1990).

¹⁷² Ibn Qutaybah, vol. 2, p. 565, trans. Khairallah, p. 137. In al-Iṣfahānī’s version of this story, the deer that accompanied Majnūn left when he recited poetry.

meanings “to fall down in an epileptic fit”, “to go mad” or “to be killed in battle” are derived. The word is appropriate in the title of this book, for it embraces almost all the afflictions described in its pages: fainting, madness and death¹⁷³. *Maṣārī‘ al-‘ushshaq* is just one example, and in fact, most love stories in classical Arabic literature place an atypical poignancy on the tragedy associated with love, but needless to say, this manner is typical of the ‘*udhri*’ tradition. In Arabic treatises, which deal with the theme of love, one can find endless examples of the tragic end of a lover¹⁷⁴ including insanity, wasting away, sudden death or the double death of the pair as in this tale:

Ibn al-Ashdaq says: I was making my ritual circumambulation of the Ka‘ba at Mecca, when I remarked a young man standing under the eaves-trough, his head held down beneath his robe, moaning like a man in fever. I greeted him: he returned my salutation and then said, ‘From where do you come?’ ‘From Basra’ I replied. ‘Are you returning there?’ he asked. ‘Yes’, I said. ‘When you reach al-Nibaj, go forth to the villagers and cry out, “Hilāl, o Hilāl!” A young girl will come forth to you. Recite this verse to her:
I craved for a doom hurled out of your eyes
That you might see in me a man killed by love’.
He died on the spot. When I reached al-Nibaj, I went forth to the villagers and called out, ‘Hilāl, o Hilāl!’ A girl came forth to me, more beautiful than I had ever seen. ‘What have you to say?’ she asked. ‘A young man at Mecca recited this verse to me...’ ‘What did he do next?’ she asked. ‘He died’.
She fell down dead upon the spot.¹⁷⁵

In this tale, death is almost a choice as the poet identifies the moment of his death in accordance with the intensity of both his love and his poetry. It is implied that the

¹⁷³ See Giffen, p. 108. Interestingly, the tragic effects of love have been used by Muslim authors who have a strong interest in morality, to condemn [love]. In their discourse, the passionate lover is always tragically driven to fornication, incest, murder, suicide or madness. See, for instance, ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. al-Jawzī, *Dhamm al-hawā*, [In Blame of Love] (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 1987).

However, a book like *Maṣārī‘ al-‘ushshaq* is written with sympathy for the sorrows of love.

¹⁷⁴ See, for instance, al-Washshā’, pp. 94-98, al-Nuwayrī, vol. 2, pp. 160, 184, Ibn Qutaybah, ‘*Uyūn al-Akhbar*, vol. 4, pp. 128-134, in which one can find many stories of the tragic ends of lovers. Ibn Ḥazm, in his *Ṭawq*, devoted a chapter entitled ‘Of Death’ to the martyrs of love. ‘Sometimes,’ he says, ‘the affair becomes so aggravated, the lover’s nature is so sensitive, and his anxiety is so extreme, that the combined circumstances result in his departure out of this transient world’, p. 220.

¹⁷⁵ Al-Sarraj, vol. 1, pp. 308-9, trans. Mahmoud Manzalaoui, “Tragic Ends of Lovers: Medieval Islam and the Latin West”, in *Comparative Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19), pp. 43-44.

heart of the narrator *rawī* is moved by the plight of the frustrated lovers, who ultimately die because of their ardent passion. He acts as the go-between, making sure to deliver the lover's message to his beloved, and then to relate the story in the most sympathetic tone. However, much of the contents of *Maṣārī' al-'ushshaq* appear in numerous later works, which use *'udhrī* love stories as examples of how love affects its victims, often killing them in one way or another. One of those works; *Kitāb al-waḍīh al-mubīn fī dhikr man istushhida min al-muḥbīn*, is devoted entirely to the martyrs of love. It provides a clear link between the lovers, who died because of their passionate love, and the concept of martyrdom, explicitly labelling all victims of love as martyrs. In fact, the author of *Kitāb al-waḍīh*, Mughultāy (d.762/1361), is relying upon a well-established tradition, which is ascribed to the Prophet himself: 'He who loves, yet remains chaste, conceals his secret and dies, dies a martyr'¹⁷⁶. The first mention of this *ḥadīth* about the martyrs of love, as Giffen notes, is in the *Kitāb al-zahrah* of Ibn Dā'ūd, although it became more widely known later¹⁷⁷. Even though the genuineness or spuriousness of its origin is questionable¹⁷⁸, this idea enjoyed a measure of success. Several variant versions of this tradition are quoted sympathetically in some of the Arabic love treatises. Two centuries after Ibn Dā'ūd, Ibn al-Jawzī included ten versions of the *ḥadīth* in his book *Dhamm al-hawa*¹⁷⁹. If the great jihad is the battle against one's *hawa*¹⁸⁰, then it is understood

¹⁷⁶ Ibn Dā'ūd, p. 117, trans. Giffen, p. 99.

¹⁷⁷ Giffen, p. 99.

¹⁷⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah delivered an attack upon the tradition in his *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn wa nuzhat al-mushtaḥiqīn*, ed. Ṣābir Yūsuf (Cairo: Maktabat al-jami'ah, 1973), pp. 180-182.

¹⁷⁹ Giffen, p. 100. Though nowhere does Ibn al-Jawzī give any indication of his own attitude toward the tradition of the martyrs.

¹⁸⁰ It appears in a *Al-Bayhaqī's Sunan* as a statement ascribed to the Prophet, see the discussion about its authenticity in

www.islamonline.net/servlet/satellite?cid=1122528606158&pagename=islamonline-arabic-Ask_Scholar/FatwaA/FatwaAAskTheScholar, 10 October 2009.

that ‘one who falls violently in love, restrains his passions, remains upright and chaste, and consequently dies of love, would seem to be one who had battled against the lusts of the flesh’¹⁸¹. Thus, this *ḥadīth*, Manzalaoui maintains: ‘denotes a desire to lend religious cachet to the interest in sentimental and passionate love. It arises from a genuine recognition within Islam of the moral psychomachia as the truest of holy wars: applied to the temptation of a sexual situation’¹⁸². However, in his verses, Jamīl adds a different meaning to the concept of a martyr:

They say: “Take part in the Holy War, Jamīl.
Go on the raid.”
But what jihad do I want
Besides the one that has to do with women?
Conversation in their company
Brings joy;
But each man who dies in their midst
Is a martyr¹⁸³ [50]

Hence, the martyr, according to Jamīl, is not the one who dies in a holy war, nor is he the one who has concealed his love and avoided his beloved. On the contrary, he is the one who is to die among the women whose conversation he enjoys, and ultimately whose beauty kills him. Thus, ‘Jamīl bids for martyrdom by asserting that since he suffers on a battleground where he too is slain—albeit slain by his love for women—he also qualifies as a martyr-hero(...) The poet-lover claims that he suffers and dies while defending himself against the fatal attraction of women’¹⁸⁴.

Consequently, the concept of death or the ‘mortality of the body’ is closely related to ‘ultimate love’. ‘*Udhri* love and suffering are inseparable, and the suffering

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p103. See her full discussion on the concept of the martyr in Islam and its connection with this tradition, the association between the ideal of chaste conduct and martyrdom in Islam, on pp. 100-105.

¹⁸² M. A. Manzalaoui, “Tragic Ends of Lovers: Medieval Islam and the Latin West”, p. 38.

¹⁸³ Jamīl, p. 27, trans. Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, p. 46.

¹⁸⁴ Khan, p. 116.

eventually leads to death. The poet usually resorts to this concept when he feels incapable of possessing his beloved. Qays declares:

O love for Lubnā,
you have tortured me so let me either die or live
Death is easier than a life of separation and distance¹⁸⁵ [51]

Hence, death is preferable to a life of separation. Death is seen as a desirable objective or simply as a relief for the ardent lover. The concept of the death-wish is evident in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*; death is seen as the calm end to suffering. Jamīl wishes:

O if only I could meet my death suddenly,
if it is not ordained that we meet¹⁸⁶ [52]

On the other hand, the death-wish has another element besides the calm end to suffering. It is the way to seek the closeness of the beloved after death, if this is not possible in life. For example, 'Urwah looks forward to being with 'Afrā' even though it could not happen in this life:

I love the day of Judgment since I have been told
That I shall meet her there¹⁸⁷ [53]

The explanation here is simply that love for the 'udhrī poets is immortal. Love, as they illustrate, has no end, it is the ultimate truth of their being. Qays demonstrates the immortality of his love:

Our love will survive every event,
And will visit us in the darkness of the grave¹⁸⁸ [54]

So, the wish for the lovers to be buried in nearby graves if not in the same grave, appears in 'udhrī poetry:

God I seek your refuge
not to part between Buthaynah and me

¹⁸⁵ Qays, p. 34. And see Kuthayyir, p. 20.

¹⁸⁶ Jamīl, p. 39.

¹⁸⁷ 'Urwah, p. 41, trans. Kinany, p. 300.

¹⁸⁸ Qays, p. 123, trans. Kinany, p. 262.

neither in my lifetime nor after my death.
And let her be my neighbour if I die,
how nice my death would be if she was near to my grave¹⁸⁹ [55]

Majnun also declares:

O if only we could live together
and if we die my bones lie beside her bones¹⁹⁰ [56]

‘Urwah, likewise, says:

I long for the day of resurrection
since it is said that ‘Afra’ and I will meet there¹⁹¹ [57]

In ‘Urwah’s story, after leaving his beloved and her husband, ‘Urwah went on his way, expressing his passion by reciting poetry. He continued doing so until his death, which came three days before he would have joined his tribe, indicating that death for him was, to some extent, a choice. When ‘Afrā’ heard the news of his death she was greatly distressed and lamented him in verses until she died, only a few days after him¹⁹². In another account, the narrator al-Nu‘mān relates his meeting with the wasting away ‘Urwah and his mother. In this account ‘Urwah seems to be waiting for his death and can sense as it comes closer. When al-Nu‘mān asked this mother about her son, she replied: ‘By God, a whole year long I haven’t heard him utter a word or a groan until today. Then he came to me and said,

If ever my mothers have been crying,
well, today I think I shall be taken away.
They will want to let me hear them but I shall not hear it
when I lie exposed on the necks of the people’ [58]

And so [said al- Nu‘mān], ‘before I left the tribe I had washed his corpse, wrapped him in a shroud, performed the ritual prayer for him, and buried him’¹⁹³. From this anecdote, one can elicit how the death resulting from love is a choice, as the poet

¹⁸⁹ Jamil, p.36. See also for similar wishes: Jamil, p. 22, Majnun, pp. 24, 123, ‘Urwah, p. 44.

¹⁹⁰ Majnun, p. 191.

¹⁹¹ ‘Urwah, p. 41.

¹⁹² Al-Iṣfahānī, vol. 24, pp. 295-296, trans. Van Gelder.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* See also Ibn Qutaybah’s similar versions of the ‘Urwah’s death story. Ibn Qutaybah, pp. 625-626.

shows his willingness to die by reciting poems that trigger passion. Seeking consolation in these poems is like attempting to treat one illness with another. Reciting these poems prior to death is like a license that entitles the poet to join the company of love victims. When Ibn ‘Abbās heard ‘Urwah’s story he said: ‘this one is killed by love: no blood money is due, nor retaliation’¹⁹⁴.

It is no wonder, then, that ‘Urwah’s story became an archetype of the lover who died from his passion. He became, as some lover-poets before him, a model that other ‘*udhrī*’ poets followed. Death for the sake of love was not new, it was the path that the true lovers of the past had taken, Jamīl says:

Before me Hind’s lover and his friend Marqqash died
and ‘Urwah was cured of his heartache
Each of them died of love and my passion for her is greater.
I think, nay, I know that she will send me the way they went¹⁹⁵ [59]

Any love, Majnūn declares, is worthless if it does not kill the lover, as it did with the old lovers¹⁹⁶. Furthermore, Majnūn, Qays and Jamīl themselves became models for the martyrs of love and as such, subsequent poets referred to them as the true representations. Al-‘Abbās b. Al-Aḥnaf, for instance, says:

Jamīl did not love like myself
Verily, neither did ‘Urwah, the martyr of love¹⁹⁷ [60]

The image of the beloved as a killer is a striking one in *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī*. She is depicted as the one who is responsible for the poet’s death, as he dies for her love;

Jamīl says:

¹⁹⁴ Al-Isfahānī, vol. 24, p. 297, trans. Van Gelder.

¹⁹⁵ Jamīl, p. 32. See also Majnūn, p. 197, and Qays, p. 43.

¹⁹⁶ Majnūn, p. 124. Many poets apologised for being alive while they were in love, See al-Sarrāj’s discussion on *majlis* al-Mubarrad in *Maṣari‘ al-‘ushshiq*, vol. 2, p. 260. In fact, no poet could claim to be the first to die of love, as each one has become part of the poet-lover circle where all poet-lovers, even the pre-Islamic ones, such as al-Muraqqash and Ibn ‘Ajlan al-Nahdī, face the same destiny. See Salamah, p. 405.

¹⁹⁷ Al-‘Abbās b. Al-Aḥnaf, p. 15, trans. J.C.Bürgel, p. 95. See also al-Sarrāj, vol. 1, p. 282, vol. 2, pp. 36, 73.

My bosom friend, in your whole life,
Have you ever seen a slain man
Weep for love of his slayer as I do?¹⁹⁸ [61]

She is described as being capable of controlling both the poet's life and his death¹⁹⁹, however no ransom is demanded from her and she will not be punished for her "crime"²⁰⁰. Even though the beloved is shown as capable of bringing agony and death, she is depicted as a source of life at the same time; and even if the poet was already dead, she could bring him to life again; Jamīl says:

Were a herald from you to announce my funeral
and I was on the arms of men I would come alive again²⁰¹ [62]

Majnun also demonstrates:

Had she been with me when dying,
her words would have stopped my death throes²⁰² [63]

In one account, Majnun's relatives fear that he might throw himself down from the mountain²⁰³. Even though committing suicide did not constitute an honourable death or a sign of courage among Arabs either before or after Islam²⁰⁴ and in fact the idea is forbidden in the latter; 'udhri poets transformed suicide into a positive act:

Qays wanted to throw himself from the pinnacle of the mountain
It is no surprise that love can kill a man –
it turns him as it wills from side to side²⁰⁵ [64]

This positive view of suicide contrasts with Jacobi's claim that 'Death proves and shows the intensity of love, and may be wished for, but there is no mention of self-

¹⁹⁸ Jamīl, p. 73.

¹⁹⁹ Kuthayyir, p. 110.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 87.

²⁰¹ Jamīl, p. 20.

²⁰² Majnun, p. 191.

²⁰³ See a similar story about a Bedouin lover who threw himself from a mountain in al-Sarrāj, vol. 2, pp. 106-107.

²⁰⁴ Al-Jāḥiz maintains that any Arab who killed himself was blameworthy. Al-Jāḥiz, *al-Ḥayawān*, ed. 'Abd al-Salam Harūn (Beirut, al-Mujama' al-'ilmī al-Islāmī, 1969), vol. 2, p. 279.

²⁰⁵ Majnun, p. 48.

sacrifice and suicide'²⁰⁶. In a verse by Abū Mishar *al-'udhrī*, who followed the *'udhrī* path, he clearly states that an *'udhrī* lover should not die in his bed²⁰⁷.

Furthermore, in the classical Arabic tales influenced by the *'udhrī* tradition, suicide was sometimes considered to be the real proof of love. An example which confirms this supposition is a story cited in many sources, including *tazyīn al-Aswāq* and *Ṭawq al-Ḥamamah*. It is about an Andalusian man who sold his beloved slave when facing financial difficulties. When she reached the home of her new master, who was a Berber, her former owner almost expired, so he offered the man who had bought her all his possessions if he would restore her to him, but the Berber refused. The former owner appealed to the king. The king, most touched by his plight, commanded the Berber man to be summoned to court and asked him to free the girl. But the buyer refused, saying that he was even more deeply in love with her than the Andalusian man, so the king could do nothing about it. The Andalusian, in despair, threw himself down from the top of a building to the ground, but he did not suffer any great injuries. When the king asked him why he had done that, he replied that he could live no longer after losing his beloved. Thus, the king decided that the solution was to ask the Berber man to prove that his love was true by casting himself down from the roof of the pavilion, as the Andalusian had done already. But the Berber man was unable to throw himself and so he allowed the “true” lover to have the girl²⁰⁸. The king’s phrase is attributed to an inherited cultural and spiritual tradition that provides a link between love and death. It views death as a continuation of love

²⁰⁶ Renate Jacobi, *Die Udhra: Liebe und Tod in der Umayyadenzeit*, Workshop held at the Wissenschaftskolleg, Berlin, 1 & 2 July 2003. www.wiko-berlin.de/index.php.

²⁰⁷ Al-Sarraj, vol. 1, p. 94.

²⁰⁸ Ibn Ḥazm, pp. 227-229, *al-Anṭakī*, p. 268.

for and by the beloved. Even though love is perceived as a disorder that affects the balance of the mind, the deprivation of it does not mean the return of equilibrium²⁰⁹.

The highly influential myth of deadly ‘*udhri*’ love, therefore, has formed had a long tradition of fascination and transfiguration²¹⁰. The subsequent poets continue to link their love with death, al-‘Abbās b. Al-Aḥnaf, for instance, says:

Oh Zālūm! It is time for me to go to my grave
I have wasted away before my death in my own clothes
You have made me taste the bitter morsel of death by love
Can you not by your life have mercy on my youth²¹¹ [65]

As previously mentioned, the Arabic treatises on love are full of such stories and of discussions such as whether the dead lover is to be considered a martyr and whether his death is lawful. Furthermore, why does a lover face such a tragic end? One attempt to answer the last question, parodies such lovers by describing their malady as a medical case. Ibn Dā’ūd explains:

The first attack of despair is the worst, because the heart is not yet used to it and is not prepared to resist it. He who survives this first attack will manage to bear the other attacks as well. The reason why the first attack can in other cases be lethal is that the heart becomes hot, since it affected by such horrible things. In such cases, the function of the rest of the body is to supply the heart with an equal amount of cold. But when the heat is too much the septum cordis get torn, which causes death²¹².

Raven states that Ibn Dā’ūd’s view is certainly inspired by Greek science²¹³.

However, we have already provided a discussion on love-sickness in the Arab discourse in the first section of this chapter.

²⁰⁹ ‘Abdallah, p. 119.

²¹⁰ Renate Jacobi, *Die Udhra: Liebe und Tod in der Umayyadenzeit*, Workshop held at the Wissenschaftskolleg, Berlin, 1 & 2 July 2003.

²¹¹ Al-‘Abbās b. Al-Aḥnaf, p. 35.

²¹² Ibn Dā’ūd, cited in Wim Raven, “Ibn Dā’ūd al-Iṣbahānī and Greek Wisdom”, *Proceedings*, 10th Congress (Edinburgh, 9-16 September 1980), Union Europeenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, Edinburgh 1982, p.68.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

7.4 Conclusion

The changes that occur in the lover's body as he descends into love sickness become signs of moral values related to the manners of love and to the literary values of criticism. Thus, some of the changes are seen in the emanations of love and consequently become qualities that are much sought after, as they distinguish between true lovers and those who only claim to be so. Al-Washshā' states that:

Signs of love that primarily denote the lover include emaciation, constant illness, shortage of sleep, pale face, addiction to isolation, continuing tears, meditating status, moans, nostalgia and consecutive sighs. No matter how the lover tries to conceal and endure his love sooner or later it will be revealed²¹⁴.

To enhance his point, al-Washshā' quoted a poet who said:

No-one but those who have loved know sorrow,
and not all those who say 'I love' speak the truth
The true lovers are known by their gauntness
from their long pact with sorrows and sleeplessness²¹⁵ [66]

The ghazal poetry of the Abbasid poet, al-'Abbās b. Al-Aḥnaf is full of similar themes, such as, the tearful, wasting away and sleepless lover. He, for instance, says:

Separation has not healed the wound of the heart
and my head has become white before its time
The burning heat of separation from my love has wasted away my body
and my heart, from the fires of its love,
has a terrible sickness for which there is no physician²¹⁶ [67]

On the basis of the discussions in this chapter, one could claim that the values attached to excessive love contradict all moral, social and religious values which are firmly based on moderation. I have discussed the tragic outcomes of the lovers in examining the phenomena of fainting, madness and death as they appear in *al-ghazal al-'udhri*. The extreme reactions of the lover's body reflect his excessive passion;

²¹⁴ Al-Washshā', p. 76.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

²¹⁶ Al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf, p. 33. Similar themes in his *Diwan* occur frequently. See, for instance, his verses in pp. 45, 62, 137, 232, 251, 269.

which, on the one hand, proves to be his true emotion, and on the other hand, gains him a place in literary collections and anthologies on love in classical Arabic literature. These extreme bodily responses to love opened the door to a wide discussion on (*aḥwāl al-‘āshiq*) the lover’s circumstances and what caused them and to what extent he accepted responsibility for his acts. This discussion involved medical, religious, philosophical and literary perspectives, though the theory of love among Arabs was not formulated by philosophers or physicians, it was rather formulated by religious men *fuqahā* and literary men *‘udabā’*. Hence, the use of the poetry of love as a resource for the writing on the theory of love became a well established tradition in Arabic literature. In fact, most of the writing on this subject was done by literary men in some sense, who were therefore well-versed in Arabic poetry, both old and new, and so were positively disposed toward it²¹⁷. As discussed in this chapter, several of the effects of love on the *‘udhrī* lover’s own body are depicted in *al-ghazal al-‘udhrī*, for example, crying, wasting away, insomnia, becoming prematurely grey, fainting, madness and death. We have observed the depiction of details such as these in both *‘udhrī* poetry and in narratives. We have also examined the link between these themes and similar ones in classical Arabic poetry. The *‘udhrī* poets afterwards became the models of the true lovers who suffered tremendously, so much so that the signs of their suffering became evident in their bodies.

Interestingly, the image of the beloved as depicted in *‘udhrī* poetry is a complete contrast to that of her lover. She is depicted as the most beautiful one and as the

²¹⁷ Lois Giffen, “Love Poetry and Love Theory in Medieval Arabic Literature”, p. 111.

possessor of eternal youth, while the man who is obsessed with his passionate love is presented as a sick and thin old man, swooning and mad.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this thesis has been to trace how *the body* is represented in the seventh-eighth centuries CE literary tradition of ‘*udhrī*’ love. To a great extent, this goal has been achieved by analysing poetry and narratives ascribed to ‘*udhrī*’ poets which have appeared in several literary collections of classical Arabic literature. In particular, the study relies on *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (The Book of Songs), the monumental tenth century collection of biographies of Arab poets and their poetry. It also relies on the collections of poetry (*diwāns*) of ‘*udhrī*’ poets, which have been edited by several scholars. The thesis focuses on the difference between what poetry says, and what later sources such as *Kitāb al-Aghānī* say about the ‘*udhrī*’ poets and poetry by discussing the development of the tradition and its overlapping historical layers. This thesis discusses and reappraises a number of scholarly approaches to the subject and attempts to chart a new approach through a new reading of the primary sources.

The methodology used in this study is, at its centre, a close literary analysis of classical literary texts. Despite certain pitfalls, this method can effectively demonstrate how the body is represented in the ‘*udhrī*’ tradition. In addition, this approach allows the researcher to consider different interpretations of a text. As a result, this thesis demonstrates that the body lies at the heart of the ‘*udhrī*’ tradition. The lack of possession and absence of physicality only serve to heighten the desire since these features merely draw more attention to that which is being denied. This shows the privileged position of the body through the prominent duality of its presence and absence. The very concept of chasteness involves a conscious denial of

physical contact, and this consciousness often implies a strong awareness of physicality.

This thesis explains how the past is reconstructed in the ‘*udhri*’ tradition by discussing the way in which stories and narratives about poets and events over the course of the ninth and tenth centuries gave rise to certain narrative compositions that in effect invented a tradition. The study sheds light on the possible explanations of what spark off a fresh interest in ‘*udhri*’ love in the ninth and tenth centuries, providing a discussion of the period of documentation, criticism and authorship. It also examines the influence of Sufism and the Persian interest in *al-ghazal al-‘udhri* as it is well known that the Persians had shown particular interest in the story of Majnūn Laylā. Moreover, love is used as a narrative trope to address moral and ethical issues, so the study raises questions about the possibility that the spread of libertinism in the Abbasid era helped to create a desire to return to *al-ghazal al-‘udhri*, which is considered to be the utter opposite of libertinism.

This study provides a discussion of textuality verses reality. It has asserted that the classical Arabic text simultaneously provides contradictory anecdotes, as if trying to leave open the possible interpretations one may derive from the work. There are fascinating contradictions found within the ‘*udhri*’ tradition regarding physical contact between the lovers; if certain narrators have related stories about ‘*udhri*’ lovers making a particular claim about them, others relate different stories that give the opposite impression. The role played by *ruwāh* or popular story-tellers is important to note, for they paid special attention to love stories and recited them to different audiences that naturally would have held a variety of notions about chastity and love. This likely often resulted in the promotion of two or more contradicting

interpretations of one single story or body of poems. However, the contradiction in *'udhri* poetry regarding physicality may also possibly be resolved in light of the many different contexts within which the poet composed his verses. He might have composed them in different phases of his relationship with his beloved, which might have taken on various forms. Besides, human emotions within love are quite complex and cannot be simply classified into the categories of virtuous and sensuous, and these themselves may not necessarily be opposing concepts. This fact gives many traditions of love poetry a conflicting nature, as the poet's emotions fluctuate between representing the unattainable glorified image of his beloved, and expressing his own instinctive desire to unite with her.

In poetry, the desire to obtain the object of love is expressed constantly in the *'udhri* tradition. Certain repetitions of terminology strike the reader of *'udhri* poetry: thirstiness, touching, saliva, beds, longing, kissing, embrace, appointments, and so on. It is irrelevant whether this desire was in fact satisfied or not; that is a matter for students of the historical context, which is not our concern here. Rather, we are interested in the literary imagination. In any case, marital union is never a feature of *'udhri* narratives, which provides a direct contrast with the Islamic discourse around marriage. The *'udhri* tradition challenges the ideal of marital bonds between *'udhri* lovers. Furthermore, while Islamic discourse emphasises the goal of reproduction as a result of sexual enjoyment, the *'udhri* tradition provides no trace of children. The only possible offspring for the *'udhri* lover is poetry. It is a linguistic product, not biological. Therefore, language is the only result of *'udhri* love. In fact, it is part of idealising the beloved to keep her unique and inimitable.

The idealisation, distance and solitude of the beloved enable her to play her decisive role for the poet, that of inspiration. The entire 'udhrī experience unconsciously distances the beloved in order to heighten the poetry's emotional energy. The narrators are preoccupied by the concept of sensuality, and its connection with love, and enhance it by frequently dwelling upon its absence. Also, the so-called lack of consummation between the 'udhrī lover and his beloved itself inflames his passion continuously. This passionate love inspires beautiful poetry within the 'udhrī poet-lover. In addition, the poets or the narrators are clearly aware that the unattainability of the beloved is in fact an essential framework for composing poetry. In the 'udhrī romances, the lover loses everything, including his beloved, but retains his ability to compose poetry. Therefore, for an 'udhrī poet, being a poet appears to be his preferred, ultimate and chosen goal over the possession of his beloved.

This study has endeavoured to show that the representation of the beloved in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* has been influenced by the pre-Islamic poetry, which offers to 'udhrī poets an authoritative image of the beautiful woman. This image suggests, for example, that whiteness of the skin, softness of the body, slenderness of the waist, and a general resemblance to the gazelle and the sun are all stock indexes of feminine beauty. So, the pre-Islamic tradition provides the stereotype of female beauty, and establishes a poetic figurative language for describing the beloved. However, the 'udhrī poet's reliance upon this established repertoire raises questions about the authenticity of the poet's experience as well as the development of his audience's expectations.

Al-ghazal al-'udhrī provides detailed descriptions of the beloved's desirable body. It also depicts an image of the beloved as being synonymous with the softer components of the world, such as water and light. This thesis suggests a link between the image of the beloved as gazelle, sun or rain, and ancient Arab mythology. It also suggests a link between this mythology and the preferable image of a desirable woman as a corpulent one. The comparison of the beloved with a gazelle is one of the major topoi of classical Arabic love poetry. Thus, in this study I have explored the metaphoric image of the beloved as gazelle along with its mythic associations. The gazelle was considered sacred, and Arabs would allow these animals to go free instead of killing them. [start new paragraph here?] In addition, the emphasis on the image of a deer with its fawn could be understood as a representation of the woman who has become sacred through motherhood. This process has its roots in ancient Arab religious belief, which used to worship the goddess-mother. The ancient Arabs portrayed her as a mother-deer and a mother-oryx. The resemblance between the sun and woman in classical Arabic poetry also has its roots in ancient Arab mythology. The sun was one of the gods that used to be worshipped by the ancient Arabs. They ascribed characteristics of motherhood to the sun, conceiving it as the Mother god, which is why the sun is referred to as being female. Moreover, the description of the beloved's saliva as rain drops and wine suggests a link between her and sacred objects, since wine also carries certain religious meanings.

The image of the corpulent woman, which is a dominant image for a desirable woman in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*, is also inherited from ancient religious belief. The Goddess-mother was one of the deities that were worshipped by the ancient Arabs. Her corpulent body symbolises fertility and motherhood. Motherhood

is a principle function of the Goddess-mother, who gives life and enriches the tribe of warriors and preserves the human race. It is essential that a god is depicted with all the characteristics for which he is being worshipped. However, the later poet may have preserved the image of the female corpulent body, but removed the ancient pagan religious associations from it. Therefore, this image became a model of desirable female beauty, whilst moving away from its possible ancient roots.

The *'udhri* poet was expected to work within the framework of the established literary tradition. Alternatively, the genre is governed by the poet-lover's obsession with idealising every aspect of his beloved into tropes relating to beauty. Therefore, it may be argued that the *'udhri* imitation of the older norms does not mean that the poet does not see his beloved with his own eyes. Rather, it suggests that he sees and describes his beloved in terms affected [or shaped?] by his cultural and aesthetic inheritance. She becomes, through his loving eyes, the very archetype of ideal beauty. No one can replace her, even the literary beauty model. She becomes the model. She becomes the archetype, illuminated and illustrated with all the necessary and desirable colours, and contours of beauty.

A comparative approach shows that other appropriations of *'udhri* love stories replicate this reliance upon stock features of beauty. For example, this study has provided a comparison between Laylā's portrayal in Majnūn's poetry and her portrayal in later Persian miniature paintings, which are based on Majnūn's legend. As has been shown, her depiction in Arabic poetry varies greatly from her depiction within Persian paintings. Nonetheless, although it is almost a contrasting image, Laylā's portrayal is always enacted through a stereotype, in both Arabic poetry and Persian paintings.

Although sensual feeling runs through many images in *'udhri* poetry and influences its descriptive language, especially while imitating the older norms and patterns, it however, also often sublimates beauty to worlds that transcend human ones. In many cases, in *'udhri* poetry the beloved's beauty surpasses human beauty, and is marked by supernatural attributes. The beloved's beauty is beyond nature, and is associated with many extraordinary effects, as the poet's admiration for beauty resembles religious belief. This beauty goes beyond time itself. It is timeless beauty, and eternally youthful. When the beloved's body surmounts time this implies its perfection and immortality. It is an immortal body that achieves the status of worshipped statues and images. Therefore, this thesis has highlighted themes such as the beloved's eternal youth, her omnipotence and the devotion for her that goes beyond reason.

The bodily presence in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* does not always take the form of a physical body. Sometimes it emerges through symbolic channels, where symbolising the body appears alongside its physical depiction, and this is closely linked with the ideas of the present and absent bodies of the beloved. Symbolising the body of the beloved can be observed in many *'udhri* poetic themes such as the longing for the beloved's place and the depiction of her in the form of a phantom. These themes reveal an attempt to regain the absent body of the beloved and to rise above this absence. [new paragraph here?] Certainly, the representation of the beloved's place in *'udhri* poetry indicates her absence, on the one hand, and the poet's endeavour to overcome this absence, on the other. Her location acts as a symbol of her actual body. Furthermore, the bodily presence of the beloved also takes the form of gestures and speech. Gestures act in the *'udhri* tradition as a means

of communicating between the two lovers, while speech enjoys a privileged position as a factor in causing love and inflaming passion. [new paragraph here] This presence-through-absence is also discussed by examining the presence of the beloved in nature. An initial superficial view of the beloved's depiction indicates that her presence is scattered and fragmented among natural elements such as stones, wind and water. However, a more profound observation of her depiction suggests that her existence actually absorbs these, the natural elements of the universe within which she is situated. Her remarkable omnipresence is a key feature in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*.

One of the major contributions of this study is its examination of the representation of the lover-poet's body. The changes in the body of the lover become signs of moral values relevant to the manners of love, and literary values of criticism. Thus, some of the changes are seen in the emanations of love and consequently become values that are sought after and that distinguish between true lovers and those who only claim to be so. I have discussed the tragic fates of the lovers in examining the phenomena of fainting, madness and death as they appear in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī*. The lover's body manifests extreme reactions as a result of his excessive passion; that is what, on the one hand, proves his true emotion, and on the other hand, wins him a place in literary collections and anthologies on love in classical Arabic literature. By examining the depiction of the lover's own body, I suggest that the image of the beloved is in a complete contrast to that of her lover. She is depicted as the most beautiful object, and the one who possesses eternal youth, while he is presented as a sick, thin, old mad man, who is obsessed by his passionate love.

In addressing the aforementioned areas, this study sheds new light on the body; its representations and associations in the *'udhrī* tradition. In addition, this

work opens the door to new discussions on the relationship between love poetry and Arab society in the classical age. Indeed, it leaves that door open for further discussion. For it would be impossible to comprehensively address all of the questions this study has raised. For example, issues such as the valences of Islamic discourse around chastity and marriage in the period under discussion could be investigated in greater detail. This is a rich area for a research especially if linked with classical Arabic literature of love poetry and prose. Also, the tragic fate of lovers in classical Arabic literature might be studied through further engagement with recent theorizations of representations of love and violence. It is hoped that this study will encourage further literary studies of representations of the body, which unfortunately remain rare for Arabic literature compared with the state of such scholarship on Western literatures. Yet the Arabic sources are immensely rich and varied. In this way, this study is only a beginning for what may be hoped will be an entirely new approach to classical Arabic literature.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Chapter I:

[1]

كأن فجاج الأرض حلقة خاتم علي فما تزداد طولاً ولا عرضاً

[2]

كلانا بكى أو كاد يبكي صبابة لصاحبه واستعجالت عبرة قبلي

[3]

أبيت مع الهلاك ضيفاً لأهلها وأهلي قريب موسعون ذوو فضل

[1]

وإني لأرضى من بثينة بالذي لو أبصره الواشي لقرت بلابله
بلاء، وبألا أستطيع، وبالمنى، وبالوعد حتى يسأم الوعد آمله
وبالمنظرة العجلى وبالحول تنقضي أواخره لا نلتقي وأوائله

[2]

(لا والذي تسجد الجباه له) مالي بما دون ثوبها خير
ولا بفيها ولا هممت بها ما كان إلا الحديث والنظر

[3]

فإن كان فيكم بعل ليلى فإنني وذي العرش قد قبلت فاها ثمانيا
وأشهد عند الله إنني رأيتها وعشرون منها إصبعاً من ورائها

[4]

إذا سمتها التقبيل صدت وأعرضت صدود شمس الخيل صل لجامها
وعضت على إبهامها ثم أومأت أخاف عيوننا أن تهب نيامها

Chapter III:

[1]

فيا ليت شعري هل أبيتن ليلة كليتنا حتى نرى ساطع الفجر
تجود علينا بالحديث وتارة تجود علينا بالرضاب من الثغر

[2]

ولست بناس أهلها حين أقبلوا وجالوا علينا بالسيوف وطوفوا
وقالوا جميل بات في الحي عندها وقد جردوا أسيافهم ثم وقفوا
وفي البيت ليث الغاب لولا مخافة على نفس جمل والإله لأر عفوا

[3]

ألم تعلمي يا عذبة الريق أنني أظل إذا لم أسق ريقك صاديا

[4]

ولو أن جلدا غير جلدك مسني وباشرنني دون الشعار شريت

[5]

يا ليتنا والمنى ليست مقربة أنا لقيناك والأحراس قد رقدوا
نعم لحاف الفتى المقرور يجعلها شعاره حين يخشى القر والصرود

[6]

أرى الإزار على ليلى فأحسده إن الإزار على ما ضم محسود

[7]

تمنييت من وجدي بعفراء أنني إزار لها تحت القميص يمان

[8]

وإني لمشتاق إلى ربح جيبها كما اشتاق ادريس إلى جنة الخلد

[9]

وما حائمت حمن يوما وليلة على الماء يخشين العصي حوان
عوافي لا يصدرن عنه لوجهة ولا هن من برد الحياض دوان
يرين حباب الماء والموت دونه فهن لأصوات السقاة روان
بأجهد مني حر شوق ولو عة عليك ولكن العدو عداني

[10]

يا أكمل الناس من قرن إلى قدم وأحسن الناس ذا ثوب وعريانا
نعم الضجيع بعيد النوم تحذبه إليك ممتلئا نوما ويقطانا

[11]

فيا ليت شعري هل أبيتن ليلة بحيث اطمأنت بالحبیب المضاجع

[1]

" رأيت جبهة كالمرآة الصقيلة، يزينها شعر حالك كأذنان الخيل المصفورة، إن أرسلته خلته السلاسل، وإن مشطته قلت عناقيد كرم جلاه الوابل، ومع ذلك حاجبان كأنهما خطا بقلم، أو سودا بحمم، قد تقوسا على مثل عين العبهرة التي لم يرعها قانص ولم يذعرها قسورة، بينهما أنف كحد السيف المصقول، لم يخنس به قصر، ولم يمعن به طول، حفت به وجنتان كالأرجوان، في بياض محض كالجمان، شق فيه فم كالخاتم، لذيد المبتسم، فيه ثنانيا غر، ذوات أشر، وأسنان تعد كالدر، وريق تتم إليك منه ريح الخمر، أم نشر الروض بالسحر، يتقلب فيه لسان ذو فصاحة وبيان، يقلبه عقل وافر، وجواب حاضر، يلتقي دونه شفتان حمر او ان كالورد، يحلبان ريقاً كالشهد، تحت ذلك عنق كإبريق الفضة، ركب في صدر تمثال دمية، يتصل به عضدان ممثلتان لحماً مكتنزان شحماً، وذراعان ليس فيهما عظم يحس، ولا عرق يحبس، ركبت فيهما كفان رقيق قصبهما لين عصبهما، تعقد إن شئت منها الأنامل، وتركب الفصوص في حفر المفاصل، وقد تربع في صدرها حقان كأنهما رمانتان. من تحت ذلك بطن طوي كطي القباطي المدمجة، كسي عكنا كالقراطيس المدرجة. تحيط تلك العكن بسرة كمدهن العاج المجلو، خلف ظهر كالجدول ينتهي إلى خصر لولا رحمة الله لانخزل، تحته كفل يقعدها إذا نهضت، وينهضها إذا قعدت، كأنه دعص رمل، لبدته سقوط الطل، يحمله فخذان لفاوان كأنهما نضيد الجمار، تحملهما ساقان خدلجتان كالبردي وشيا بشعر أسود، كأنه حلق الزرد، ويحمل ذلك قدمان كحد السنان تبارك الله في صغرهما كيف تطيقان حمل ما فوقهما، فأما سوى ذلك فتركت أن أصفه، غير أنه أحسن ما وصفه واصف بنظم أو نثر".

[2]

تريك إذا دخلت على خلاء وقد أمنت عيون الكاشحينا (...)
وثديا مثل حق العاج رخصا حصانا من أكف اللامسينا
ومنتى لدنة طالت ولانت روادفها تنوء بما يلينا

[3]

هصرت بفودي رأسها فتمايلت علي هضيم الكشح ربا المخلخل
مهفهفة بيضاء غير مفاضة تراثبها مصقولة كالسجنجل
تصد وتبدي ن أسيل وتتقي بناظرة من وحش وجرة مطلق
وجيد كجيد الريم ليس بفاحش إذا هي نصته ولا بمعطل

[4]

وما سعاد غداة البين غذ رحلوا إلا أغن غضيض الطرف مكحول

تجلو عوارض ذي ظلم إذا ابتسمت كأنه منهل بالراح معلول
شجت بذى شيم من ماء محنية صاف بأبطح أضحى وهو مشمول
[5]

سقتني شمس يخجل البدر نورها ويكسف ضوء البرق وهو بروق
[6]

تضيء الظلام بالعشاء كأنها منارة ممسى راهب متبتل
[7]

أنيري مكان البدر إن أفل البدر وقومي مقام الشمس ما استأخر الفجر
ففيك من الشمس المنيرة ضوءها وليس لها منك التبسم والثغر
لك الشرفة اللآلاء والبدر طالع وليس لها منك الترائب والنحر
ومن أين للشمس المنيرة بالضحي بمكحولة العينين في طرفها فتر
وأنى لها من دل ليلي إذا انثنت بعيني مهة الرمل قد مسها الذعر
[8]

فقالوا: أين مسكنها ومن هي فقلت: الشمس مسكنها السماء
[9]

أقول لأصحابي هي الشمس ضوءها قريب ولكن في تناولها بعد
[10]

خذوا بدمي إن مت كل خريفة مريضة جفن العين والطرف فاتر
[11]

فما طبية أدماء واضحة القرا تنص إلى برد الظلال غزالها
تحت بقرنيها برير أراكة وتعطو بظلفيها إذا الغصن طالها
بأحسن منها مقلة ومقلدا وجيدا إذا دانت تنوط شيكالها
[12]

سبتني بعيني طبية يستنيمها أغن البغام أعيى اللون راشح
إلى أرك بالجزع من بطن بيثشة عليهن صيفن الحمام النوائح
كان القماري الهوائف بالضحي إذا أظهرت قينات شرب صواح
[13]

كان قرنفلًا وسحيق مسك وصوب الغاديات شملن فاها

[14]

كأن المدام وصوب الغمام وريح الخزامى وذوب العسل
يعل به برد أنيابها إذا النجم وسط السماء استقل

[15]

سبتك بمصقول ترف أشوره إذا ابتسمت في طيب ريح وفي برد
كأن عتيق الراح خالط ريقها وصفو غريض المزن صفق بالشهد

[16]

وما قهوة صهباء في متمنع بحوران يعلو حين قضت شراره
لها محصنات حولها هن مثلها عواتق أرجاها لبيع تجارها
بأطيب من فيها إذا المسك بله من الليل أروى ديمة وقطارها

[17]

وذو أسر عذب الرضاب كأنه إذا غار أرداف الثريا السوايح
مجاة نحل في أباريق صفقت بصفق الغوادي شعشعته المجادح
تروق عيون اللائي لا يطعمونها ويروى بريها الضجيع المكافح
وغر يغادي ظلمه بينانها مع الفجر من نعمان أخضر مائح
قضى كل ذي دين وعزة خلة له لم تنله فهو عطشان قامح

[18]

كأن قتيبت المسك خالص نشرها تغل به أردانها والمرافق
تقوم إذا قامت به من فراشها ويغدو به من حضنها من تعانق

[19]

إذا نحن أدلجنا وأنت أمامنا كفى لمطايانا بريحك هاديا

[20]

أبت الروادف والتدي لقمصها مس البطون وأن تمس ظهورا

[21]

وتحتهما حققان قد ضربتهما قطار من الجوزاء ملتبدان

[22]

إذا ما مشت شبرا من الأرض أزحفت من البهر حتى ما تزيد على شبر
لها كفل يرتج منها إذا مشت ومتن كغصن البان مضطمر الخصر

[23]

يا أكمل الناس من قرن إلى قدم وأحسن الناس ذا ثوب وعريانا

[24]

هي البدر حسنا والنساء كواكب وشتان ما بين الكواكب والبدر

[25]

كأنى أرى الناس المحبين بعدها عصارة مصل الحنظل المتفلق
فتكره عيني بعدها كل منظر ويكره سمعي بعدها كل منطق

[26]

رهبان مدين والذين عهدتهم بيكون من حذر العذاب فعودا
لو يسمعون كما سمعت حديثها خروا لعزة ركعا وسجودا
والميت ينشر أن تمس عظامه مسا ويخلد أن يراك خلودا

[27]

أراني إذا صليت يمت نحوها بوجهي وإن كان المصلى ورائيا
وما بي إشراك ولكن حبها وعظم الجوى أعيا الطبيب مداويا

[28]

وأنت التي إن شئت أشقيت عيشتي وأنت التي إن شئت أنعمت باليا

[29]

وما هو إلا أن أراها فجاءة فأبهت حتى ما أكاد أجيب

[30]

تقول بثينة إذ أبصرت قنوا من الشعر الأحمر
برأسي كبرت وأودى الشباب فقلت مجيبا لها أقصري
أنتسين أيامنا باللوى وأيامنا بذوي الأجر
أما كنت أبصرتني مرة ليالي نحن بذوي جهور
ليالي أنتم لنا جيرة ألا تذكرين بلى فانكري
وإذ أنا اغيد غض الشباب أجر الرداء مع المنزر
وإذ لمتي كجناح الغراب ترجل بالمسك والعنبر
فغير ذلك ما تعلمين تغير ذا الزمن المنكر
وأنت كلولة المرزبان بماء شبابك لم تعصري

قريبان مربعنا واحدا فكيف كبرت ولم تكبري

[31]

كأني أنادي صخرة حين أعرضت من الصم لو تمشي بها العصم زلت

صفوح فما تلقاك إلا بخيلة فمن مل منها ذلك الوصل ملت

[32]

ألم تعلمي يا أم ذي الودع أنني أضاحك ذكراكم وأنت صلود

[33]

إني إليك بما وعدت لناظر نظر الفقير إلى الغني المكثر

يعد الديون وليس ينجز موعدا هذا الغريم لنا وليس بمعسر

ما أنت والوعد الذي تعديني إلا كبرق سحابة لم تمطر

[34]

ووالله ما قاربت إلا تباعدت بصرم ولا أكثرت إلا أقلت

[35]

متى يشتقي منك الفؤاد المعذب وسهم المنايا من وصالك أقرب

فبعد ووجد واشتياق ورجفة فلا أنت تدنيني ولا أنا أبعد

كعصفورة في كف طفل يزورها تذوق حياض الموت والطفل يلعب

فلا الطفل ذو عقل يرق لما بها ولا الطير ذو ريش يطير فيذهب

[36]

إني عشية رحمت وهي حزينة تشكو إلي صباية لصبور

وتقول بت عندي فديتك ليلة أشكو إليك فإن ذاك يسير

[37]

وما أنصفت أما النساء فبغضت إلي وأما بالنوال فضنت

[38]

أسيني بنا أو أحسني لا ملومة لدينا ولا مقلية إذ تقلت

[39]

يهواك ما عشت الفؤاد وإن أمت يتبع صداي صداك بين الأقبير

[40]

وإني لأهوى الحشر إن قيل أنني وعفراء يوم الحشر ملتقيان

[1]

إذا اكتحلت عيني بعينك لم تنزل بخير وجلت غمرة عن فواديا

[2]

نظرت إليها نظرة ما يسرني بها حمر أنعام البلاد وسودها

[3]

إذا نظرت نحوي تكلم طرفها وجاوبها طرفي ونحن سكوت
فواحدة منها تبشر باللقا وأخرى لها نفسي تكاد تموت

[4]

مُنعتُ من التسليم يوم وداعها فودعتها بالطرف والعين تدمع
وأخرست عن رد الجواب فمن رأى محبا بدمع العين قلبا يودع

[5]

كلانا مظهر للناس بغضا وكل عند صاحبه مكين

وأسرار الملاحظ ليس تخفي إذا نطقت بما تخفي العيون

[6]

ولكن جعلت اللحظ بيني وبينها رسولا فأدى ما تجن الضمائر

[7]

وطرفك إما جنتنا فاحفظنه فذيع الهوى باد لمن يتبصر

وأعرض إذا لاقيت عينا تخافها وظاهر بيبغض إن ذلك أستر..

فمازلت في إعمال طرفك نحونا إذا جنت حتى كاد حبك يظهر

[8]

فأقسمت لا أنسى لعزة نظرة لها كدت أبدي الوجد مني الممجما

عشية أومت والعيون حواضر إلي برجع الكف ألا تكلما

[9]

وما هو إلا أن أراها فجاءة فأبهرت حتى ما أكاد أجيب
وأصرف عن رأبي الذي كنت أرتئي وأنسى الذي أعددت حين تغيب
ويظهر قلبي عذرها ويعينها علي فما لي في الفؤاد نصيب

[10]

وأنا الذي اجتلب المنية طرفه فمن المطالب والقَتيل القاتل

[11]

وما ذرفت عينك إلا لتضربي بسهميك في أعشار قلب مقتل

[12]

إن العيون التي في طرفها حور قتلتنا ثم لم يحيين قتالنا
بصر عن ذا اللب حتى لا حراك به وهن أضعف خلق الله أركاننا

[13]

خذوا بدمي – إن مت- كل خريفة مريضة جفن العين والطرف فاتر

[14]

ريم رمى قاصدا قلبي بمقلته أفديه من قاصد قلبي وأحميه

[15]

إني أصيد وما لمثلي قوة ظيبيا يموت إذا رآه الصائد

[16]

يجيء بريها الصبا كل ليلة وتجمعنا الأحلام في كل مرقد

[17]

إذا ما أتاه الركب من نحو أرضه تنفس يستشفي برائحة الركب

[18]

لكل حديث عندهن بشاشة وكل قتيل عندهن شهيد

[19]

غراء مبسام كأن حديثها در تحدر نظمه منثور

[20]

وحديثها كالغيث يسمعه راعي سنين تتابعت جدبا
فأصاخ يرجو أن يكون حيا ويقول من فرح هيا ربا

[21]

وكان تحت لسانها هاروت ينفث فيه سحرا

وكان رجع حديثها قطع الرياض كسين زهرا

[22]

فما مكفهر في رحي مرجحة ولا ما أسرت في معادنها النحل
بأحلى من القول الذي قلت بعدما تمكن في حيزوم ناقتي الرجل

[23]

يقتلنا بحديث ليس يعلمه من يتقين ولا مكتومه بادي
فهن بيدين من قول يصين به مواقع الماء من ذي الغلة الصادي

[24]

وبثنة قد قالت وكل حديثها إلينا ولو قالت بسوء مملح

[25]

ولباطل ممن أحب حديثه أشهى إلي من البغيض البازل

[26]

(لا والذي تسجد الجباه له) مالي بما دون ثوبها خير

ولا بفيها ولا هممت بها ما كان إلا الحديث والنظر

[27]

ألا ليت شعري هل نببتن ليلة كليتنا حتى نرى ساطع الفجر

تجود علينا بالحديث وتارة تجود علينا بالرضاب من الثغر

[28]

ألا ليت شعري هل أببتن ليلة أناجيكم حتى أرى غرة الفجر

[29]

ولو كنت أعمى أخطب الأرض بالعصا أصم فنادتني أجبت المناديا

[30]

ألا ليتني أعمى أصم تقودني بثينة لا يخفى علي كلامها

[31]

وأدنييتي حتى إذا ما فتنتني بقول يحل العصم سهل الأباطح
تجافيت عني حين لا لي حيلة وغادرت ما غادرت بين الجوانح

[32]

فلو أنها تدعو الحمام أجابها ولو كلمت ميتا إذا لتكلما

[33]

ولو بذلت أم الوليد حديثها لعصم برضوى أصبحت تتقرب
تهبطن من أكناف ضأس وأيلة إليها ولو أغرى بهن المكلب

[34]

طاف الخيال لأهل عزة موهنا بعد الهدو فهاج لي أحزاني
فألم من أهل البويب خيالها بمعرس من أهل ذي ذروان

[35]

فما بي من سقم ولا طيف جنة ولكن عبد الأعرجي كذوب

[36]

قد زارني طيفكم ليلا فأرقني فبت للشوق أذري الدمع تهتانا

[37]

أسرى لخالدة الخيال ولا أرى ظللا أحب من الخيال الطارق

[38]

ألم خيال من بثينة طارق على النأي مشتاق إلي وشائق
سرت من تلاع الحجر حتى تخلصت إلي ودوني الأشعرون وغافق

[39]

أمنك سرى يا بثن طيف تأوبا هدوا فهاج القلب شوقا وأنصبا

عجبت له أن زار في النوم مضجعي ولو زارني مستيقظا كان أعجبا

[40]

وإني لأستغشي وما بي نعسة لعل لقاء في المنام يكون

[41]

وإني لأستغشي وما بي نعسة لعل خيالا منك يلقى خياليا

[42]

أفي النوم يا ليلي رأيتك أم أنا رأيتك يقطانا فعندي شهودها
ضممتك حتى قلت ناري قد انطففت فلم تطف نيراني وزاد وقودها

[43]

فهلا منعتم- إذ منعتم حديثها- خيالا يوافيني على النأي هاديا

[44]

زار الخيال لها لا بل ازاركه فكر إذا نام فكر الخلق لم ينم
ظبي تقتصته لما نصبت له في آخر الليل أشراكا من اللحم

[45]

تمناه طيفي في الكرى فتغيبا وقبلت يوما ظله فتعتبا

[46]

يا عاشقين اصطلحا في الكرى فأصبحا غضبي وغضباننا
كذلك الأحلام غرارة وربما تصدق أحيانا

[47]

أفي كل يوم أنت رام بلادها بعينين إنساناهما غرقان
ألا فاحملاني -بارك الله فيكما- إلى حاضر الروحاء ثم دعاني

[48]

ألا أيها البيت الذي لا أزوره وهجرانه مني إليه ذنوب
هجرتك مشتاقا وزررتك خائفا وفيك علي الدهر منك رقيب

[49]

أصد وبني مثل الجنون لكي يرى رواة الخنا أي لبيبتك هاجر

[50]

أترك ليلي ليس بيني وبينها سوى ليلة إنى إذا لصبور
هبوني امرءا منكم أضل بعيره له ذمة إن الذمام كبير
وللساحب المتروك أعظم حرمة على صاحب من أن يضل بعير
عفا الله عن ليلي الغداة فإنها إذا وليت حكما علي تجور

[51]

أمر على الديار ديار ليلي أقبيل ذا الجدار وذا الجدارا
وما حب الديار شغفن قلبي ولكن حب من سكن الديارا

[52]

وما أحببت أرضكم ولكن أقبيل إثر من وطئ الترابا

[53]

خليلي هذا ربع عزة فاعقلا قلوبكما ثم ابكيا حيث حلت
ومسا ترابا كان قد مس جدها وبيتنا وظلا حيث باتت وظلت
ولا تياسا أن يمحو الله عنكما ذنوبا إذا صليتما حيث صلت

[54]

أحن إلى نجد وإنى لأيس طوال الليالي من قفول إلى نجد
وإن يك لا ليلي ولا نجد فاعترف بهجر إلى يوم القيامة والوعد

[55]

ألا يا صبا نجد متى هجت من نجد لقد زادني مسراك وجدا على وجد

[56]

يعور إذا غارت فؤادي وإن تكن بنجد يهم منى الفؤاد إلى نجد

[57]

وأجهشت للتوباد حين رأيتته وهلل للرحمن حين رأني
فقلت له أين الذين عهدتهم حواليك في خصب وطيب زمان

[58]

وإن الكئيب الفرد من جانب الحمي إلي – وإن لم آته – لحبيب

[59]

كأن القلب ليلة قيل يغدى بليلي العامرية أو يراح

قطاة غرها شرك فباتت تجاذبه وقد علق الجناح

[60]

متى يشتهي منك الفؤاد المعذب وسهم المنايا من وصالك أقرب

فبعد ووجد واشتياق ورجفة فلا أنت تدنيني ولا أنا أبعد

كعصفورة في كف طفل يزمها تذوق حياض الموت والطفل يلعب

فلا الطفل ذو عقل يرق لما بها ولا الطير ذو ريش يطير فيذهب

[61]

ألا ليتنا كنا غزالين نرتعي رياضاً من الحوذان في بلد قفر

ألا ليتنا كنا حمامي مفازة نظير ونأوي بالعشي إلى وكر

ألا ليتنا حوتان في البحر نرتمي إذا نحن أمسينا نلجج في البحر

وباليتنا نحيا جميعاً ولتتنا نصير إذا متنا ضجيعين في قبر

[62]

فإن نسيم الجو يجمع بيننا ونبصر قرن الشمس حين تزول

وأرواحنا بالليل في الحي تلتقي (ونعلم أنا بالنهاة نقييل)

[63]

فما طلع النجم الذي يهتدى به ولا الصبح إلا هيجا ذكرها ليا

[64]

وشغلت عن فهم الحديث سوى ما كان منك وحبكم شغلي

وأديم نحو محدثي ليرى أن قد فهمت وعندكم عقلي

[65]

أريد لأنسى ذكرها فكأنما تمثل لي ليلي بكل سبيل

Chapter VI:

[1]

لقد ثبتت في القلب منكم مودة كما ثبتت في الراحيتين الأصابع

[2]

أتبكي على لبني وأنت تركتها وكنت كآت حتفه وهو طائع
فيا قلب صبرا واعترافا لما ترى ويا حبتها فع بالذي أنت واقع
ويا قلب خبرني إذا شطت النوى بلبني وبانت عنك ما أنت صانع
كأنك بدع لم تر الناس قبلها ولم يطلعك الدهر فيمن يطالع

[3]

ما بال قلبك يا مجنون قد خلعا في حب من لا ترى في نيله طمعا

[4]

ألا ليتنا يا عز كنا لذي غنى بعيرين نرعى في الخلاء ونعزب
كلانا به عر فمن يرنا يقل على حسنها جرباء تعدي وأجرب
إذا ما وردنا منهلا صاح أهله علينا فما ننفك نرمى ونضرب
نكون بعيري ذي غنى فيضيعنا فلا هو يرعانا ولا نحن نطلب

[5]

ولست على بذل الصفاء هويتها ولكن سببتي بالدلال وبالبلخ

[6]

وقال أفق حتى متى أنت هائم ببثنة فيها قد تعيد وقد تبدي؟
فقلت له: فيها قضى الله ما ترى علي، وهل فيما قضى الله من رد
فإن كان رشدا حبتها أو غواية فقد جئته ما كان مني على عمد

[7]

عدمك من حب أما منك راحة وما بك عني من توان ولا فتر

[8]

رمى الله في عيني بثنة بالقذى وفي الغر من أنيابها بالقوادح

[9]

ألا ليتني أعمى أصم تقودني بثينة لا يخفى علي كلامها

[10]

وقلت لقلبي حين لج بي الهوى وكلفني ما لا يطيق من الحب

ألا أيها القلب الذي قاده الهوى أفق لا أقر الله عينك من قلب

[11]

صادت فؤادي يا بثين حبالكم يوم الحجون وأخطأتك حباتي

[12]

قضاها لغيري وابتلاني بحبها فهلا بشيء غير ليلي ابتلانيا

[13]

دعا المحرمون الله يستغفرونه بمكة شعثا كي تمحى ذنوبها

وناديت يا رحمن، أول سؤلتي لنفسي ليلي ثم أنت حسيبها

وإن أعط ليلي في حياتي لم ينب إلى الله عبد توبة لا أتوبها

[14]

يا حبذا عمل الشيطان من عمل إن كان من عمل الشيطان حبيها

[15]

وقالوا نأت فاختر من الصبر والبكا فقلت البكا أشقى إذن لغيلي

[16]

تداويت من ليلي بليلى عن الهوى كما يتداوى شارب الخمر بالخمير

[17]

فيا حبها زدني جوى كل ليلة ويا سلوة الأيام موعدك الحشر

[18]

رفعت عن الدنيا المنى غير ودها فما أسأل الدنيا ولا أستزيدها

[19]

وعاذلين أحوالهم في محبتهم يا ليتهم وجدوا مثل الذي أجد
لما أطالوا عتابي فيك قلت لهم: لا تكثروا بعض هذا اللوم واقتصادوا

[1]

يا أكمل الناس من قرن إلى قدم وأحسن الناس ذا ثوب وعريانا

[2]

تقول بثينة إذ أبصرت قنوا من الشعر الأحمر
برأسي كبرت وأودى الشباب فقلت مجيبا لها أقصري
أتنسين أيامنا باللوى وأيامنا بذوي الأجر
أما كنت أبصرتني مرة ليالي نحن بذوي جهور
ليالي أنتم لنا جيرة ألا تذكرين بلى فاذكري
وإذ أنا اغيد غض الشباب أجر الرداء مع المنزر
وإذ لمتي كجناح الغراب ترجل بالمسك والعنبر
فغير ذلك ما تعلمين تغير ذا الزمن المنكر
وأنت كلؤلؤة المرزبان بماء شبابك لم تعصري
قريبان مربعنا واحدا فكيف كبرت ولم تكبري

[3]

قفا نبك من ذكرى حبيب ومنزل بسقط اللوى بين الدخول فحومل

[4]

خليلي ما ألقى من الوجد باطن ودمعي بما أخفي الغداة شهيد

[5]

وأية وجد الصب تهطل دمعته ودمع الشجي الصب أعدل شاهد

[6]

أقول لماء العين أمعن لعله بما لا يرى من غائب الوجد يشهد

[7]

هل الحب إلا عبرة ثم زفرة وحر على الأحشاء ليس له برد
وفيض دموع تستهل إذا بدا لنا علم من أرضكم لم يكن يبدو

[8]

وقالوا نأت فاختر من الصبر والبكا فقلت البكا أشقى إذن لغيلي

[9]

وليس الذي يجري من العين ماؤها ولكنها نفس تذوب وتقطر

[10]

إذا نحن أنفدنا البكاء عشية فموعدنا قرن من الشمس طالع

[11]

وإن انهمال الدمع يا ليل كلما ذكرتك يوما خاليا لسريع

[12]

وما كنت أدري قبل عزة ما البكا ولا موجعات القلب حتى تولت

[13]

بكيت نعم بكيت وكل إلف إذا بانث قرينته بكاها

[14]

أفي كل يوم أنت رام بلادها بعينين انساناهما غرقان

[15]

إذا بصرت بها العينان لجت بدمعهما مع النظر اللجوج

[16]

ولو أن عينا طاوعتني لم تزل تفرق دمعا أو دما حين تسكب

[17]

أعفراء كم من زفرة قد أدقنتني وحزن ألج العين بالهملان

فلو أن عيني ذي هوى فاضتا دما لفاضت دما عيناى تبندران

[18]

أنت في حل فزدني سقما أفن صبري واجعل الدمع دما

[19]

وما حائمت حمن يوما وليلة على الماء يخشين العصي حوان

عوافي لا يصدرن عنه لوجهة ولا هن من برد الحياض دوان

يرين حباب الماء والموت دونه فهن لأصوات السقاة روان

بأجهد مني حر شوق ولوعة عليك ولكن العدو عداني

[20]

وكم زفرة لي لو على البحر أشرقت لأنشفه حر لها ولهيب

[21]

لاحت لعينك من بثينة نار فدموع عينك درة وغازار

[22]

بي الياس او داء الهيام أصابني فايك عني لا يصيبك ما بيا

[23]

متى تكشفنا عني القميص تبينا بي الضر من عفراء يا فتيان

وتعترفا لحما قليلا وأعظما دقاقا وقلبا دائم الخفقان

[24]

جعلت لعراف اليمامة حكمه وعراف نجد إن هما شفياني

فما تركا من رقية يعلمانها ولا شربة إلا وقد سقياني

فقالا شفاك الله والله مالنا بما حملت منك الضلوع يدان

[25]

طبيبان لو داويتماني أجرتما فما لكما تستغنيان عن الأجر

فقالا بحزن مالك اليوم حيلة فمت كمدا أو عز نفسك بالصبر

[26]

أرى أهل ليلى أورثوني صباية وما لي سوى ليلى الغداة طبيب

[27]

يا بثن جودي وكافي عاشقا دنفا واشفي بذلك أسقامي وأوجاعي

[28]

عيد قيس من حب لبني ولبنى داء قيس والحب داء شديد

وإذا عادني العوائد يوما قالت العين لا أرى من أريد

لبيت لبني تعودني ثم أفضى إنها لا تعود فيمن يعود

[29]

وللحب آيات تبين بالفتى شحوب وتعري من يديه الأشجاع

[30]

كلفت بها حتى أذابني الهوى وصير عظمي بالعظام رميما

[31]

لقد لاقيت من كلني بلبني بلاء ما أسيفغ به الشرابا

[32]

بنا من جوى الأحزان في الصدر لوعة تكاد لها نفس الشفيق تذوب

ولكنما أبقى حشاشنة معول على ما به عود هناك صليب

[33]

ويعجبني من جعفر أن جعفرأ ملح على قرص وبيكي على جمل

فلو كنت عذري العلاقة لم تكن بطينا وأنساك الهوى كثرة الأكل

[34]

ما زال حبك في فؤادي ساكنا وله بزيد تنفسي ترديد

[35]

وإني لأعشق من عشقكم نحولي وكل امرئ ناحل

[36]

إن في بردي جسما ناحلا لو توكأت عليه لانهدم

[37]

أبليت جسمي من بعد جدته فما تكاد العيون تبصره

[38]

رعاة الليل ما فعل الصباح وما فعلت أوائله الملاح

ومابال الذين سبوا فؤادي أقاموا أم أجد بهم رواح

وما بال النجوم معلقات بقلب الصب ليس لها براح

رعاة الليل كونوا كيف شئتم فقد أودى بي الحب المتاح

[39]

كليني لهم يا أميمة ناصب وليل أفاسيه بطيء الكواكب
تطاول حتى قلت ليس بمنقض وليس الذي يرعى النجوم بأيب

[40]

وليل بت أكلؤه كأني سليم أو سهرت على السليم
أراعي من كواكبه هجانا سواما ما تريع إلى المسيم
فأقسم لو سألت دجاه عني لقد أنباك عن وجد عظيم

[41]

كأني من لبنى سليم مسهد يظل على أيدي الرجال يميد

[42]

فلا البعد يسليني ولا القرب ناعفي وليلي طويل والسهاد شديد

[43]

أمن أجل سار في دجى الليل لامع جفوت حذار البين لين المضاجع

[44]

فإن تسألوني بالنساء فإنني بصير بأدواء النساء طيب
إذا شاب رأس المرء أو قل ماله فليس له من ودهن نصيب
يردن ثراء المال حيث علمنه وشرخ الشباب عندهن عجيب

[45]

وأفنيث عمري بانتظاري وعدها وأبليت فيها الدهر وهو جديد

[46]

ويامن تعلقته ناشئا فشبت وما أن لي أن أشيبا

[47]

لقد عارضتنا الريح منها بنفحة على كيدي من طيب أرواحها برد

فمازلت مغشيا علي وقد مضت أناة وما عندي جواب ولا رد

[48]

وإن قلت ردي بعض عقلي أعش به تولت وقالت ذاك منك بعيد

[49]

يقولون مجنون يهيم بذكرها وأقسم ما بي من جنون ولا سحر
إذا ما نظمت الشعر في غير ذكرها أبا وأبيكم أن يطاوعني شعري

[50]

يقولون جاهد يا جميل بغزوة وأي جهاد غير هن أريد

لكل حديث عندهن بشاشة وكل قتيل عندهن شهيد

[51]

لقد عذبتني يا حب لبنى فقع إما بموت أو حياة
فإن الموت أروح من حياة تقوم على التباعد والشتات

[52]

يا ليتني ألقى المنية بغتة إن كان يوم لقائكم لم يقدر

[53]

وإني لأهوى الحشر إن قيل أنني وغراء يوم الحشر ملتقيان

[54]

ولكنه باق على كل حادث وزائرنا في ظلمة القبر والحد

[55]

أعوذ بك اللهم أن تشحط النوى ببثنة في أدنى حياتي ولا حشري
وجاور إذا ما مت بيني وبينها فياحبذا موتي إذا جاورت قبيري

[56]

فيا ليتنا نحيا جميعا فإن نمت تجاور في الهلكى عظامي عظامها

[57]

وإني لأهوى الحشر إن قيل أنني وعفراء يوم الحشر ملتقيان

[58]

من كان من أخواتي باكيا أبدا فالיום إني أراني اليوم مقبوضا

يسمعننيه فإني غير سامعه إذا علوت رقاب القوم معروضا

[59]

قد مات قبلي أخو هند وصاحبه مرقش واشتقى من عروة الكمد

وكلهم كان من عشق منيته وقد وجدت بها فوق الذي وجدوا

إني لأحسب أو قد كدت أعلمه أن سوف توردني الحوض الذي وردوا

[60]

ما إن صبا مثلي جميل فاعلمي حقا ولا المقتول عروة إذ صبا

[61]

خيلبي فيما عشتما هل رأيتما قتيلًا بكى من حب قاتله قبلي

[62]

ولو أن داع منك يدعو جنازتي وكنت على أيدي الرجال حبيبت

[63]

ولو شهدتني حين تحضر ميتتي جلا سكرات الموت عني كلامها

[64]

لقد هم قيس أن يزج بنفسه ويرمي بها من ذروة الجبل الصعب

فلا غرو أن الحب للمرء قاتل يقليه ما شاء جنبا إلى جنب

[65]

أظلم حان إلى القبور ذهابي ولبيت قبل الموت في أثوابي

جر عنتي غصص المنية بالهوى أفما بعيشك ترحمين شبابي

[66]

ما يعرف الحزن إلا كل من عشقا وليس من قال إني عاشق صدقا

للعاشقين نحول يعرفون به من طول ما حالفوا الأحزان والأرقا

[67]

ما أنكأ البين لقرح القلوب شيب رأسي قبل حين المشيب
أنحل جسمي ويرى أعظمي لذع حرارات فراق الحبيب...
أورث قلبي من جوى حبه داء عياء ماله من طيب

Appendix II

The aspects of bodily presence in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* (Diwān Majnūn Laylā)

| The Corporeal: description of the beloved's body | Desire: Longing for physical contact with the beloved | Gestures: Secret body language as a means of communication | The phantom of the beloved | The place of the beloved |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| وعارضن بالعقيان كل مفلج به الظلم لم تغفل لهن غروب رضاب كريح المسك يجلو متونه من الضرو أو فرخ البشام قضيبي 36 | فلا النفس يسليها البعاد فتنثني ولا هي عما لا تنال تطيب 29 | إذا ما أتاه الركب من نحو أرضه تنفس يستشفي برائحة الركب 49 | أتاني خيال منك يا ليل زائر فكادت له نفسي الغداة تزول خيال لليلي زارني بعد هجره ورام عتابي والعتاب يطول 171 | وإن الكتيب الفرد من جانب الحمى إلي وإن لم آته لحبيب 26 |
| تبدت لنا كالشمس تحت غمامة بدا حاجب منها وضنت بحاجب 46 | أحبك يا ليلي غراما وعشقه وليس أتاني في الوصال نصيب 31 | إذا نظرت نحوي تكلم طرفها وجاوبها طرفي ونحن سكوت فواحدة منها تيشر باللقا وأخرى لها نفسى تكاد تموت 55 | بربك أخبرني ألم تأثم التي أضر بجسمي من زمان خيالها 173 | ألا أيها البيت الذي لا أزوره وهجرانه مني إليك ذنوب هجرتك مشتاقا وزرتك خائفا وفيك علي الدهر منك رقيب 28 |
| أشارت بموشوم كأن بنانه من اللين هداب الدمقس المهدب 52 | فيا ليل جودي بالوصال فإنني بحبيك رهن والفؤاد كئيب 32 | إذا اكتحلت عيني بعينك لم تزل بخير وجلت غمرة عن فواديا 229 | سقى الله أرضا أهل ليلي تحلها وجاد عليها الغيث وهو سكوب 31 | |
| قالت لجارته يوما تسائلها لما استحمت وألقت عندها السلبا يا عمرك الله ألا قلت صادقة أصادقا وصف المجنون أم كذبا 54 | فلو خلط السم الزعاف بريقها تمصصت منه نهلة ورويت 55 | مُنعت من التسليم يوم وداعها فودعتها بالطرف والعين تدمع وأخرست عن رد الجواب فمن رأى محبا بدمع العين قلبا يودع 145 | أرى كل أرض دست فيها وإن مضت لها حجج يزداد طيبا تراها 40 | |
| علقت مليحة الخدين وردا تشابه حسن مطلعها السعود 72 | أرى الإزار على ليلي فأحسده إن الإزار على ما ضم محسود 71 | كلامك أشهى فاعلمي لو أناله إلى النفس من برد الشراب على الظما 199 | أتهجر بيتا للحبيب تعلقت به الحب والأعداء أم أنت زائره 93 | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <p>مبتلة الأعجاز زانت عقودها بأحسن مما زينتها عقودها 74</p> | <p>وإني لمشتاق إلى ريح جيبها كما اشتاق ادريس إلى جنة الخلد 82</p> | | | |
| <p>من الخفرات البيض ود جليسيها إذا ما انقضت أحداثها لو تعيدها 76</p> | <p>ألا ما لليلي لا ترى عند مضجعي بليل ولا يجري بذلك طائر</p> | | | |
| <p>يكاد فضييض الماء يخدش جلدها إذا اغتسلت بالماء من رقة الجلد 82</p> | <p>ألا ليت شعري هل أبيتن ليلة أناجيكم حتى أرى غرة الفجر 114</p> | | | |
| <p>ألم تعرفوا وجهها لليلي شعاعه إذا برزت يغني عن الشمس والبدر..منعمة لو قابل البدر وجهها لكان له فضل مبين على البدر هلالية الأعلى مطلقه الذرى مرجرجة السفلى مهفهفة الخصر مبتلة هيفاء مهضومة الحشا موردة الخدين واضحة الشعر خدلجة الساقين بض بضبيضة مفلجة الأنياب مصقولة العمر 115</p> | <p>فيا ليت شعري هل أبيتن ليلة بحديث اطمأنت بالحبيب المضاجع وهل ألقين رحلي إلى جنب خيمة بأجرع حفتها الربى فمتالع 140</p> | <p>إذا طلعت شمس النهار فسلمي فأية تسليمي عليك طلوها بعشر تحيات إذا الشمس أشرقت وعشر إذا اصفرت وحان وقوعها 150</p> | <p>أمر على الديار ديار ليلي أقبل ذا الجدار وذا الجدارا وما حب الديار شغفن قلبي ولكن حب من سكن الديارا 127</p> | |
| <p>سقتني شمس يخجل البدر نورها ويكسف ضوء البرق وهو بروق غرابية الفرعين بدرية السنا ومنظرها بادي الجمال أنيق 160</p> | <p>إذا سُمّتها التقبيل صدت وأعرضت صدودَ شَموس الخيل صلَّ لجامها وعضت على إبهامها ثم أومأت: أخاف عيوننا أن تهب نيامها 191</p> | | | <p>وأجهشت للتوباد حين رأيتَه وهلل للرحمن حين رأني وأذريت دمع العين لما رأيتَه ونادى بأعلى صوته ودعاني فقلت له أين الذي عهدتهم حواليك في خصب وطيب زمان فقال مضوا واستودعوني بلادهم ومن ذا الذي يبقى مع الحدثان 213</p> |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| وفي الظعن بيضاء العوارض طفلة منعمة يسبي الحليم ابتسامها 191 | فإن كان فيكم بعل ليلى فإنني وذي العرش قد قبلت فاها ثمانيا وأشهد عند الله أنني رأيتها وعشرون منها إصبعا من ورائيا 237 | | | |
| بيضاء باكرها النعيم كأنها قمر توسط جنح ليل أسود 83 | | | | |
| وتهتز ليلى العامرية فوقها ولائت بسب الفز ذا غدر جعدا إذا حرك المدري ضفائرها العلا مججن ندى الريحان والعنبر الوردا 85 | فلو زرت بيت الله ثم رأيتها بأبوابه حيث استجارت حَمَامها لمست ثيابي إن قدرتُ ثيابها ولم ينهنني عن مسهن حرامها 191 | | | |
| هويت فتاة كالغزاة وجهها وكالشمس يسبي دلها كل عابد 77 | | | | |
| ففيك من الشمس المنيرة ضوءها وليس لها منك التبسم والثغر.. لك الشرقة اللألاء والبدر طالع وليس لها منك الترائب والنحر.. 92 | ليلى هي البدر ما لي قط مصطبر عنها وإن كثرت فيها الأقاول 172 | | | |
| ووجه له ديباجة قرشية به تكشف البلوى ويستنزل القطر ويهتز من تحت الثياب قوامها كما اهتز غصن البان والفن النصر | أظل أمني النفس إياك خاليا كما يتمنى بارد الماء صائم 182 | | | |
| من البيض كوماء العظام كأنما يلاث على دعص هيال إزارها 106 | وإن بنا لو تعلمين لغلة إليك كما بالحائمات غليل 170 | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <p>وما قهوة صهباء في متمنع بحوران يعلو حين فُضَّت شراها لها محصنات حولها هن مثلها عواتق أرجاها لبيع تجارها بأطيب من فيها ولا المسك بله من الليل أروى ديمة وقطارها 107</p> | <p>كان على أنيابها الخمر شجها بماء سحاب آخر الليل غابق وما ذقته إلا بعيني تفرسا كما شيم في أعلى السحابة بارق 156</p> | | | |
| <p>فما أسود ألمى المحاجر مطفل بأحسن منها مقلتين تديرها 108</p> | <p>إن الشفاء عناق كل خريدة كالخيزرانة لا نمل عناقها 163</p> | | | |
| <p>وما أنشد البعران إلا صبابة بواضحة الخدين طيبة النشر مفلجة الأنياب لو أن ريقها يداوى به الموتى لقاموا من القبر 120</p> | <p>وقلبي كنيب في هواها وإنني لفي وصل ليلي ما حبيت لطامع 142</p> | | | |
| <p>هي الخمر في حسن وكالخمر ريقتها ورقة ذاك اللون في رقة الخمر وقد جمعت منها خمور ثلاثة وفي واحد سكر يزيد على السكر 125</p> | <p>نهاري نهار الناس حتى إذا بدا لي الليل هزنتي إليك المضاجع 142</p> | | | |
| <p>كان قرنفلا وسحيق مسك وصوب الغاديات شملن فاها 222</p> | <p>خليلي ليلي أكبر الحاج والمني فمن لي بليلي أو فمن ذا لها بيا 228</p> | | | |
| <p>أخذت محاسن كل ما ضنت محاسنه بحسنه كاد الغزال يكونها لولا الشوى ونشوز قرنه 217</p> | <p>الله يعلم أن النفس هالكة باليأس منك ولكني أعنيها منيتك النفس حتى قد أضر بها واستيقنت خلفا مما أمنيها وساعة منك ألهوها وإن قصرت</p> | <p>وإني لأستغشي وما بي نعسة لعل لقاءها في المنام يكون تخبرني الأحلام إنني أراكم فيا ليت أحلام المنام يقين 204</p> | <p>سقى الله أطلالا بناحية الحمى وإن كن قد أبدين للناس ما بيا منازل لو مرت عليها جنازتي لقال الصدى: يا حاملي انزلا بيا 236</p> | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| | أشهى إلي من الدنيا وما فيها 223 | | | |
| | إذا ما تمنى الناس رוחا وراحة تمنيت أن ألقاك يا ليل خاليا 238 | | | |
| ألا إنما ليلى عصا خيزرانة إذا غمزوها بالأكف تلين 203 | | | | أسألكم هل سال نَعمان بعدنا وحبُّ إلينا بطن نَعمان واديا 230 |
| ومفروشة الخدين وردا مضرجا إذا جمشته العين عاد بنفسجا شكوت لها طول ليلى بعبرة فأبدت لنا بالغنج درا مفلجا فقلت لها مني علي بقبلة أدوي بها قلبي فقالت تغنجا بليت بردف لست أسطيع حمله يجاذب أعضائي إذا ما ترجرجا 60 | زها جسم ليلى في الثياب تنعما فيا ليتني لو كنت بعض برودها أفي النوم يا ليلى رأيتك أم أنا رأيتك يقطانا فعندي شهودها ضممتك حتى قلت ناري قد انطفت فلم تطف نيراني وزاد وقودها 76 | | | فيا ساكني أكناف نخلة كلكم إلى القلب من أجل الحبيب حبيب 29 |

The physical presence of the lover himself

| Crying | Fainting | Sickness | Prematurely grey-haired | Insomniac |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| ولو أن عينا طاو عنتني لم تزل ترقرق دمعاً أو دما حين تسكب 24 | لقد عارضتنا الريح منها بنفحة على كبدي من طيب أرواحها برد فمازلت مغشياً علي وقد مضت أناة وما عندي جواب ولا رد 67 | إليك عني إني هائم وصب أما ترى الجسم قد أودى به العطب 25 | وإن الذي أملت يا أم مالك أشاب فويدي واستهام فؤاديا 228 | وما بال النجوم معلقات بقلب الصب ليس لها براح؟ 61 |
| فقلت وعيني تستهل دموعها وقلبي بأكناف الحبيب يذوب 31 | وأغشى فيحى لي من الأرض مضجعي وأصرع أحيانا فالترم الأرض 135 | ولي كبد مقروحة من يبيعي بها كبدا ليست بذات قروح أبيع ويأبى الناس لا يشترونها ومن | وراءكم إني لقيت من الهوى تباريح أبلت جدتي وشبابيا 235 | فلا البعد يسليني ولا القرب نافعي وليلي طويل والسهاد شديد 69 |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | يشترى ذا علة بصحيح65 | |
| وكم زفرة لي لو على البحر أشرقت لأنشفه حر لها ولهيب 30 | | أرى أهل ليلي أورتوني صباية وما لي سوى ليلي الغداة طيب 29 | أرقت وعادني هم جديد فجمالي للهورى نضو بليد أراعي الفرقدين مع الثريا كذاك الحب أهونه شديد 72 |
| ولو أن أنفاسي أصابت بحرها حديدا لكانت للحديد تذيب 30 | | أقلب بالأيدي وأهلي بعولة يفدونني لو يستطيعون أن يفدوا ولم يبق إلا الجلد والعظم عاريا ولا عظم لي إن دام ما بي ولا جلد 68 | سلي الليل عني هل أدوق رقاده وهل لضلوعي مستقر على فرشي 131 |
| فأبكي لنفسي رحمة من جفائها ويبكي من الهجران بعضي على بعضي133 | | بربك أخبرني ألم تأثم التي أضرت بجسمي من زمان خيالها 173 | |
| لعمرك ما ميعاد عينك والبكا بليلاك إلا أن تهب جنوب 37 | | فدعني وما ألقاه من ألم الهوى بنار لها بين الضلوع وفود أعالج من نفسي بقايا حشاشة على رمتي والروح في تجود 70 | باكيا ساهيا نحيلاً ذليلاً ليس يهدا وليس يطعم غمضاً134 |
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The death:

متى يشنقي منك الفؤاد المعذب وسهم المنايا من وصالك أقرب
فبعد ووجد واشتياق ورجفة فلا أنت تدنيني ولا أنا أبعد
كعصفورة في كف طفل يزورها تذوق حياض الموت والطفل يلعب
فلا الطفل ذو عقل يرق لما بها ولا الطير ذو ريش يطير فيذهب 23

أقطع حبل الوصل فالموت دونه أم أشرب كأسا منكم ليس يشرب 23

فلو تلتقي أرواحنا بعد موتنا ومن دون رمسينا من الأرض منكب
لظل صدى رمسي وإن كنت رمة لصوت صدى ليلي يهش ويضطرب 24

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فلا غرو أن الحب للمرء قاتل يقلبه ما شاء جنبا إلى جنب
أناخ هوى ليلي به فأذابه ومن ذا يطيق الصبر عن محمل الحب
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The aspects of bodily presence in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* (Diwān Jamīl Buthaynah)

| The Corporeal: description of the beloved's body | Desire: Longing for physical contact with the beloved | Gestures: Secret body language as a means of communication | The phantom of the beloved | The place of the beloved |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| من الخفرات البيض أخلص لونها ثلاحي عدوا لم يجد ما يعيبها 17 | وددت ولا تغني الودادة أنها نصيبي من الدنيا وأني نصيبها 17 | حلفت يمينا يا بئينة صادقا فإن كنت فيها كاذبا فعميت إذا كان جلد غير جلدك مسني وباشرني دون الشعار شريت 20 | أمنك سرى يا بئن طيف تأوبا هدوا فهاج القلب شوقا وأنصبا عجبت له أن زار في النوم مضجعي ولو زارني مستيقظا كان أعجبا 19 | وأهوى الأرض عندي حيث حلت بجذب في المنازل أو خصيب 16 |
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| تسوك بقضبان الأراك مفلجا يشعشع فيه الفارسي المروق 67 | | | | |
| وأحسن خلق الله جيدا ومقلة تشبه في النسوان بالشادن الطفل 85 | | | | |
| فما طيبة أدماء لاحقة الحشا بصحراء قو أفردتها ظباؤها تراعي قليلا ثم تحنو إلى طلا إذا ما دعتة والبغام دعاؤها بأحسن منها مقلة ومقلدا إذا جليت لا يستطاع اجتلاؤها وتبسم عن غر عذاب كأنها قناة تعلت لينها واستواؤها | نعم لحاف الفتى المقرور يجعلها شعاره حين يخشى القر والصرد 118 | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p>إذا قعدت في البيت يشرق بيتها وإن برزت يزداد حسنا فناؤها قطوف ألوف للحجال يزيناها مع الدل منها جسمها وحيائها 111</p> | | | | |
| <p>بذي أشر كالأفحوان يزينه ندى الطل إلا أنه هو أملح كأن خزامي عالج في ثيابها بعيد الكرى أو فأر مسك تذبح كأن الذي يبيتها من ثيابها على رملة من عالج متبطح .. من الخفرات البيض خود كأنها إذا ما مشت شبرا من الأرض تنزح منعمة لو يدرج الذر بينها وبين حواشي ثوبها ظل يجرح إذا ضربتها الريح في المرط أجفلت مأكمها والريح في المرط أفضح ترى الزل حاذرن الريالغ إذا جرت وبثنة إن هبت لها الريح تفرح 113</p> | | | | |
| <p>صادت فؤادي بعينيها ومبتسم كأنه حين أبدته لنا برد عذب كأن ذكي المسك خالطه والزنجبيل وماء المزن والشهد وجيد أدماء تحنوه إلى رشاً أغن لم يتبعها مثله ولد رجاجة رخصة الأطراف ناعمة تكاد من بدنها في البيت تتخضد خذل مخلخلها وعت مؤزرها هيفاء لم</p> | | | | |

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| يغذها بؤس ولا وبد هيفاء مقبلة عجاء مدبرة تمت فليس يرى في خلقها أود 118 | | | | |
| من اللف أفاذا إذا ما تقلبت من الليل وهنا أثقلتها الروادف ..قطوف الخطى عند الضحى عبلة الشوى إذا استعجل المشي العجال النحائف أناة كأن الريق منها مدامة بعيد الكرى أو ذافه المسك ذائف 122 | | | | |
| سبتك بمصقول ترف أشوره إذا ابتسمت في طيب ريح وفي برد كأن عتيق الراح خالط ريقها وصفو غريض المزن صفق بالشهد تأرج بالمسك الأحم ثيابها إذا عرقت فيها وبالعنبر الورد 120 | | | | |
| مفلجة الأنياب لو أن ريقها يداوى به الموتى لقاموا من القبر 38 | | | | |

The physical presence of the lover himself

| Crying | Fainting | Sickness | Prematurely grey-haired | Insomniac |
|--|----------|---|--|---|
| لقد ذرفت عيني و طال سفوحها وأصبح من نفسي سقيما صحيحها 22 | | ارحميني فقد بليت فحسبي بعض ذا الداء يا بئينة حسبي زعم الناس أن دائي طبي أنت والله يا بئينة طبي | تقول بئينة إذ أبصرت قنوا من الشعر الأحمر برأسي كبرت وأودى الشباب فقلت مجيبا لها أقصري... 44 | فاهتاج قلبي لحزن قد بضيقه فما أغمض غمضا غير تهياح 53 |
| خليلي ما ألقى من الوجد باطن ودمعي بما أخفي الغداة شهيد ألا قد أرى والله أن رب عبرة إذا الدار شطت بيننا ستزيد 25 | | ألا تتقين الله في قتل عاشق له كبد حرى عليك تقطع 52 | تشيب روعات الفراق مفارقي 97 | منع النوم شدة الاشتياق وادكار الحبيب بعد الفراق 70 |
| ومالي لا أبكي وفي الأيك نائح وقد فارقتني شحنة الكشح والخصر 37 | | يا بنن جودي وكافي عاشقا دنفا واشفي بذلك أسقامي وأوجاعي 53 | | |
| فكدت ولم أملك إليها صباة أهيم وفاض الدمع مني على نحري 38 | | تعلقتها والجسم مني مصحح فما زال ينمي حب جمل وأضعف إلى اليوم حتى سل جسمي وشفني وأنكرت من نفسي الذي كنت أعرف 59 | | |
| فلم يوجبوا عيني عن دائم البكا ولن يملكوا ما قد يجن ضميري إلى الله أشكو ما ألقى من الجوى ومن حرق تعنادني وزفير ومن كرب للحب في باطن الحشا وليل طويل الحزن غير قصير سأكبي على نفسي بعين غزيرة بكاء حزين في الوثاق أسير 46 | | أيا ريح الشمال أما تريني أهيم وأنتي بادي النحول 84 | | |

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|---|--|--|--|--|
| لاحت لعينك من بثينة نار فدموع عينك درة وغزار 48 | | أتقرح أكباد المحبين كالذي أرى كبدني من ذكر بثينة تقرح 114 | | |
| وما ذكرك النفس يا بئن مرة من الدهر إلا كادت النفس تتلف وإلا اعترتني زفرة واستكائة وجاد لها سجل من الدمع يذرف 61 | | | | |
| كلانا بكى أو كاد يبكي صباية إلى إلفه واستعجلت عيرة قبلي 73 | | | | |
| إذا خطرت من ذكر بثينة خطرة عصتني شؤون العين فانهل ماؤها 109 | | | | |
| إذا ما كررت الطرف نحوك رده من البعد فياض من الدمع يهمل 78 | | | | |
| كأن دموع العين يوم تحملت بثينة يسقيها الرشاش معين 97 | | | | |

The death:

أفي كل يوم أنت محدث صبوة تموت لها بدلت غيرك من قلب 18

ولو أن داع منك يدعو جنازتي وكنت على أيدي الرجال حبيبت 20

أريد صلاحها وتريد قتلي وشتى بين قتلي والصلاح 22

ألا ليتنا نحيا جميعا وإن نمت يجاور في الموتى ضريحي ضريحها
فما أنا في طول الحياة براغب إذا قيل قد سوي عليها صفيحها 22

هل الحائم العطشان مسقى بشرية من المزن تروي ما به فتريح
فقال فتخشى إن سقيناك شربة تخبر أعدائي بها فتبوح
إذن فأباحنتي المنايا وقادني إلى أجلي غضب السلاح سفوح 24

لكل حديث عندهن بشاشة وكل قتيل عندهن شهيد 27

على أن من قد مات صادف راحة وما لفؤادي من رواح ولا رشد 30

قد مات قبلي أخو هند وصاحبه مرقدش واشتقى من عروة الكمد
وكلهم كان من عشق منيته وقد وجدت بها فوق الذي وجدوا
إني لأحسب أو قد كدت أعلمه أن سوف توردني الحوض الذي وردوا 32

أعوذ بك اللهم أن تشحط النوى ببثنة في أدنى حياتي ولا حشري
وجاور إذا ما مت بيني وبينها فياحبذا موتي إذا جاورت قبري 36

يا ليتني ألقى المنية بعتة إن كان يوم لقائكم لم يقدر 39

يهواك ما عشت الفؤاد فإن أمت يتبع صداي صداك بين الأقبير 40

ألا تتقين الله في قتل عاشق له كبد حرى عليك تقطع 52

لولا الذي أرتجي منه وأمله لقد أشاع بموتي عندها ناعي
يا بثن جودي وكافي عاشقا دنفا واشفي بذلك أسقامي وأوجاعي
أليت لا أصطفي بالحب غيركم حتى أغيب تحت الرمس بالقاع
قد كنت عنكم بعيد الدار مغتربا حتى دعاني لحيني منكم داع 53

وما صائب من نابل فذفت به يد وممر العقدتين وثيق....
 بأوشك قتلا منك يوم رميتني نوافذ لم تظهر لهن خروق 69

خليلي فيما عشتما هل رأيتما قتيلا بكى من حب قاتله قبلي 73

سلا كل ذي ود علمت مكانه وأنت بها حتى الممات موكل 77

The aspects of bodily presence in *al-ghazal al-'udhrī* (Qays Lubnā)

| The Corporeal: description of the beloved's body | Desire: Longing for physical contact with the beloved | Gestures: Secret body language as a means of communication | The phantom of the beloved | The place of the beloved |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| خذوا بدمي – إن مت- كل خريذة مريضة جفن العين والطرف فاتر 46 | وللحائم العطشان ري بريقها وللمرح المختال خمر ومسكر 47 | | قد زارني طيفكم ليلا فأرقني فبت للشوق أدري الدمع تهاننا 109 | وما أحببت أرضكم ولكن أقبل إثر من وطئ الترابا 19 |
| إذا ما مشت شبرا من الأرض أزحفت من البهر حتى ما تزيد على شبر لها كفل يرتج منها إذا مشت ومنتن كغصن البان مضطر الخصر 52 | لعمري من أمسى وأنت ضجيعه من الناس ما اختيرت عليه المضاجع 63 | | | كأن هبوب الريح من نحو أرضكم يثير فتات المسك والعنبر النداء 41 |
| ربعا لواضحة الجبين غريرة كالشمس إذ طلعت رخم المنطق 81 | وإني لمشتاق إلى ريح جيبها كما اشتاق ادريس إلى جنة الخلد 124 | | | هل الصبر إلا أن أصد فلا أرى بأرضك إلا أن يكون طريق 95 |

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| شهدت على نفسي بأنك عادة رداح وأن الوجه منك عتيق 90 | وما حائمت حمن يوما وليلة على الماء يخشين العصي حوان عوافي لا يصدرن عنه لوجهة ولا هن من برد الحياض دوان بأجهد مني حر شوق ولوعة عليك ولكن العدو عداني 155 | | | أمس تراب أرضك يا لبيبي ولولا أنت لم أمسس ترابا 19 |
| يا أكمل الناس من قرن إلى قدم وأحسن الناس ذا ثوب وعريانا نعم الضجيع بعيد النوم تجلبه إليك ممتلنا نوما ويقظانا 109 | | | | |

The physical presence of the lover himself

| Crying | Fainting | Sickness | Prematurely grey-haired | Insomniac |
|--|----------|--|-------------------------|--|
| هل الحب إلا عبرة ثم زفرة وحر على الأحشاء ليس له برد وفيض دموع تستهل إذا بدا لنا علم من أرضكم لم يكن يبدو 43 | | لقد لاقيت من كلفي بلبي بلاء ما أسيغ به الشرابا 20 | | فما أنا إن باننت لبيبي بهاجع إذا ما استقلت بالنيام المضاجع وكيف ينام المرء مستشعر الجوى ضجيع الأسي فيه نكاس روداع 59 |
| وهجت قذى عين لبي مريضة إذا ذكرت فاضت مدامعها تجري 50 | | مرضت فجاؤوا بالمعالج والرقى وقالوا بصير بالدواء مجرب أتاني فداواني وطال اختلافه إلي فأعياه الرقى والتطيب ولم يغن عني ما يعقد طائلا ولا ما يميني الطبيب المجرب 23 | | |

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| فلم يمنعوا عيني من دائم البكا ولن يذهبوا ما قد أجن ضميري 51 | | سقيم لا يصاب له دواء أصاب الحب مقلته فناحا وعذبه الهوى حتى براه كبري القين بالسفن القداحا 36 | | |
| فيا من لقلب لا يفيق من الهوى ويا من لعين بالصبابة تدمع 53 | | وإنك من لبني العشية رائح مريض الذي تطوى عليه الجوانح 39 | | |
| هما برحا بي معولين كلاهما فؤاد وعين مآقها الدهر دامع إذا نحن أنفدنا البكاء عشية فموعدنا قرن من الشمس طالع 66 | | عيد قيس من حب لبني ولبني داء قيس والحب داء شديد وإذا عادني العوائد يوما قالت العين لا أرى من أريد ليت لبني تعودني ثم أفضى إنها لا تعود فيمن يعود ويح قيس لقد تضمن منها داء خبل فالقلب منه عميد 41 | | |
| بت والهم يا لبيني ضجيعي وجرت مذ نأيت عني دموعي 74 | | وللحب آيات تبين بالفتى شحوب وتعري من يديه الأشاجع 66 | | |
| إذا أنت عزيت الهوى أو تركته أنت عبارات بالدموع تسوق 92 | | وحب بدا بالجسم واللون ظاهر وحب لدى نفسي من الروح ألطف وحب هو الداء العياء بعينه له ذكر تعدو علي فأدنف 78 | | |
| بكيته نعم بكيت وكل إلف إذا بانته قرينته بكاها 112 | | إذا ذكرت لبني تأوه واشتكي تأوه محموم عليه البلايل يبيب ويضحى تحت ظل منية به رمق تبكي عليه القبائل 105 | | |
| فإن انهمال العين بالدمع كلما ذكرتك وحدي خاليا لسريع 131 | | وللحب آيات تبين بالفتى شحوبا وتعري من يديه الأشاجع 106 | | |

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| | كأني من لبني سليم مسهد يظل على أيدي الرجال يميد 121 | | |
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The death:

فيا ليت أني مت قبل فراقها وهل ترجعن فوت القضية ليت
فوطن لهلكي منك نفسا فإنني كأنك بي قد، يا ذريح، قضيت 33

لقد عذبتني يا حب لبني فقع إما بموت أو حياة
فإن الموت أروح من حياة تدوم على التباعد والشتات
وقال الأقربون تعز عنها فقلت له إذن حانت وفاتي 34

وعذبه الهوى حتى براه كبري القين بالسفن القداحا
فكاد يذيقه جرع المنايا ولو سقاه ذلك لاستراحا 37

وفي عروة العذري إن مت أسوة وعمرو بن عجلان الذي قتلت هند
وبي مثل ما قد نابه غير أنني إلى أجل لم يأتني وقته بعد 43

وحب بدا بالجسم واللون ظاهر وحب لدى نفسي من الروح أطف
وحب هو الداء العباء بعينه له ذكر تعدو علي فأدنف
فلا أنا منه مستريح فميت ولا هو علي ما قد حبيبت مخفف
فيا حبها مازلت حتى قتلتني ولا أنت إن طال البلا لي منصف 78

ولو أنني قدرت غداة قالت: غدرت وماء مقلتها يسيل
نحرت النفس حين سمعت منها مقاتتها وذاك لها قليل 100

ومن قادني للموت حتى إذا صفت مشاربه السم الزعاف سقاني 156

The aspects of bodily presence in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* (Diwān Kuthayyir 'Azzah)

| The Corporeal: description of the beloved's body | Desire: Longing for physical contact with the beloved | Gestures: Secret body language as a means of communication | The phantom of the beloved | The place of the beloved |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| هضيم الحشا رود المطا بخترية جميل عليها الأتحمي المنشب 40 | لعزة هم النفس منهن لو ترى إليها سبيلا أو تلم فتصقب 42 | يجيء بريها الصبا كل ليلة وتجمعنا الأحلام في كل مرقد 86 | طاف الخيال لأهل عزة موهنا بعد الهدو فهاج لي أحزاني 235 | وأتي بيوتا حولكم لا أحبها وأكثر هجر البيت وهو جنيب 36 |
| وذي أشر عذب الرضاب كأنه إذا غار أرداد الثريا السوابح مجاة نحل في أباريق صفقت بصفق الغوادي شعشعته المجادح 70 | والميت ينشر أن تمس عظامه مسا ويخلد أن يراك خلودا 76 | فأقسمت لا أنسى لعزة نظرة لها كدت أبدي الوجد مني المجمما عشية أومت والعيون حواضر إلي برج الكف ألا تكلمنا 197 | | خليلي هذا ربع عزة فاعقلا قلوصيكما ثم ابكيا حيث حلت ومسا ترابا كان قد مس جلدها وبيتا وظلا حيث باتت وظلت ولا تياسا أن يمحو الله عنكما ذنوبنا إذا صليتما حيث صلت 54 |
| أغرك منا أن ذلك عندنا وإسجاد عينيك الصيودين رابع 69 | أحب طعينة وبنات نفسي إليها لو بللن بها صوادي 90 | | | إذا قيل هذي دار عزة قادي إليك الهوى واستعجلتني البوادر 99 |
| من الشم مشراف ينيف بقرطها أسيل إذا ما قلد الحلبي واضح 71 | واني لأسمو بالوصال إلى التي يكون شفاء ذكرها وازديارها 109 | | | تزور بيوتا حوله ما تحبها وتهجره سقيا لمن أنت هاجر 103 |
| من الخفرات البيض ود جليسا إذا ما انقضت أحوثة لو تعيدها 84 | واني لأستأنني ولولا طماعتني بعزة قد جمعت بين الضرائر 110 | | | |
| ويوم الخيل قد سفرت وكفت رداء العصب عن رتل براد | | | | |

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| و عن نجلاء تدمع في بياض إذا دمعت وتنتظر في سواد وعن منكاوس في العقص جتل أثيث النبات ذي عذر جعاد | | | | |
| أتنسى إذ تودع وهي باد مقلدها كما برق الصبير 103 | | | | |
| بجيد كجيد الرئم حال تزيينه غدائر مسترخي العقاص يصورها تلوث إزار الخز منها برملة رداح كساها هائل الترب مورها 106 | | | | |
| فما روضة بالحزن طيبة الثرى يمج الندى جنجائها وعرارها بأطيب من أردان عزة موهنا وقد أوقدت بالمندل الرطب نارها 110 | | | | |
| منعمة أما ملات نطاقها فجل وأما الخصر منها فأهيف 124 | | | | |
| كأنه حين مار المأقيان به در تحلل من أسلاكه نسق وللعبير على أصداغها عبق كأنه بجنوب المجر العلق 130 | | | | |
| فما ظبية أدماء واضحة القرأ تنص إلى برد الظلال غزالها تحت بقرنيها بربر أراكة وتعطو بظلفيها إذا الغصن طالها بأحسن منها مقلة ومقلدا وجيدا إذا داننت تنوط شكالها 153 | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| لو أن عزة خاصمت شمس الضحى في الحسن عند موفق لقضى لها 153 | | | | |
| سبته بعذب الريق صاف غروبه رقيق الثنايا بارد لم يفلل وأسود ميل على جيد ظبية من الأدم حوراء المدامع مغزل وأتلع براق كأن اهتزازة إذا انتصفت للروع هزة منصل...بأطيب من فيها لمن ذاق طعمه 181. | | | | |
| وغال فضول الدرع ذي العرض خلقها وأتعبت الحجلين حتى تقصما وكظت سواربها فلا يألوانها لذن جاور الكفين أن يتقدما وتدني على المتنين وحفا كأنه عناقيد كرم قد تدلى فأنعما من الهيف لا تخزى إذا الريح ألصقت على منتها ذا الطرتين المنمنما 197 | | | | |

The physical presence of the lover himself

| Crying | Fainting | Sickness | Prematurely grey-haired | Insomniac |
|--|----------|--|-------------------------|--|
| وراجعت نفسي واعتزرتني صباية وفاضت دموعي عيرة خشية النوى 29 | | وما زلت من ذكراك حتى كأنني أميم بأكناف الديار سليب 36 | | أبيت نجيا للهموم مسهدا إذا أوقدت نحوي بليل وقودها 85 |
| وما كنت أدري قبل عزة ما البكا ولا موجعات القلب حتى تولت 54 | | ولي كبد قد برحت بي مريضة إذا سمتها الهجران ظلت تصدع 116 | | ولي منك أيام إذا شحط النوى طوال وليلات تزول نجومها 206 |
| ولي زفرات لو يدمن قتلني توالي التي تأتي المنى قد تولت 56 | | إذا ذكرتها النفس ظلت كأنما عليها من الورد التهامي أفكل 159 | | |
| إذا بصرت بها العينان لجت بدمعهما مع النظر اللجوج 64 | | لعمري لئن كان الفؤاد من النوى بغى سقما إني إذن لسقيم فإما تريني اليوم أبدي جلادة فإني لعمري تحت ذلك كلیم 110 | | |
| كأن دموع عيني يوم باننت دلالة بلها فرط مهيج يربيع بها غداة الورد ساق سريح المتح بكرته مريج 65 | | وإن بجوفي منك داء مخامرا وجوفك مما بي عليك سليم 202 | | |
| لعزة هاج الشوق فالدمع سافح مغان ورسم قد تقادم ماصح 76 | | تقول ابنة الضمري مالك شاحبا وقد تنبري للعين فيك المحاسن 223 | | |
| أقول لماء العين أمعن لعله بما لا يرى من غائب الوجد يشهد 78 | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| لقد هجرت سعدى وطال صدودها وعاود عيني دمعها وسهودها 84 | | | | |
| أغاضر لو شهدت غداة بنتم جنوء العائدات على وسادي 90 | | | | |
| أتت عبرات من سجوم كأنه غمامة دجن إستهل فيقلع 115 | | | | |
| وقاضت دموع العين حتى كأنما بوادي القرى من يابس الثغر تكحل إذا قلت أسلو غارت العين بالبكا غراء ومدتها مدامع حفل 159 | | | | |
| إذا ذكرت ليلي تعشتك عبرة تعل بها العينان بعد نهول 177 | | | | |
| كان دموع العين واهية الكلى وعت ماء غرب يوم ذاك سجيل تكنفها خرق تواكلن خرزها فأرخينه والسيل غير بجيل.. وقالوا نأت فاختر من الصبر والبكا فقلت البكا أشفى إذن لغيلي 180 | | | | |
| وإن شحطت يوما بكيت وإن دنت تذللست واستكثرتها باعتراله 192 | | | | |
| إذا ذرفت عيناى أعتل بالقذى وعزة لو يدري الطبيب قذاهما 204 | | | | |

The death:

وقد قتلت نفسا بغير جريرة وليس لها عقل ولا من يقيدها 84

أقيدي دما يا أم عمرو هرقته فيكفك فعل القاتل المتعمد 87

وكل خليل راعي فهو قاتل من أجلك هذا هامة اليوم أو غد 88

هي العيش ما لاقتك يوما بودها وموت إذا لاقاك منها ازورارها 110

إذا سمت نفسي هجرها واجتنابها رأيت غمرات الموت فيما أسومها 207

The aspects of bodily presence in *al-ghazal al-'udhri* (Diwān 'Urwah)

| The Corporeal: description of the beloved's body | Desire: Longing for physical contact with the beloved | Gestures: Secret body language as a means of communication | The phantom of the beloved | The place of the beloved |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| وأخر عهدي من عفيراء أنها تدير بنانا كلهن خضيب 25 | لئن كان برد الماء عطشان صاديا إلي حبيبا إنها لحبيب 23 | وما هو إلا أن أراها فجأة فأبهت حتى ما أكاد أجيب 22 | | |
| منعمة لم يأت بين شبابها ولا عهدا بالثدي غير ثمان 46 | تمنيت من وجدي بعفراء أنني إزار لها تحت القميص يمان 51 | | | |
| كان وشاحيها إذا ما ارتدتتهما وقامت عنانا مهرة سلسان يعض بأبدان لها ملتقاهما | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| ومتناهما رخوان يضطربان وتحتهما حقان قد ضربت همت قطار من الجوزاء ملتبدان 47 | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

The physical presence of the lover himself

| Crying | Fainting | Sickness | Prematurely grey-haired | Insomniac |
|---|----------|---|-------------------------|--|
| غلبتك بالبكاء لأن ليلي أوصله وأنتك تهجعينا 33 | | وقلت لعراف اليمامة داوني فإنك إن أبرأتني لطبيب 24 | | ألا خبراني أيها الرجالان عن النوم إن الشوق عنه عداني وكيف يلذ النوم أم كيف طعمه صفا النوم لي إن كنتما تصفان 51 |
| أفي كل يوم أنت رام بلادها بعينين انساناهما غرقان وعيني ما أوفيت نشرا فتنتظرا بمأقيهما إلا هما تكفان 34 | | فواكبدا أمست رفاتا كأنما يلذعها بالموقدات طبيب 25 | | أمامي هوى لا نوم دون لقائه وخلفي هوى قد شفني وبراني 37 |
| على كبدي من حب عفراء قرحة وعيني من وجد بها تكفان 36 | | بي اليأس أو داء الهيام شربته فايالك عني لا يكن بك ما بيا 53 | | |
| وأورثتني غما وكربا وحسرة وأورثت عيني دائم الهملان 41 | | متى تكشف عني القميص تبينا بي الضر من عفراء يا فتيان وتعترف لحما قليلا وأعظما دقاقا وقلبا دائم الخفقان 36 | | |
| تحملت زفرات الضحى فأطقتها ومالي بزفرات العشي يدان 45 | | جعلت لعراف اليمامة حكمه وعراف نجد إن هما شفياني... 39 | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| أعفراء كم من زفرة قد أذقتني وحزن ألج العين بالهملان فلو أن عيني ذي هوى فاضتا دما لفاضت دما عينا تبتدران 48 | | إذن تحملا لحما قليلا وأعظما دقاقا وقلبا دائم الخفقان 42 | | |
| | | ألسنت ترى للحب كيف تخللت عناججه جسمي وكيف براني 43 | | |
| | | وما تركت عفراء من دنف دوى بدومة مطوي له كفنان فقد تركتني ما أعي لمحدث حديثا وإن ناحيته ونجاني 49 | | |

The death:

وما عجبى موت المحبين في الهوى ولكن بقاء العاشقين عجب 26

من كان من أخواتي باكيا أبدا فاليوم إنني أراني اليوم مقبوضا
بسمعنيته فإني غير سامعه إذا علوت رقاب القوم معروضا 29

ألا يا غرابي دمنة الدار بينا أبالصرم من عفراء تنتحبان؟
فإن كان حقا ما تقولا فاذهبا بلحمي إلى وكريكما فكلاني
إذن تحملا لحما قليلا وأعظما دقاقا وقلبا دائم الخفقان
كلاني أكلا لم ير الناس مثله ولا تهضما جنبي وازدراني
ولا يعلمن الناس ما كان مييتي ولا يطعمن الطير ما تذران 42

فياليت عمي يوم فرق بيننا سقي السم ممزوجا بشب يمان 5

فياليت محيانا جميعا وليتنا إذا نحن متنا ضمنا كفنان 44