

BEIRUTER TEXTE UND STUDIEN • BAND 25

LOVE, MADNESS, AND POETRY  
AN INTERPRETATION  
OF THE MAĠNŪN LEGEND

BY

AS'AD E. KHAIRALLAH

BEIRUT 1980

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An Interpretation of the Mağnūn Legend





BEIRUTER TEXTE UND STUDIEN  
HERAUSGEGEBEN VOM  
ORIENT-INSTITUT  
DER DEUTSCHEN MORGENLÄNDISCHEN GESELLSCHAFT

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*For Ioana and the Future*







## PREFACE

This monograph is the first installment of a more inclusive study that I had planned as I wrote my Ph.D. dissertation at Princeton University. After finishing the dissertation, I had hesitated to publish it and hoped to be able to write the second part of this study, namely that dealing with the European side of the Maġnūn archetype, and especially as it was expressed by the French poet, Louis ARAGON. My research for this second part had been almost completed before the start of the Lebanese civil war in 1975. Yet many practical difficulties have prevented me from writing out the essay I had planned. At present, I realize that it is more fruitful to accept Professor Hans Robert Roemer's advice and encouragement and Professor Ulrich Haarmann's help, as well as the generous offer of the Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft to publish this first part as a separate monograph in the "Beiruter Texte und Studien"; hoping to have soon the opportunity to follow it with a second essay dealing with Aragon.

Except for minor corrections and changes, the dissertation has been kept as originally presented. I have added, however, a short introduction in which I briefly discuss the major scholarly contributions that have appeared in the meantime and that are relevant to my subject.

I should like to express my grateful appreciation to all my professors for their kind encouragement and generous help throughout my studies at Princeton University. In the preparation of this dissertation, I have received valuable advice and guidance from my professors at the Department of Near Eastern Studies. My warm thanks go to my adviser, Professor Andras Hamori, for his continuous attention, and for many valuable suggestions; to Professor Roy Mottahedeh, for his understanding and technical help; to Professors Martin Dickson and Michel Mazzaoui for help and advice at different stages of my work; and to Professor L.C. Brown, then Chairman of the Near Eastern Studies Department, for his many kindnesses and, in particular, for giving me the opportunity to conduct research for a year in Iran. I should also like to thank the members



of the Program in Comparative Literature, in particular Professors Ralph Freedman and Joseph Frank, for their expert counsel and continuous encouragement. Throughout my years at Princeton, the inspiration, moral support, and *baraka* of the late Professor Emeritus Philip K. Hitti was ever-present. To him my gratitude remains boundless.

The same support and encouragement I have been fortunate to receive at Freiburg University from Professor Hans Robert Roemer, Director of the Orientalisches Seminar. To him I am indebted in more than one way. Not only did he introduce me to Persian in 1964 and teach me, both at the Orient-Institut in Beirut and at Freiburg, many of the secrets of the art, but also his kind presence in the time of need and his ever active and motivating spirit have done most to bring this essay into print.

To all those, at the Orient-Institut of the DMG in Beirut, who helped bring this book to its present form, and especially Professor Ulrich Haarmann, who accepted this essay in the "Beiruter Texte und Studien" and supervised its publication, and Dr. Barbara Kellner-Heinkele for her invaluable help in correcting the proofs and finalizing the Index, similarly, to my Freiburg colleagues and friends, in particular Dr. Erika Glassen, who offered many valuable suggestions, and Dr. Paul Andersen, who spotted several English mistakes, I should like to express my deepest thanks.

Finally, my warmest gratitude goes to Dr. Mubarak Amar for long discussions and enlightening company while writing this dissertation, and to my wife, Ioana Khairallah, for help in preparing the Index and, above all, for her patience and love.

*Freiburg, December, 1979*

AS'AD E. KHAIRALLAH



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## INTRODUCTION

*Whatever we look at, and however we look at it, we see only through our own eyes. For this reason a science is never made by one man, but by many. The individual merely offers his contribution, and in this sense only do I dare to speak of my way of seeing things.*

C. G. JUNG

In the confrontation between the “I” and the Other, a “thirst for the Absolute” seems to make this world look like a desert and to set sensitive souls on an unremitting quest for the hidden Water of Life. Although many a journey may lead to a mirage, these journeys do not fail to endow life with a meaningful goal, and to enliven it with hope.

For its visions of the Invisible, pre-Islamic Arabia found its guides in poets, seers, and madmen. The *šāʿir* was a combination of all three. But his vision was only one of many: Arab society consisted of many tribes and worshiped many gods. However, with the rise of Islam, this multiplicity of visions was replaced by the Revelation, the many gods by the One, and the poets by the Prophet.

In addition to organized religion, Greek rationalism and disillusionment with the material world led to a reaction that found one of its best expressions in the Mağnūn figure.

Although the rise of the Mağnūn legend was due to a specific historical context, its simple Arabic structure — a mosaic of anecdotes and poetic fragments revolving around the love-madness of a certain poet called Mağnūn — accommodated various levels of interpretation. Indeed, the Legend was the product, not only of the popular mind, but also of Šūfī motifs. It achieved its universal appeal, because it expressed a collective need for rebellion against the rationalist claims of society. If reduced to his basic characteristics, Mağnūn remains a poet, a lover, and a madman. Each

of these aspects of his personality was a common motif in Arabic poetry. I propose, however, to show that Mağnūn's uniqueness rests on (1) the intrinsic unity between the three aspects of his character, (2) the fact that he is the only love-poet who is described as actually insane, and who leaves society in order to live and die with the wild animals of the desert.

Thus, love, madness, and poetry must be seen as archetypal channels for communion with the divine, channels that were fused in one legendary character who symbolized different quests in different contexts. In all these contexts, however, Mağnūn represents the rejection of established intellectual, social, and psychological limitations and symbolizes the basic yearning of the "I" to be at one with the Other. His project is to fulfill the eternal human desire to make the part identical with the Whole, a project that is conceivable only within the realms of love, madness, and poetry.

In the Arabic context — contrary to what is generally believed — the Mağnūn theme does not simply express a romantic nostalgia for life in nature, but it also exhibits clear Šūfī overtones. Before reaching 'Abdarrahmān Ğāmī (d. 1492), Mağnūn had become, in CORBIN's words, "l'œil par lequel Dieu se contemple soi-même,"<sup>1</sup> and Persian poets — Niẓāmī (d. 1203), Amīr Ḥusraw (d. 1325) — had already invested the theme with epic breath and symbolic ambiguity.

However, it was Ğāmī's contribution to set Mağnūn on his allegorical quest for self-purification, leading him to self-annihilation in union with the Friend. In Ğāmī's *Laylī u Mağnūn*, most of the motifs found before him are integrated into a mystic romance, in which Mağnūn's quest follows a spiral curve, gradually transcending the limitations of ego, society, and material world. Although Ğāmī invents few motifs and symbols, his successful integration of traditional poetic elements within his metaphysical outlook makes his variations on the Mağnūn theme especially important for the understanding of Mağnūn's archetypal character.

The present study consists of four chapters and a conclusion. Chapter I sets the theoretical framework of the problem; Chapter II discusses the cultural background and the early versions of the Legend — those of Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), Abu l-Farağ al-Işfahānī (d. 967), and Abū Bakr al-Wālibī (late ninth century ?) in his *Qays b. al-Mulawwah al-Mağnūn wa-dīwānuh*; Chapter III is an analysis of the Mağnūn archetype in Wālibī's book; and Chapter IV centers on Ğāmī's *Laylī u Mağnūn*. The conclusion sums up the main points made in the essay and suggests some possible

1. H. CORBIN et M. MO'IN: "Introduction" to: Rūzbihān Baqlī Šīrāzī: *Le jasmin des fidèles d'amour*. Tehran, Paris 1958, 14.



angles of comparison between Ġāmī's poem and ARAGON's *Le Fou d'Elsa* (1963). In addition, and although parts of the Mağnūn story have been translated into Western languages,<sup>2</sup> I found it advisable to append to this essay a full translation of the earliest, extant version of the Legend, i.e., that of Ibn Qutayba.

When I wrote this dissertation in 1970-71, I was not aware of the PARRY-LORD theories of oral formulaic composition, nor of some important monographs and articles written either shortly before I finished my dissertation, or simultaneously with it but after I had finished writing the second chapter, which deals with the historical background and genesis of the Mağnūn legend.

Now I realize that the works published between 1970 and 1979 do not require me to change my thesis, but come to strengthen it and to confirm the validity of my approach.

As a study of a poetic figure that crosses the boundaries of the Arabic culture, the present essay has two inseparable dimensions: the comparative and the Islamic. From the comparative point of view, and as already mentioned, my central thesis is that Mağnūn is the archetype of the triadic unity of love, madness, and poetry as channels for identity with, and annihilation in, the Beloved. The appeal of this archetype does not only go beyond the Arabic culture to find its place in the main Islamic literary traditions, but has recently been enriched with a new interpretation by ARAGON's epic romance *Le Fou d'Elsa*. Some of the many interesting aspects of comparing ARAGON's use of this archetype with its usage by Arabs and Persians are only hinted at in my "Concluding Remarks" in anticipation of a fuller analysis in my prospective second part of this study, devoted to ARAGON's poem.

Equally interesting, from the comparative point of view, are the genesis of the Mağnūn legend and the fact that here we have perhaps one of the rare instances of an archetypal character whose formation seems to have taken place in the light of history. It would certainly be naïve (if not contradictory with the definition of an archetype) to claim that Mağnūn was totally without predecessors in history, at least in some of his single facets. One may easily think of Enkidu's early, pristine purity and his life with the animals in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*; or of Orpheus, the divinely-born poet, whose songs drew animals, trees, and even rocks after him, and whose

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2. Most excerpts have been translated from *al-Ağānī*; see, for instance, M. WEISWEILER's *Arabesken der Liebe*. Leiden 1954, 70-78, and R. BASSET: *Mille et un contes, récits, et légendes arabes*. II, Paris 1926, 105-109.

love for Eurydice was a special kind of obsession somehow similar to Mağnūn's love-madness.<sup>3</sup> In the Arabic tradition itself, it is not difficult to find illustrations of love-madness, or of poets who claimed madness in love. But Mağnūn's uniqueness seems to consist in the inseparability of these three facets of his one character. And here the Arabic and Islamic background seems to have played a decisive role in the genesis of the legend, thus combining in one single character Mağnūn's archetypal aspects. That is where this essay touches upon matters that concern the Arabist as well as the Islamist.

In view of the fact that, outside the religious sphere and perhaps for fear of anthropomorphism, the Islamic cultural tradition remained rather poor in personifications of mythical heroes or legendary figures, the Mağnūn archetype gains much in significance. For it is highly remarkable that Islam had to generate (or at least adopt and variate on) this particular type of hero as the poet's best persona for asserting his right to exist along with the Prophet. It is also not surprising that it was the Šūfīs who made the best of this persona and animated it with the highest symbolic and allegorical allusions, integrating into it the various popular and non-orthodox elements that had been denied literary recognition.

For the Šūfīs, Mağnūn, the love-mad poet, became the highest symbol for transcending the Prophet's mediation into the direct experience of communion and unity with God. Whence the ambivalence between profane and sacred love, as well as profane and sacred love-poetry. And here lies the difference between Mağnūn and the 'Uḍrī poets as well as between profane 'Uḍrī poetry and the Šūfī understanding of this poetry according to their own interpretation (*ta'wīl*). For the same *ta'wīl* that the Šūfīs needed in interpreting the Koran for their mystical purposes was again at work in their understanding of their own and of the already existing 'Uḍrī poetry.<sup>4</sup> This Šūfī exploitation of the symbolic potential in the Arabic language and literary tradition reaches its culmination in the Persian poetic tradition, and especially with Ğāmī.

3. It may not be totally accidental that Orpheus was the source of extatic mysteries and Mağnūn became the outstanding symbol for Šūfī mystic trance. But to go about investigating the possible relationship between the figure of Mağnūn and that of Orpheus is a matter far beyond the scope of the present essay. I have, therefore, limited myself to the Arabic tradition and attempted to show how a specific cultural heritage was functional in the genesis and development of this archetypal figure.

4. Concerning the Šūfī hermeneutic, see esp. L. MASSIGNON: *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*. 2e éd., Paris 1954; H. RITTER: *Das Meer der Seele*. Leiden 1955; P. NWYIA: *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique*. Beirut 1970; and H. CORBIN: *En Islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, 4 vols., Paris 1971-72.

Before embarking upon the specific analysis of the poetry and anecdotes attributed to Mağnūn, then upon the development of the legend in Persian poetry, the present study offers a general chapter (Chapter II) meant to be an outline of the cultural, religious, and poetic conditions that were functional in creating the suitable climate for the rise of the legend. This chapter presents under a specific light a material already known to the Islamist, though not necessarily to the comparatist. It is, thus, indispensable for the second part of this study, I mean the one dealing with ARAGON's *Le Fou d'Elsa*. Also, being very general, this chapter is naturally opened to various kinds of up-dating if one takes into consideration the fact that it touches on practically most of the important aspects of Arabic culture and Islam. I should like, therefore, to mention briefly the major works that appeared in the last decade and that are relevant to the present essay.

Thematic studies concerning love and Šūfī poetry in Arabic and Persian have been rather few and rarely bear any immediate relevance to my thesis. L.A. GIFFEN's *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs: the Development of the Genre* (New York 1971, London 1972) deals mostly with concepts of love rather than with poetry; Š. AL-'AZM's *Fil-Ḥubb wal-ḥubb al-'udrī* (Beirut, 1974)<sup>5</sup> is more of an ideological approach to the phenomenon; ADŪNĪS's *at-Tābit wal-mutaḥawwil: baḥṭ fil-ittibā' wal-ibdā' 'ind al-'arab*, 3 vols. (Beirut, 1974-78) comes closest to my interpretation of Mağnūn's poetry, although ADŪNĪS centers his analysis on Ġamīl's poetry.<sup>6</sup> On the Persian side, the most important general contribution is H. CORBIN's major work, *En Islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques* (Paris 1971-72), then some specific essays and articles on Šūfī poetry or on Ġamī. Among these one may mention in particular E. MEYEROVITCH's *Mystique et poésie en Islam: Djalāl-ud-Dīn Rūmī et l'ordre des derviches tourneurs* (Paris 1972), W.C. CHITTICK's edition of Ġamī's *Naqḍ an-nuṣūṣ fī šarḥ naqṣ al-fuṣūṣ* (Tehran 1977) and his article, *The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī* in *Studia Islamica* (1979), and finally A.R. FARHĀDĪ's *L'Amour dans les récits de Djāmi* in *Studia Iranica* (1975).<sup>7</sup>

5. This is the date of the second edition. I was not able to see the first edition (Beirut 1968).

6. See *at-Tābit wal-mutaḥawwil*. I, 227-57.

7. I have not been able to read Joseph N. Bell's *Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam* (New York 1979). Otherwise, none of these contributions affects my thesis about Mağnūn's archetype, its triadic unity, and significance.

However, the more relevant contributions concern particularly Chapter II and center on pre- and early Islamic poetry. In this field, the new research is directly relevant to Chapter II and section 1 of Chapter III, in which I discuss the genesis and composition of Mağnūn's legend and poetry, and where I have tried to suggest that not only Mağnūn's legend but also his poetry were "collectively composed". In doing so, I have naturally dealt with the two essential questions of authenticity<sup>8</sup> and structure in classical Arabic poetry, from which I tried to develop the concept of "collective composition".<sup>9</sup> Now, the new research in this field focuses on the questions of composition and structure, while it tends to lay less emphasis on, or, at least, to give a new perspective to, the problem of authenticity. On the one hand, we have new studies in the dynamics and restrictions of composition: e.g., M.C. LYONS and P. CACHIA: *The Effect of Monorhyme on Arabic Poetic Production*. In: *Journal of Arabic Literature* (= JAL) I (1970), 3-13; J. MONROE: *Oral Composition in pre-Islamic Poetry*. In: JAL III (1972), 1-53; J.N. MATTOCK: *Repetition in the Poetry of Imru' al-Qays*. In: *Glasgow University Oriental Society. Transactions* 24 (1974), 34-50; M.V. McDONALD: *Orally Transmitted Poetry in pre-Islamic Arabia and Other pre-Literate Societies*. In: JAL IX (1978), 14-31; as well as two important monographs dealing with the various aspects of the problem: J. BENCHEIKH: *Poétique arabe: essai sur les voies d'une création* (Paris 1975), and M. ZWETTLER: *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry: Its Character and Implications* (Columbus 1978). Most of these contributions were highly and fruitfully inspired by the work of Milman PARRY and Albert B. LORD, especially by the latter's book, *The Singer of Tales* (New York 1965).<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, we have new studies in structure and motifs, in a serious attempt to discover an inner distinctive form in classical Arabic poetry, regardless of, or beyond, the obstacles raised by the problems of authenticity and the restrictions of monorhyme and the lack of organic unity in the classical *qaṣīda*. To mention but a few of such valid attempts, one may cite: M. BATESON's *Structural Continuity in Poetry* (Paris 1970); R.

8. For an excellent bibliographical and thematic discussion of the problems of transmission and authenticity, see F. SEZGIN: *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*. II, Leiden 1975, 14-33.

9. See also my *Collective Composition and the Collector's Art: Observations on the Dīwān of Mağnūn Lailā*. In: *La signification du bas moyen âge dans l'histoire et la culture du monde musulman*. Aix-en-Provence 1978, 117-25.

10. See the large bibliography on oral composition in ZWETTLER's above-mentioned book.

JACOBI's *Studien zur Poetik der altarabischen Qasida* (Wiesbaden 1971); K. ABU-DEEB's *Towards a Structural Analysis of pre-Islamic Poetry*. In: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* VI (1975), 148-84, and his two Arabic monographs, *Fil-Binya al-īqā'iyya liš-ši'r al-'arabī* (Beirut 1974) and *Ġadaliyyat al-ḥafā' wat-taġallī: dirāsa binyawiyya fi š-ši'r* (Beirut 1979). The relevant points in these contributions are too many to be discussed here, and I hope to deal with them in a separate essay.

For the present, suffice it to say that the two above-mentioned new trends are by no means contradictory; they are rather complementary and may be combined to open many fruitful vistas on classical Arabic poetry. Moreover, my main concept of "collective composition" has much to gain from such an important concept as oral formulaic composition, and from the work done on the effect of monorhyme and conventional restrictions on the creative process in Arabic poetry. It goes without saying that, since I was not aware of Albert LORD's theories on oral poetry, and since I do not use terms such as "formulaic expressions", my emphasis on the capital importance of oral tradition may not sound as strong as it should have sounded. But the reader will realize that terms such as "stereotyped motifs" can easily be replaced by "formulaic expressions", while terms such as "popular additions and accretion" were meant to point out the effect of oral tradition.

While the above-mentioned scholars generally tend to accept the authenticity of the poetry attributed to the classical poets and to find in it many structural patterns that corroborate this authenticity, they would not deny the fact that in spite of the authenticity of a considerable corpus of what was ascribed to the classical period, much was also invented later, nor would they insist in all cases on the unity of the poem.

Thus, we have always the huge quantity of what one may call "floating verses" and even floating *qiṭ'as* (short poems, or stanzas), which belong to no one in particular. And while it is true that some attempts have been made to characterize the individual styles of some poets, the fact is that these attempts, though much enhanced by the recent research, remain unfortunately limited to the smaller part of the poetic corpus attributed to this period.

In other words, the two main reasons I have suggested for collective composition, namely, floating verses and stereotyped prosody (with its themes as well as its cultural and moral contexts) remain indisputably valid. Thus, to say that a poet has personality, that a poem has structural unity, and that there are specific content and style which help us recognize one or more classical poets, does not imply that some poems and *dīwāns* of even



these “individualistic” poets do not include, besides what may be called their typical or individual poetry, other verses that belong to the collective style and express the common stock in trade. This kind of verses, when pertaining to a common description (*wasf*) of nature, or of personal, tribal, moral, or physical standards (i.e., stereotyped values), could be and were in fact often attributed to more than one poet, so that such great experts as al-İşfahānī or even al-Aşma‘ī were not able to decide to whom such verses belonged. Thus, a look at *Dīwān Mağnūn Laylā*, collated by ‘Abdassattār A. FARRĀĜ (Cairo 1963), shows us that more than sixty poets, from Imra’alqays to al-Buḥturī, have contributed to the composition of the dīwān. Many of the verses or *qiṭ‘as* reascribed to five, six, or more poets: e.g., Nos. 51, 82, 84, 93, 99, 105, 124, 135, 140, 144, 153.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, the more general and abstract the verse, the more likely to belong to the category of “floating verses”. And in this general pool of what is not particularly individualistic or personalized, the whole nation was able to contribute. And here lies the importance of this pool for detecting the deep-seated artistic, moral, and psychic inclinations of a nation, or in better terms, the nation’s collective unconscious.

It is then these very verses and poems, which traditional criticism and scholarship have tended to regard as weak pastiche, that seem to me to present a particularly rich soil for, and a genuine expression of, the collective unconscious, and of the general aesthetic taste in which it is exteriorized.

My work is thus part of the new trend of paying attention to the poetry itself. And it seems to me that we should not confine our interest only to what has come down to us as standard or court poetry. Nor is it enough to dismiss “unauthentic” poetry as pastiche, as BLACHÈRE<sup>12</sup> often does, or as below our modern, aesthetic sense, as does Ṭāhā ḤUSAYN when he vilifies the story of Mağnūn considering it unauthentic and totally artificial, while refusing to see its symbolic dimensions.<sup>13</sup>

The fact is that the Mağnūn romance was written down gradually, and that, as a genuine collective composition, it grew on with every new version or performance. Here too, we have a kind of “Singers of tales” who were

11. Another aspect of this collective composition is the integration of anonymous poetry into the *Dīwān*: tens of couplets are adopted from Ibn Dāwūd’s *K. az-Zahra*, as clearly shown in FARRĀĜ’s footnotes.

12. See esp. R. BLACHÈRE’s *Histoire de la littérature arabe*. 3 vols., Paris 1952-66. Cf. also, in connection with this point, W. HEINRICH: *Die altarabische Qaṣīde als Dichtkunst*. In: *Der Islam* 51(1974), 118-24, esp. 120.

13. See Ṭ. ḤUSAYN: *Min Tārīḫ al-adab al-‘arabī*. Beirut 1970, 491.



the collectors or *rāwīs*. In the case of Mağnūn, we have three basic Arabic performances which I have called “versions” of one dīwān, and which I have tried to analyze, seeking their message insofar as the essential vision of a culture is collectively conveyed through them. Thus, I hope to have illustrated the capacity of such a dīwān to represent the dreaming level of the collective consciousness, and to have raised the question whether the world of poetic dream should be deemed an “escape”, or rather the natural level of consciousness of the “intuitive man” (in NIETZSCHE’s terms<sup>14</sup>), where dreaming, day-dreaming, as well as legendary and mythological mental activities correspond to the abstract ideas of the “rational man.”

This question will be taken up in my second part, where I hope to show how a socially “committed” poet, Louis ARAGON, employs his mythopoetic imagination and puts the archetype of the love-mad poet in the service of his own vision of the future.

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14. See G. CLIVE: *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*. New York 1965, 513-15.



## CHAPTER ONE

### MADNESS OR POETIC VISION

Muslim poets seem to have been fascinated with the figure of Qays b. al-Mulawwah, better known in Arabic as al-Mağnūn (the Madman).<sup>1</sup> The story of his love for Laylā has always known a vogue unequalled by any other literary theme. Although Mağnūn's legend<sup>2</sup> started on a popular level, it became and for centuries remained the Song of Songs of Ṣūfī (i.e. Islamic mystic) poets, and until very recently<sup>3</sup> its theme was particularly associated with mystical love. Nevertheless, from the earliest extant version of the legend, translated here in the Appendix, it is easy to see a simplicity and naïveté in the narrative which remind one of its popular origin.

Aside from the introductory and concluding chapters, the present study will consist basically of three chapters: First, an analysis of the formative factors which helped the rise and development of the legend; next an interpretation of the legend as represented on the popular level (with some Ṣūfī overtones) by Abū Bakr al-Wālibī (9th century ?) in his *Qays b. al-Mulawwah al-Mağnūn wa-dīwānuh*; and lastly, a study of Ġāmī's mystical use of the theme in his *Laylīu Mağnūn*. The methodological basis of this dissertation will be the archetypal approach.

The present chapter will be divided into four sections, of which the first will briefly explain the reasons for discussing the above-mentioned material; the second will take a look at the comparative approaches already applied to the Mağnūn theme and, by the same process, elaborate upon the relevance of archetypal criticism; the third will attempt to propose a

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1. Another common Arabic name for him is Mağnūn Laylā (the madman of Laylā); in other Islamic languages his nickname is simply Mağnūn. Hereafter, I shall use the forms "Mağnūn" and "Laylā".

2. For "legend" I adopt the definition of the *Dictionary of World Literature*. Ed. J.T. Shipley, New York 1953: "Legend... (3) unauthenticated narrative, folk-embroidered from historical material, sometimes popularly deemed historical."

3. Until the appearance in 1963 of *Le Fou d'Elsa* by the French Surrealist and Marxist poet, Louis ARAGON (1897- ).



general, socio-psychological hypothesis which might help explain the literary appeal of the Mağnūn figure; and the fourth will briefly submit the thesis of the present study.

## I

Despite the popularity of the Mağnūn theme in Arabic literature, it was first with the *Laylī u Mağnūn* of the Persian poet Niẓāmī (d. 1203) that the story acquired the organic form of an epic romance. Moreover, some scholars tend to believe that it was first with Niẓāmī that the legend acquired its mystical dimensions. Thus, contrasting Niẓāmī's version with its popular background, Max WEISWEILER says that,

In jener Zeit, als man erstmal Mağnūns Liebesklage im Volke sang, ahnte man auch noch nicht, daß er einst den Mystikern zum Sinnbild der menschlichen Seele werden sollte, die, in der Wüste des irdischen Lebens verschmachtend, sich nach der durch Lailā verkörperten Gottheit sehnt.<sup>4</sup>

If the above passage implies that before Niẓāmī the legend of Mağnūn had not been invested with its mystical symbolism, then I disagree with WEISWEILER in this regard. Indeed, one of the aims of the present study is to show that, before Niẓāmī, and perhaps right from its first extant version, the legend of Mağnūn had already acquired its mystical dimensions, though clearly not on Niẓāmī's level of complexity or artistic consciousness. On the other hand, although Niẓāmī is widely held to be the high point in the lyrical expression of the legend, it was only with Ğāmī (d. 1492) that the Mağnūn theme acquired its highest consciously mystical expression. On this point, most scholars who studied the theme seem to agree with E.G. BROWNE's opinion that, "In Jami the mystical and pantheistic thought of Persia may be said to find its most complete and vivid expression."<sup>5</sup>

However, Ğāmī's high rank in mystical thought does not necessarily make him the best Šūfī poet. A.J. ARBERRY rightly remarks that it is rather Rūmī (d. 1273) who established "an irrefutable claim to be the greatest

4. M. WEISWEILER: *Die früh-arabische Liebesgeschichte und ihr historischer Hintergrund*. In: Saeculum IX (1958), 166. See also M.Ġ. HILĀL: *al-Ḥayāt al-'āṭifiyya bayna l-'udriyya wa-ṣ-šūfiyya*. 2nd ed., Cairo 1960, 305-06.

5. E.G. BROWNE: *A Literary History of Persia*. III, Cambridge 1928, 548. See also 'A.A. HIKMAT: *Romeo u Juliet, muqāyasa bā Laylī u Mağnūn*. Tehran 1941, 208-9; M.Ġ. HILĀL: *op. cit.* 162, 239, 306; and A.S. LEVEND: *Leylā ve Mecnun hikāyesi*. Ankara 1959, 380, where Ğāmī is considered one of the three masters who treated the theme.

mystical poet Islam and perhaps the whole world, has ever produced.”<sup>6</sup> Hence, it is necessary to keep in mind that BROWNE qualifies his statement about Ğāmī by adding that,

Though he may have been equalled or even surpassed by others in each of the numerous realms of literature which he cultivated, no other Persian poet or writer has been so successful in so many different fields, and the enthusiastic admiration of his most eminent contemporaries is justified by his prolific and many-sided genius.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, one may judge that Ğāmī is neither the greatest Šūfī nor the best lyrical poet of Iran. Nonetheless, in comparison with the different variations on the Mağnūn theme, I am inclined to agree with M.Ġ. HILĀL and ‘ALĪ HIKMAT (see below) in judging Ğāmī’s poem to be the most thoroughly mystical.

## II

Scholars have been attentive to the persistence of the Mağnūn theme throughout Islamic poetry. They have been proceeding along lines similar to those suggested by Maud BODKIN in her *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*. BODKIN observes that “we may study the themes that show this persistence within the life of a community or a race, and may compare the different forms which they assume...”<sup>8</sup> So at least three attempts have been made to trace the development of the Mağnūn theme: first, ‘ALĪ A. HIKMAT’s *Romeo u Juliet, muqāyasa bā Laylī u Mağnūn*, Tehran 1941; second, M. Ġ. HILĀL’s *al-Ḥayāt al-‘āṭifiyya bayna l-‘udriyya wa-šūfiyya*, Cairo 1954; and third, A.S. LEVEND’s *Leylâ ve Mecnun hikâyesi*, Ankara 1959. These books are helpful surveys of the literary development of the legend. Combined, they cover the most important versions of the story and point out some of its most recurrent motifs. These books lack, however, any archetypal approach similar to the one which underlies Maud BODKIN’s thematic studies.

Without such a guiding principle, a study of a recurrent theme is liable to degenerate into haphazard comparisons, and may, at times, become an arbitrary enumeration of parallels and influences. Such is the case, unfortunately, with the three studies already mentioned.

6. A. J. ARBERRY: *Sufism*. London 1950, 117.

7. BROWNE: *op. cit.* III, 548.

8. M. BODKIN: *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*. Oxford 1965, 2.



1) 'Alī A. HİKMAT's book is basically a comparison of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* with various Persian versions of the Mağnūn theme, mainly that of Nizāmī. Chiefly interested in Persian romances, HİKMAT relegates the Arabic versions to occasional mention as background sources. His chapter on Ğāmī's poem tends to be a summary of the narrative, coupled with extensive excerpts from the text. While HİKMAT stresses ĞĀMĪ's Sūfism, he overlooks the Sūfī dimension in his long section on Nizāmī. He concentrates instead on citing a long list of similarities and divergences between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Juliet* and *Laylī u Mağnūn*, without offering much analysis, or any general principles.<sup>9</sup> One should not forget, however, that HİKMAT's book is significant, because it was a pioneering comparative approach to the Mağnūn theme.

2) A.S. LEVEND's *Leylâ ve Mecnun hikâyesi* is a useful bibliographical reference and a helpful survey of the theme. Its contribution is mainly on the Turkish side. Its method consists of a simple summary of each narrative, interspersed with poetic excerpts and occasional comments. The conclusion of the book — with its hasty comparisons and value judgments, and its cursory glance at recurrent motifs and characters — is of little critical value.

3) M.Ğ. HİLĀL's *al-Hayāt al-'āḫfiyya bayna l-'udriyya wa-ṣūfiyya* aptly depicts the historical background of the Mağnūn theme and analyzes its evolution in the Arabic and Persian traditions. The author's thesis is twofold: (1) In Arabic, the discussion of the Mağnūn story and poetry was limited to transmitters (*rāwīs*) and historians quarrelling about questions of authenticity. In Persian, however, the theme was appropriated by poets and thinkers. (2) In Arabic, Mağnūn's poetry was still of the 'Uḍrī kind, whereas in Persian it was Sūfī.<sup>10</sup> Within this general framework, HİLĀL includes much information, mainly concerning the Arabic and Persian literary and religious traditions, and the development of 'Uḍrī into Sūfī love. Thus, of the three books under discussion, HİLĀL's is the most inclusive study of the lyrical and mystical dimensions of the legend. His book helps one understand the paths of development connecting the early 'Uḍrī poetry and the poetry of Ğāmī. HİLĀL's main approach tends towards the history of ideas and their relationship to the narrative variations.

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9. While insisting on similarities and refusing to recognize Nizāmī's mystical symbolism (*Romeo u Juliet*, 148), HİKMAT dedicates entire pages to recording trifling comparisons such as the observation that both Shakespeare and Nizāmī have a passage which refers to flies. *Ibid.* 136-37.

10. See HİLĀL: *op. cit.* 2.



Though inclusive, HILĀL's scope is not always supported by a sound critical method. He quickly dismisses the controversy concerning Mağnūn's historicity<sup>11</sup> only to settle for an oversimplified solution. On the one hand, he accepts the authenticity of the poetry attributed to Mağnūn, relying in particular on *Kitāb al-Ağānī* of Abu l-Farağ al-Iṣfahānī (d. 967) and *Tazyīn al-aswāq* of Dāwūd al-Anṭākī (d. 1599), which he deems the "most reliable sources."<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, he singles out anecdotes which can be interpreted mystically and ascribes them to later Šūfī additions.<sup>13</sup> Thus, he concludes that the Šūfīs contributed to the prose anecdotes, but not to the poetry itself. This untenable distinction allows him first to establish a clear dichotomy between the 'Uḍrī and the Šūfī traditions of the legend, and secondly to claim that the poetry connected with Mağnūn was 'Uḍrī in Arabic and Šūfī only in Persian.

In studying a legend, one may choose to focus on its early formative period, and to analyze the different factors which brought it into being. One may also consider the legend as being already formed and study its narrative and imagery. Most scholars have chosen the former approach. But the skeptical attitude which D.S. MARGOLIOUTH (*The Origins of Arabic Poetry*. In: JRAS, July 1925, 417-49) and ṬĀHĀ ḤUSAYN (*Fi š-Ši'r al-ğahilī*. Cairo 1926) assumed towards the *Ğāhiliyya* and early Islamic poetry had the effect of reviving the controversy over Mağnūn's existence. This controversy does not add greatly to our literary appreciation of the legend. In a well-documented essay, KRAČKOVSKIJ argues for the real existence of Mağnūn in the latter half of the seventh century.<sup>14</sup> Again, his historicobibliographical approach leads him astray as to the nature of the cultural factors which explain the formation and the popularity of the legend. The major role played by the Šūfīs is pointed out by H. RITTER in a short commentary added to his translation of KRAČKOVSKIJ's essay.<sup>15</sup>

Apparently unaware of both KRAČKOVSKIJ's essay, and of RITTER's argument, HILĀL fails to see Šūfī strains in the Arabic poetry ascribed to Mağnūn. Furthermore, he totally neglects any mention of Abū Bakr al-

11. See *ibid.* 2 and 42.

12. *Ibid.* 89. «أشعاره في أوثق مصادرها».

13. See *ibid.* 90 *et seq.* Almost all the motifs mentioned by HILĀL as Šūfī additions can be found in: Abu l-Farağ al-Iṣfahānī: *Kitāb al-Ağānī*. II, Beirut 1955, 21, 28-29, 54 *et passim*; and Ibn Qutayba: (*Kitāb*) *aš-Ši'r wa-š-šu'arā*. Beirut 1964, 475. Henceforth, these books will be referred to as *Ağānī* and *Kitāb aš-Ši'r*.

14. See *Die frühgeschichte der erzählung von Mağnūn und Lailā in der arabischen literatur*. Trans. H. Ritter. In: *Oriens* VIII (1955), 48.

15. See *Nachwort des übersetzters*. In: KRAČKOVSKIJ: *op. cit.* 49-50.

Wālibī's *Qays b. al-Mulawwah al-Mağnūn wa-dīwānuh*.<sup>16</sup> Through focusing on this *Dīwān*, the present study will attempt to show that while it is well-nigh impossible to draw a demarcation line between the 'Uḍrī and the Ṣūfī elements in the poetry ascribed to Mağnūn, it is not difficult to substantiate RITTER's claim, i.e., to demonstrate that Ṣūfī strains were already obvious in this poetry. This question brings us to an important problem of comparative literature which seems advisable to discuss in this context.

All three books under discussion manifest two methodological deficiencies, which often limit the usefulness of a thematic analysis. These two deficiencies are interrelated, but one is more obvious in studies of "content", and the other in studies of "form".

With respect to the content, a thematic approach deepens our understanding and appreciation of a literary subject. It draws attention to the elements which endow a theme with an enduring vitality throughout the metamorphoses of its form. A new light is shed on a work of art, once it is placed in relationship with other works on the same theme. This gives us a better perspective from which to appreciate the development of man's creative imagination. Yet this approach involves two pitfalls: First, we may be too attentive to the general perspective, and neglect the importance of the work of art as a separate, self-contained entity; such an approach tends to reduce criticism to listing extrinsic causal relationships, and to neglect the inner, structural complexity of the work. This seems to be the lacuna common to the three studies in question. Secondly, we may fail to choose a perspective wide or deep enough to avoid detecting influences and borrowings where they do not exist. Thus we may obtain assertions such as HİLĀL's statement that Persian literature borrowed from Arabic certain characteristics denoting the intensity of 'Uḍrī love, "such as addressing birds, animals, and inanimate beings."<sup>17</sup> This statement obviously demonstrates the narrowness of HİLĀL's perspective. Such a universal poetic motif as conversing with nature need not be exclusively or automatically explained in terms of foreign influence. It might be more perceptively explained by means of the archetypal approach, which, when kept in balance with a formal analysis, could be of great critical value.

The theory of archetypes postulates the existence of certain permanent psychic patterns and deems them as intrinsic to our soul as our physical parts

16. This is the title adopted by Ş. İNALCIK in her edition of al-Wālibī's *Kays b. al-Mulawwah (al-Macnun) ve Diwani*. Ankara 1967, henceforth referred to as Wālibī and *Dīwān*.

17. *al-Ḥayāt al-ʿāfiyya*, 272-73.

are to our body.<sup>18</sup> This theory rules out the assumption that some basic human characteristics may suddenly come into being, or may be introduced as a total innovation into a society. Only artistic differentiations of an archetype are affected by cultural environment as well as by trans-cultural influences. As for archetypal images, characters and patterns, they emerge from a deeper, subconscious plane, unaffected by cultural change; hence, "the archetype is always an image belonging to the whole human race."<sup>19</sup> On this universal plane, it is not very useful to look for sources of influence. A thematic study should then endeavor to elucidate the nature of the archetype, which lies at the heart of a theme and gives it a perennial significance. "T.S. Eliot says, 'The pre-logical mentality persists in civilized man, but becomes available only to or through the poet.' The 'primordial image' which taps this 'pre-logical mentality' is called *archetype*."<sup>20</sup> One may suggest hypotheses for interpreting the function of an archetype, yet one should not hope to reach a scientific formulation of a phenomenon which, by definition, expressed a "pre-logical mentality." Nonetheless, in the thematic analysis, the notion of the *archetype* provides an essential critical tool:

The literary critic applies the term to an image, a descriptive detail, a plot pattern, or a character type that occurs frequently in literature, myth, religion, or folklore, and is, therefore, believed to evoke profound emotions in the reader because it awakens a primordial image in the unconscious memory and thus calls into play illogical but strong responses.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, the notion of archetypes, by providing vast possibilities of interpretation, may allow us to grasp the relationships between some fundamental psychic tendencies and the various symbolic patterns in which they are expressed.

Yet once isolated and established as a constant common element, a symbolic pattern should recede into the background, allowing the analysis to deal with the question of "form." The formal characteristic, conventions, and techniques inherent in a work of art, both as an expression of its cultural milieu and of the author's individual creativity, should then be our main concern, if we intend to understand how a work of art satisfies us emotionally and aesthetically.

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18. See C.G. JUNG: *Psyche and Symbol*. Ed. V.S. de Laszlo, New York 1958, XVI and 123 *et seq.*

19. *Ibid.* 124.

20. *A Handbook to Literature*. Revised ed., C.H. Holman *et. al.*, New York 1960, 32.

21. *loc. cit.*

## III

Plato distinguishes four types of inspired madmen: The prophet, inspired by Apollo; the mystic, by Dionysus; the poet, by the Muses; and — the highest type — the lover, inspired by Aphrodite and Eros.<sup>22</sup>

Although he ascribes madness to a “lot divine,”<sup>23</sup> Plato does not present all four types under a favorable light. The poet, the prophet, and the mystic are divinely possessed, but they do not know what they are talking about.<sup>24</sup> Only the philosopher, the lover of eternal Forms, is able to know the truth, for he is guided by dialectical reasoning. But rational thinking is not always adequate for reaching the more mysterious realms of reality. Furthermore, the philosopher, this lover of wisdom, is deemed mad, because he also is possessed by a deity,<sup>25</sup> and his highest attainment of truth can only occur by means of a vision. This point is corroborated by the fact that Plato himself has to resort to visionary descriptions of reality, when the subject is too spiritual to be expressed by his dialectical discourse:

It may be well to repeat here, then, that in instinct and intellectual method, Plato is a poet. The ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy seemed to be settled in the person of Plato himself. For, in the discussion of intellectual questions, the characters are led to their search for truth through the steps of dialectic, but, in what is generally regarded as the sphere of the spiritual, the poet and his view of life are called into play. In that sphere knowledge is represented — Plato’s method implies the truth of this — in the inspired utterance of the poet.<sup>26</sup>

The problem is, however, that Plato overlooks his own practice and denies others what he allows himself. He thus insists on considering his dialectical method the only guarantee for knowledge; consequently, his system has room for other visionaries only inasmuch as they do not contradict his truth. In this, poets are no exception:

Of that place beyond the heavens none of our earthly poets has yet sung, and none shall sing worthily. But this is the manner of it, for assuredly we must be bold to speak what is true, above all when our

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22. Cf. *Phaedrus* 265a-b. Trans. R. Hackforth. In: *Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, New York 1964, 510-11. Further references to Plato are to this edition.

23. *Ion* 534c and 536d.

24. *Ibid.* 534d.

25. *Phaedrus* 249d.

26. T. SH. DUNCAN: *Plato and Poetry*. In: *The Classical Journal* XL (No. 8), 484.

discourse is upon truth. It is there that true being dwells, without color or shape, that cannot be touched; reason alone, the soul's pilot, can behold it, and all true knowledge is knowledge thereof.<sup>27</sup>

He thus establishes a monopoly on knowledge and chases the non-subservient poet outside the walls of his Republic. Along with other visionaries, the poet has to submit to Plato's established vision of reality, and to the socio-political order deriving from that vision.

With the rise of Islam, a similar monopoly on truth was established in Arabia, then throughout the Islamic Empire. Unlike Plato, Muhammad did not claim to have reached his truth by dialectical reasoning; he was a prophet. Still, for different reasons, the result was the same: Muhammad was the Prophet, to him the Absolute Truth was revealed. And, once again, the new order had room only for the believers among the visionaries.

The medieval reconciliation of Reason and Revelation did not change the epistemological priorities inherited from Plato. Reason was a very useful tool, a sturdy scaffolding. Yet, at the top of each rational edifice reigned a different vision of the world, and by and large philosophy became the handmaiden of revelation. Thus Plato's metaphysical and moral vision was replaced by a Judaic, Christian, or Muslim vision of life and the hereafter, while his rational tool came in handy in each case.

Doctrinal absolutism was not Plato's invention, nor was it to disappear with him. If Plato failed to establish his own Republic, the spirit of orthodoxy was able to flourish throughout the ages. Its extreme aspects, embodied in the Inquisition mentality, and recurrent in various forms of suppression and persecution, do not leave us with much illusion about man's tolerance.

All along, however, orthodoxy seems to have provoked dissent, and the chains of established order have often been violently broken. That man is born free and that everywhere he lies in chains does not apply only to Rousseau's century; it rather seems to be a characteristic of the human condition. And it is as such, that is to say, as a general, apparently ubiquitous phenomenon, that this problem is relevant to our present investigation.

The core of the problem seems to be so obvious that one wonders if man overlooks it out of ignorance or out of necessity. If life is a continuous flux, then any static system, designed to hold it, is bound to collapse sooner or later. One imagines that this should be readily understood. Yet, whether utopian or realistic, dreamers or practical reformers, those who effect

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27. *Phaedrus* 247c.

radical changes in our vision of reality (and in the norms entailed by this vision) seem to believe that their own vision is the final one. Even when they do not make it as explicit as Muhammad's claim, at heart, every one seems convinced that he is "The Seal of Prophecy." It is probably this attitude, worsened by later ossification and misunderstanding of the message, that transforms the new freedom into a new slavery: Plato deplores the execution of Socrates, then dreams of his own totalitarian state; Christians deplore the crucifixion, then establish their own Inquisition; Muhammad narrowly escapes being killed by his enemies, but outside the religions of the Book (Ahl al-Kitāb), unbelievers are at best tolerated.

If there is a possible pattern to be discerned, it might be safe to suggest that there seems to be a perennial urge to endow our vision of the world with absolute validity. Our unsatisfied thirst for the absolute seems to be at least partly quenched when we imagine our relative laws to be of eternal truth and value. What oppresses us we deem to be relative, distorted, or at most man-made. Our vision of a freer life, and of our right to realize it, are sacred duty. But once things turn our way, our vision is claimed to be divinely inspired, and our acquired freedom develops into chains for whoever dares to challenge the "eternal" foundations of the new order. Thus obtains the usual pattern of oppressed becoming oppressor.

If, within the limitations of man's finitude, absolute morality is cruel, then claims for absolute knowledge are nothing less than absurd. But, this is almost never the opinion of those who happen to be in power. They feel that it is not only their prerogative, but also their duty to define good and evil. They determine what is best for society, and establish the rules of the game. Since conformity to these rules — a condition for being admitted — is what determines the health or sanity of a social member, dissent in thinking or behaviour is deemed sheer mental illness. Whence the importance of madness both as a stigma and, by contrast, as a sign of rebellion.

If sanity is generally equated with conformity to established norms, then we can see how madness becomes one of the best literary symbols of the universal rebel against any established order that stands between his free self and reality, whether this reality be the inner introspective or the outer physical world. The madman will represent the rebellion against the stifling laws of reasonable society and its common sense. His imagination is his reason, and where "sane" people hesitate in front of social and intellectual norms, he simply asserts his mode of vision with the same innocence and force of prophetic utterance. This purity of vision, and the courage of expressing it make the madman an almost poetic ideal.

But, vision of what? And how does it radically differ from visions aimed at solving the contradiction between self and world only through social and political reforms?

One possible interpretation of this contradiction is that established norms frame the individual and divide the self between the natural flow of life in its depth and the part or role which the individual has to concede to society. The effect of such a division can be better realized if we consider the psychic landscape as described by JUNG:

Jung defines the *self* as the complete personality comprising the ego as the center of the conscious functioning, plus the infinitely vaster areas of the unconscious. Of these areas, the one situated closest to the ego he designates as the personal unconscious. Beyond this, the reaches of the psyche extending into the subhuman on the one part and the super-human on the other part are what he describes as the collective unconscious. In and through the *self*, the human personality is therefore related (paradoxically though this appears from the viewpoint of the ego) to what we might call its innermost center as well as the universe of which it forms a particle.<sup>28</sup>

Against such a landscape, it is possible to see how social, rational pressure dislocates the self not only from its external universe, but also, and most importantly, from its innermost center. This creates a sense of alienation and exile, and a disillusion with socio-political reforms which fail to reconcile the rational with the non-rational elements within and without the individual self. Depending on individual and social conditions, this rational one-sidedness can become so frustrating that it results in a violent upsurge of the nonrational forces in us. Yet even when we keep these forces under control, this basic existential dislocation is probably the source of our feeling of an irreparable loss of, and separation from the totality of Being. It is this sense of a fundamental lack that fascinates our imagination and focuses it on a continuous, conscious or unconscious, quest for that lost state of original bliss. Psychologists may see in this quest a wish to return to the womb or to early childhood; socially speaking, it may be seen as a desire to return to nature and to primitive life; metaphysically and religiously, it is usually interpreted as a longing for a lost world of perfection or paradise.<sup>29</sup>

28. V. S. de Laszlo's Introduction to JUNG's *Psyche and Symbol*, XXXII-XXXIII.

29. One may borrow ELIADE's statement which sums up the situation: "... it is obvious that the 'mother' symbolizes, in these different contexts, nature in her primordial state, the *prima materia* of the alchemists, and that the 'return to the mother' translates a spiritual experience corresponding to any other 'projection' outside Time... in other words, to the



No matter where we lay the emphasis, the general drive seems to point to a nostalgia created by a vague memory of a state of bliss, a state of perfect union and harmony with the world, where the individual soul was at one with itself and with the soul of the universe, and where — instinctively, intuitively, spiritually, or in any other manner — it swam with the flux, uninhibited by any man-made norms. It is this omnipresent need for union or reunion with the Absolute — immanent or transcendent — that seems to underly our images and dreams of perfect happiness.

Empirically we cannot prove the existence of a prenatal or post-mortal paradise. Nonetheless, our observation of small children and primitives, assisted by remembrances from our childhood, and our collective unconscious seem to suggest a close connection between happiness and these two states of “reduced intensity of consciousness and absence of concentration and attention.”<sup>30</sup>

Obviously, 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,<sup>31</sup> and is usually represented by a great variety of forms. This reconnection can be imaginatively achieved through “recapturing” the past, or living its archetypes, or more often through striving to relive it in the future.<sup>32</sup> In both cases, the model seems to be generally inspired by the child’s joy in his world of play and warmth. This model seems to survive both cultural change and old age. It is usually interpreted and reformulated religiously or rationally, and frequently replayed through dream, fantasy, legend, creativity — all forms of play, or ritual, characterized by material uselessness.

It is especially the bliss of early childhood<sup>33</sup> that seems to represent in man’s unconscious, whether individual or collective, a hearth of love and well-being, prior to what is later experienced as the cruel intervention of consciousness that separates the individual from the totality of Being, and prior to the realm of reason, which systematizes this separation.

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reintegration of a primal situation.” See M. ELIADE: *The Forge and the Crucible*. Trans. S. Corrin, New York 1962, 155.

30. Cf. JUNG: *Psyche and Symbol*, 118 *et seq.*

31. For the appeal of poetry, on account of its relieving function, see S. FREUD: *Character and Culture*. Ed. Ph. Rieff, New York 1963, 43.

32. See JUNG: *op. cit.* 123-31.

33. *Ibid.* 119. This assumes, of course, that the bliss of early childhood was not tragically disrupted.



If there is here a definite pattern that students of sociology and psychology may identify and analyze, the present study can only borrow it as a possible hypothesis for explaining the general appeal of the problem of madness, and perhaps as a wider perspective for examining the legend under discussion.

#### IV

How does the Mağnūn legend illustrate the problem we just discussed, and what pattern can we discern in Mağnūn's character?

In our attempt to understand the continuous appeal of Mağnūn, emphasis will be laid on the following interrelated points:

1) The Mağnūn figure has an inherent complexity which contains and combines primordial psychic tendencies — love, creative impulse, numinous experience, etc. Thus, depending on the levels of sophistication of both author and reader, the legend can satisfy popular as well as elitist aesthetic and spiritual demands. Accordingly, its symbolic implications will necessitate different levels of interpretation.

2) Like any true symbol, the Mağnūn figure derives its effectiveness from its power to reconcile between conscious and unconscious elements, thus remaining outside the reach of rational elucidation, and rejuvenating its meaning through personal and cultural changes.

3) Although this symbolic complexity cannot be formulated in any clear-cut fashion, it will be suggested that Mağnūn, in his erotico-poetic madness, may be said to represent a heroic pattern which gratifies man's yearning for reconnection with the totality of Being. Though ultimately indivisible, the media for such reconnection may be theoretically distinguished into: love as a way for sympathetic union, and poetry as a way of sympathetic vision. When invested with the intensity of madness, these two ways may represent an outlet to the divine, regardless of where one's god is thought to reside.

From this perspective, we realize that we have a triadic relationship uniting the poet, the lover, and the madman. It will be shown that in the context of our legend, madness is a dimension as essential as love and poetry. It is the dimension which transmutes poetry into prophetic vision, and love into mystic union.

From this perspective also, we can see that Plato's four types of divine madness can be detected in Mağnūn. These types are certainly not difficult

to find in most, if not it all, cultures. However, the Mağnūn legend seems to have a special distinction. Despite, or possibly because of, the apparent naïveté of the original story, the legend includes the seeds of a character capable of integrating within himself these four types of madness,<sup>34</sup> simply by integrating their four inspiring gods in one: Laylā.

The pattern which emerges from this situation is that of a “possessed-Possessor” relationship. The poet, the lover, and the madman are three dimensions of the same archetype. These three dimensions seem to emanate from a state of mind that we call “possession,” whether this state is effected by the Muse, the Beloved, or the Jinni. With Mağnūn, however, these agents tend to be identical and equivalent to the person of the “Possessor,” whether we interpret this Possessor as being God, or simply a concrete human being — Laylā. The Possessor is at the same time the efficient and the final cause of Mağnūn’s quest. Mağnūn’s peace and freedom are in his Possessor’s will. Love, poetry, and madness are equal expressions of his being possessed. His social alienation is an immanent corollary of the loss of his common sense, a loss that grows in direct proportion to his success in achieving his freedom, i.e., annihilating all egoistic or social obstacles that hinder his total possession by, or unity with, the object of his Quest.

It is worth mentioning here that among those who have dealt with the theme of Mağnūn, two critics have already made two points of immediate relevance to our subject. In his important study. *L’esprit courtois en Orient*, Jean-Claude VADET devotes an illuminating chapter to Mağnūn, in which he emphasizes the importance of the common daemonic source which identifies madness with poetic vision: “Le fou par excellence est aussi le poète par excellence, le poète surhumain celui qui vit comme les Djinns qui a la clairvoyance des djinns parce qu’il a subit leur blessure mortelle mais libératrice.”<sup>35</sup>

Yet more relevant still is Rudolph GELPKE’s article on Nizāmī. As far as I know, GELPKE is the first to discern the triadic character of the Mağnūn archetype as it appears in Arabic and in Nizāmī’s *Laylī u Mağnūn*:

Wer ist dieser Mädschnun? In drei Punkten stimmen die frühen arabischen Quellen bei aller sonstigen Widersprüchlichkeit überein: Mädschnun *liebte, dichtete* und war (oder wurde) *wahnsinnig*. Auf das Fundament dieses Dreiklangs gründet auch Nezami sein Werk. Es ist,

34. In discussing Ġāmī, we shall see that Plato’s philosophic madness, of which the ultimate channel is intuition, is replaced by gnosticism, equally dependent on this channel.

35. J.-C. VADET: *L’Esprit courtois en Orient dans les cinq premiers siècles de l’hégire*. Paris 1968, 378 *et passim*.

möchte ich sagen, das “magische Dreieck” über der Eingangspforte zu dieser Dichtung.<sup>36</sup>

What interplay of cultural factors caused or furthered the formation of this “Dreiklang,” and how was it manifested before Wālibī? These questions will be the central concern of the next chapter.

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36. R. GELPKE: *Liebe und Wahnsinn als Thema eines persischen Dichters: Zur Mädchnun-Gestalt bei Nezami*. In: *Symbolon IV* (1964), 108-109.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND THE EARLY VERSIONS OF THE MAĞNŪN LEGEND

The present chapter does not offer new details of thought or history. Rather, it relies on already existing research, in an attempt to emphasize and interpret some social, religious, and literary elements which seem to have been functional in the composition and development of the Mağnūn legend. Since most of these elements are paralleled in other cultures, one cannot claim that they are exclusively Arabic or Muslim. It is the convergence of these elements in a certain historical moment that produces the distinctive result with which we are here concerned, namely, the Mağnūn legend.

The fact that this legend was formulated in the light of history allows us to trace some immediate factors which contributed to its formulation. These factors were influential chiefly in integrating within the complex character of Mağnūn some modes of religious and literary experience. However, one should remember that these modes gave vent to simple, deep-rooted emotions, connected with the collective unconscious, and difficult to pin down to any particular period.

#### I. ORAL TRADITION

Probably the chief point to emphasize, is the fundamental role of oral tradition, on the one hand, in preserving, enlarging, and spreading classical Arabic literature, and, on the other hand, in shaping our historical sources on the *Ġāhiliyya* and on the first three centuries of Islam. While largely responsible for the creation of many legends and of the Mağnūn legend in particular, oral tradition could neither produce nor encourage an objective writing of history. How pervasive was oral tradition and to what extent can we trust it? As has been noted above, scholars differ sharply, especially concerning the authenticity of pagan and early Islamic Arabic poetry. One position would apply a methodological doubt to all the poetry ascribed to that period, and, at its extreme, this position would imply an almost total



rejection of the *Ġāhiliyya* poetry, attributing its creation to later forgeries.<sup>1</sup> The opposite attitude deemphasizes the importance of oral transmission. It attempts to prove that written texts were available, and that the *rāwīs* claimed to have learned their poetry not through written texts, but through oral tradition, because the latter was considered a more precise form of transmission.<sup>2</sup> Since it was difficult to read the short-hand form of the Arabic script, lacking vowels and diacritical marks, the teaching of a master was indispensable. He who relied only on written texts was ridiculed. Thus some masters would deny having such texts in their possession, and some poets would falsely claim illiteracy.<sup>3</sup>

Here we realize that even the argument for the existence of written texts has to admit the higher rank of the oral tradition. While it proves that one cannot reasonably deny the authenticity of much pre-Islamic or early Islamic poetry, this argument does not give us any clues for verifying the genuineness of particular poems or particular lines.

This same situation prevails in our general historical knowledge of that early period, where fact and fiction are intermingled. Early Islamic scholars found themselves facing the same problem and, in their attempt to verify historical accounts, they resorted to the method of *isnād*, i.e., support by an unbroken chain of reliable authorities.<sup>4</sup> The literary influence of this method is another point which needs to be emphasized. For whether efficient or not, we shall see later that this method had a definite impact on the style of historical and narrative writing.

The *isnād* method was perfected by the collectors of the *Ḥadīṭ* (i.e., Traditions of the Prophet and the first four caliphs), and mainly by Buḥārī (d. 870) and Muslim (d. 874). They lived at the time when the Mağnūn legend started to flourish<sup>5</sup> and it would be interesting to trace an outline of the Arabic and Islamic culture as seen from that moment in history.

First, only one document was accepted as historically authentic: the Koran.<sup>6</sup> Practically everything else was open to question. Revealed to

1. See Section II of the previous chapter. For a discussion of this problem, see R. BLACHÈRE: *Histoire de la littérature arabe*. I, Paris 1952, 85-127.

2. This thesis is defended by N. AL-ASAD in his *Maṣādir aš-ši'r al-ġāhili wa-qīmatuhā at-tārīḫiyya* (Cairo 1956) where he also gives a summary of previous positions on this problem.

3. *Ibid.*, 179 *et seq.*

4. For a short description of the *isnād* method, see article "Ḥadīṭh" in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Ed. H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers. Ithaca, New York 1965.

5. The first extant version of the Legend is Ibn Qutayba's: see Appendix. Also see: KRAČKOVSKIJ: *op. cit.* 35-36.

6. This does not mean, however, that the Koranic text did not undergo additions and

Muhammed (d. 632) between the years 610 and 632 A.D., the Koranic verses were collected in one single and final version a few years after his death. The Koran is thus the earliest and most authentic text which we have from the dialect that was to become standard Arabic as well as the sacred language of all Muslims. With the Koranic revelation, not only the religious but also the historical and cultural aspects of Arabic life were fundamentally changed. As the Word of God, the Koran became the source and the motive of "Islamic Sciences." In an empire of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, however, the short Koranic text was not by itself a sufficient guide for the new conditions of life. Furthermore, the Koran had to be explained, interpreted, and frequently supplemented by the *Ḥadīṭ*. Thus, Muhammad's life, considered as ideal, became the basis of the Science of *Ḥadīṭ*, which consisted mainly of the knowledge of genuine traditions based on the Prophet's words and action. A third cornerstone of "Islamic Sciences" was the Arabic language itself, which assumed an almost sacred status. For furthering their understanding of the Koran and deepening their knowledge of their linguistic tools, exegetes, philologists, theologians, jurists, biographers, etc. joined literary historians and critics in assigning to the collections of *Ġāhiliyya* literature a value second only to that of the Koran and the *Ḥadīṭ*. These literary collections, however, were heavily dependent on the *rāwīs*. These *rāwīs* were accorded such importance that, in order to increase their credits, they rarely resisted the temptation of investing or borrowing new material and ascribing it to the *Ġāhiliyya*.

Early Islamic scholars were aware of the problem, but, being at the mercy of the *rāwīs*, they were faced with the dilemma of either rejecting everything or accepting whatever material they deemed authentic. Understandably enough, they deemed authentic whatever corresponded to their concept of *Ġāhiliyya* life and literature.

The most prevalent attitude among later scholars — an attitude that seems to impose itself upon us — is a kind of reasoning fatalistically resigned to accepting a necessary deficiency: if these imitations and forgeries were so good as to pass for genuine, they may as well be considered as such.

In spite of the critical scrupulosity of many Islamic scholars, our doubts are not appeased. These scholars, divided generally into rival schools, had some vested interests in the material they accepted, so they

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subtractions during the first decade after the Prophet's death. See: D.S. MARGOLIOUTH: *The Early Development of Mohammedanism*. London 1914, 36-64.



defended it as authentic, even when they were in doubt. One illustration of this attitude is the well known anecdote that Ḥalaf al-Aḥmar (d. ca. 800 A.D.) relates about the Kūfa and Baṣra philological schools. He tells us that he had invented several poems, and passed them to these philologists. In his old age, he repented and went back to them, and told them he had forged those poems. Yet, having illustrated many of their grammatical arguments by those poems, they rejected his new claim, and defended the authenticity of the poems. This situation was true even of the collectors of the *Ḥadīṭ*. Divided into many religious factions, even the most pious Muslims did not hesitate to invent Traditions in support of their positions.

At any rate, one of the main solutions to which Islamic scholars resorted was the method of *isnād*. Especially in the *Ḥadīṭ*, a transmitter had to fulfill certain requirements that made forgery more detectible.<sup>7</sup> In other fields, however, scholars were not as strict about choosing informants, and the *isnād* method lost its efficacy.

We thus find ourselves faced with a complex and paradoxical situation: (1) A cultural heritage recorded by the religion which superseded it. Hence, one should not expect these records to be exempt of prejudice. (2) An oral tradition, which, owing to the sacredness of its subject matter, insists on total authenticity and devises a methodological criterion, the *isnād*. The *isnād* is efficiently used by eminent scholars such as Buḥārī and Muslim; but with less scrupulous scholars, the *isnād* itself is the easiest part to forge. This is witnessed by the fact that the hundreds of thousands of *ḥadīṭs* excluded by Buḥārī and Muslim had their own *isnāds*. More importantly, their exclusion does not wipe them out of people's minds. On the contrary, the fascinating paradox of this oral tradition consists of the reversed function of what the *isnād* was meant to achieve. Instead of working as a safeguard against false additions to the Islamic Traditions and to the pagan heritage, it served as a channel that helped authenticate whatever the spirit of an age needed to sancify, whether on the religious level, or on the literary level. Its overall effect was the creation of an unusual continuity in a tradition famous for its unity in variety.

Keeping this framework in mind, let us now attempt to sketch the background of the Maḡnūn legend with particular emphasis on the spiritual and literary aspects.

7. "We may see how enormous was the number of false Traditions in circulation from the fact that when Bukhārī (+ 870 A.D.) drew up his collection entitled 'The Genuine' (*al-Ṣaḥīḥ*), he limited it to some 7,000, which he picked out of 600,000." R.A. NICHOLSON: *A Literary History of the Arabs*. Cambridge 1969, 146.



## II. THE ROLE OF THE Šā'ir IN THE HEROIC AGE<sup>8</sup>

Although the Arab Peninsula was never totally devoid of fertile areas, the main character of central Arabia is that of a half desert where "periods of drought sometimes last for several years, bringing misery and death to the people and causing some to migrate abroad."<sup>9</sup> In such conditions, the continuous struggle for survival seems to have left the Bedouins with little inclination to meditate about metaphysical problems. They had to be always vigilant against natural and human onslaughts. Consequently, their major concern was the attainment of a socio-moral type of excellence, epitomized by the concept of *Muruwwa*, i.e., manliness, and based on courage, loyalty, generosity and honor. If a man fails to fulfill these requirements, he runs the risk of being expelled from the tribe and exposed to shame and disaster. But the highest achievement in *Muruwwa* is no guarantee against Destiny (*qadar*). On the contrary, it may even make one more liable to the blows of the mysterious forces beyond man's control or knowledge. Whether suddenly carried out by blind Fate (*maniyya*, plur. *manāyā*), or executed by the vicissitudes of Time (*dahr*), the final answer of Destiny was always the same: Death. And the Bedouin, who did not believe in immortality, was eager to make the best of his life.

Here we reach the usual circle: was the Bedouin's indifference towards religion a result of his total commitment to his code of *Muruwwa* which does not require or even encourage any piety? Or was he imprisoned by his *Muruwwa* for lack of a metaphysical outlook?

Insofar as we know at present, it may be sufficient and safe to say that before and after Islam, and even until the twentieth century, the Bedouins deserved the description that the Koran gives them: "The wandering Arabs are more hard in disbelief and hypocrisy, and more likely to be ignorant of the limits which Allah hath revealed unto His messenger."<sup>10</sup>

What was of much more importance to the pagan Arab than religion was his tribal connection. The clan was the unit from which all the society he had was built up. Even Islam was powerless to displace

8. By 'Heroic Age' I mean the late *Ġāhiliyya*, in which *Muruwwa*, the ideal of manliness and chivalry, was the main pillar of social and moral virtue, before the advent of Islam. For the contrast between *Muruwwa* and *Dīn*, see I. GOLDZIEHER: *Muruwwa und Dīn* in his *Muhammedanische Studien* I. Halle 1888, 1-40. Cf. also in this connection C.M. BOWRA's summary of the major features of the heroic outlook in his book, *Heroic Poetry*. London 1952, esp. 476-80.

9. See G. RENZ: "Djazīrat al-'Arab" *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden 1960.

10. *Koran* IX, 97. This and all further quotations from the *Koran* are taken from the translation of M. M. PICKTHALL.



his attachment to his tribe, and tribal feuds were carried on after the time of Muhammad as before, if not to the same extent... Much of the old poetry consists in panegyric of the poet's tribe and satire of those to which he does not belong; and the tribe is sometimes a very wide term.

The pagan Arab's idea of morality is expressed by the word *murūwa*, that is, manliness, virtue.<sup>11</sup>

This code of *Muruwwa* seems to have been generally respected. It also applied to the sedentary communities, which were connected with the Bedouins by tribal kinship. Moreover, the few poets believed to have been Jewish, such as as-Samaw'al, or Christian, such as 'Adī b. Zayd al-'Ibādī,<sup>12</sup> do not add any significant dimension to the *Muruwwa* code of ethics. What differentiated the Jews and Christians from the rest of the Arabs was their metaphysical beliefs. It is true that pre-Islamic Arabs tended to have intertribal gods, such as *Allāt*, *Manāt*, and *al-'Uzzā*, and even to consider these three goddesses as daughters of a higher deity, usually called *Allāh*. The more important side, however, is that Arab paganism could not conceive of a final Day of Judgement, where a personal fate would be decided, and which would lead to eternal salvation or damnation after the destruction of this world. The pagan Arab, both sedentary and Bedouin, was still firm in his belief, expressed by Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā, that Death strikes like a blind she-camel,<sup>13</sup> and that only Time, Allah, and the mountains would remain.

In this context, it would be true to say that the religion, not only of the nomads, but of all pagan Arabs was "a form of polydaemonism related to the paganism of the ancient Semites."<sup>14</sup>

Basically animistic, pagan Arabs populated their land with spirits: some benevolent, dwelling in oases, wells, caves etc., others malevolent, representing projections of the nomads' fears and personifications of the untame and hostile elements in their desert. "In the Arabia of Muhammad's time, if we leave out the elements affected by Christianity

11. See under "Djāhiliya" in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, and, for more details, GOLDZIEHER: *Muruwwā und Dīn* and *Das arabische Stammewesen und der Islam. In: op. cit.* 1-100.

12. Cf. Ph. K. Hitti: *History of the Arabs*. 10th ed., London 1970, 107; C.-A. NALLINO: *La Littérature arabe*. Trans. Ch. Pellat, Paris 1950, 39; and *GAS* II, 249-50, 178-79.

13. Cf. Zuhayr's *Mu'allaqa*: "I have seen Fate striking like a blind she-camel killing the one she hits, and the one she misses lives long."

رَأَيْتِ الْمَنَائِيَا خَيْطَ عَشْوَاءٍ مِنْ تُصْبٍ تُمْتَهُ وَمَنْ تُخَطِيْ يُعَمَّرُ فِيهِمْ

14. B. LEWIS: *The Arabs in History*. New York 1960, 30.



and Judaism, the spirit-world consisted of Allah, the tribal gods, and the djinn; and the links between it and men were *kāhin*'s, magicians and soothsayers, poets and madmen."<sup>15</sup>

It is this association between the poet and the madman with the *kāhin*, magician and soothsayer which is of capital importance to us, especially since these men are the media of the spirit-world. One must not assume, however, that this daemonic world, with which these classes of people communicate, is less arbitrary than Fate, Destiny, or Death. It communicates good or evil whimsically. It responds to, and relies upon, the mediation of these men who are both seers and interpreters of this mysterious spirit-world. Some may object that, on the eve of Islam, the spirit-world was not of great importance to the Arabs.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, one should admit that this world was still alive in the tradition of poets, seers, and madmen, as witnessed not only by the texts ascribed to the pagan era, but also by the Koran.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, poetry, rhymed prose (نثر موزون) and occult utterances seem to have kept a sense of their original function as ritual incantation, possessing magical power.<sup>18</sup> Except for some kinds of sorcery, most of these methods of approaching the daemonic world used language not only as a medium to convey the vision, but especially as a tool to charm the listener, and, when performed seriously, to tame the daemon himself.<sup>19</sup> "It seems that the concentration of the aesthetic sensibilities of the Arabs on the apt use of words endowed the words themselves with mystical and magical power."<sup>20</sup> The etymological meaning of *šī'r* (poetry) is not only sentiment, but also knowledge.

Le šā'ir/poète est «celui qui sait par inspiration.» Il ne se confond pas avec le *kāhin* ou «voyant», bien que celui-ci parfois vaticine en vers. Avec le «voyant», le poète archaïque a toutefois ceci en commun qu'il reçoit son inspiration du monde invisible. Le *Coran* ne s'y est d'ailleurs pas trompé, lui qui a englobé dans un même anathème la force qui fait parler le «poète» et celle qui fait vaticiner le «voyant.»<sup>21</sup>

15. Cf. "Siḥr" in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

16. Cf. "Djāhiliyya" in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

17. References to this tradition are abundant in the Koran, especially in Chapter XXVI: The Poets, and Chapter LXXII: The Jinn.

18. Cf. "Ši'r" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Ed. 1913; and GAUDEFRY-DEMOBYNES: *Ibn Qutaiba: Introduction au Livre de la Poésie et des Poètes*. Paris 1947, XVI.

19. Cf. J. WELLHAUSEN: *Reste arabischen Heidentums*. 2nd ed., Berlin 1897, 161 et passim.

20. See "Arabiyya" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, I, 584.

21. BLACHÈRE: *op. cit.* II, 332

BLACHÈRE points out that originally the poet was considered the mouthpiece of supernatural forces, namely, the jinn, «ou génies, identiques ou apparentés à ceux qui troublent l'esprit et le corps».<sup>22</sup> A remark worth emphasizing in this context is BLACHÈRE's comment: «Dans le passage où le *Coran* déclare que Mahomet est un inspiré d'Allah et non un «possédé» (Majnûn), on est admis à penser que ce terme englobe à la fois les déments, les «voyants» et les poètes.»<sup>23</sup>

The poet, however, did not draw his prominence exclusively from his power to communicate with the spirit-world. He was a cultural hero because his socio-political as well as spiritual status placed him in the leading position. He was the champion of his tribesmen's wisdom and *Muruwwa*, and the singer of their glorious battles. He was well versed in their history and norms, and had for his mission the praise of the tribal legacy in the most perfect forms he could imagine. Thus, "besides being oracle, guide, orator and spokesman for his community, the poet was its historian and scientist, insofar as it had a scientist. Bedouins measured intelligence by poetry."<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the office and activity of the poet were central, nay vital, for the spiritual and tribal identity and continuity. He possessed a magic weapon against the enemy, produced the effect of "lawful magic (*sihr ḥalāl*)"<sup>25</sup> on his friends, and had a major function, namely, "to preserve the collective memory of the past."<sup>26</sup>

A corollary of this last function was the didactic task imposed on the *qaṣīd*-poets. They had to "express, and even prescribe, a high standard of tribal morality."<sup>27</sup> Hence, the poet's imagination was checked by the ideals of *Muruwwa* which he described as being perfectly embodied in himself, in his tribe, or in the man he praised. His inspiration rarely meant any revelation of a supernatural or metaphysical order. In general the spirit-world remained a more or less empty motif. While it was an agent of inspiration, it did not reveal any metaphysical content.

22. *Ibid.* 333.

23. *Ibid.* 333, n. 1.

24. HITT: *op. cit.* 95. "Among the Arabs", says A. GUILLAUME, "the poet (*shā'ir*, i.e., 'the knower' *par excellence*), as his name implies, was a person endowed with knowledge by the spirits who gave him his magical powers: his poetry was not art, it was supernatural knowledge. In the wandering of the nomads the poet gave the signal to break camp and indicated where and when the tribe should halt." A. GUILLAUME: *Prophecy and Divination among the Hebrews and Semites*. London 1938, 243-44.

25. HITT: *op. cit.* 90.

26. See "Arabiyya" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

27. *loc. cit.*

Simultaneously, the prominent and clear-cut role of the poet made him a showman who, having to perform a public function and uphold the accepted norms, was not expected to express his intimate feelings beyond what was conventionally acceptable; and that was quite far from any deep introspection. The subjects and themes of poetry being limited, the task of the poet was to show his inspiration in reshaping the same material within a more effective expression, whence (1) the conventionalism in subject-matter and description, and (2) the largely prevailing idea that meanings are found "lying on the road" and that all art is in the form.<sup>28</sup> But here, too, the strict rules of Arabic prosody did not leave much room for originality and had important consequences, which will be discussed later.

Let us observe for the moment that the fundamental effect of the restrictive framework of *Muruwwa* was that the poet, in spite of his claim for inspiration, i.e., communication with the spirit-world, found himself imprisoned within a limited number of subjects and themes, a strict prosody, and detailed aesthetic conventions.<sup>29</sup>

Here again one wonders and remains helpless in front of this almost unnatural uniformity: was it a fact, or simply a product of the late reciters who had to imitate a small number of extant poems, and who realized that the closer the imitation the easier the test? All we can assert is that certain standards were rigidly followed either by the *Ĝāhiliyya* poets, or by their Islamic imitators, and by collectors who considered these standards the best criteria for judging the authenticity of the texts. With the Islamic critics this reached such a level of canonization that a rather liberal critic like Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), who was among the first to reject the principle that made temporal priority a sufficient proof of superiority, still forces on the Islamic poet the aesthetic norms of the *Ĝāhiliyya*. Thus, in the words of VON GRUNEBaum:

Every detail in the setting of the *qaṣīda* is attuned to the desert and to pre-Islamic conditions. To the urban Muslim the *loci communes* of the *nasīb* sounded stale if not ridiculous. But Ibn Qutaiba insists: "The later poet is not permitted to leave the custom of the ancients with regard to those parts (of the ode) so as to halt at an inhabited place, since the ancients halted at a desolate spot and effaced vestige." Nor is the later poet allowed to ride a donkey or a mule and to describe them since the ancients rode "a male or female camel. (Likewise) they are not supposed,

28. See the discussion of "Inhalt und Form" in W. HEINRICHS: *Arabische Dichtung und griechische Poetik*. Beirut 1969, 82.

29. Concerning the restrictions on the structure, themes and motifs of a poem, see G. VON GRUNEBaum: *Medieval Islam*. Chicago 1953, 258-67.



on the journey to the man they praise, to traverse countries that grow narcissus, myrtle and roses, for the ancients traversed countries in which there grew only desert plants.”<sup>30</sup>

The above quotation is an example of the rigidity of themes and motifs, extending to imagery.

Moreover, pagan poets were almost always describing an ideal, whether in reference to the poet himself, to his beloved, or to any member of his tribe. Their descriptions did not have room for individual traits, characteristic details, or idiosyncracies. Their heroes or personae rarely had a private life. Since the ideal is tribal property, the poet could do his best (and evoke his muse, or jinni, or *šayṭān*) to express it, but not to redefine or oppose it. Hence, the understandable heap of clichés recurring even in this early poetry. The poet’s job was similar to a detailed description of a statue that the tribes considered to be of perfect moral and physical beauty. Even if this statue or persona was put in motion, it could move only according to a standard pattern. The number of images or basic acceptable similies which one can imagine would evidently be limited, and the stereotyped descriptions unavoidable.<sup>31</sup>

This standardization in *Ġāhiliyya* poetry seems to explain two important tendencies that may have been the result of the idealization of the protagonist: first, the love of hyperbolic exaggeration, and second, the predilection towards painting the world in black and white. These tendencies do not characterize pre-Islamic poetry alone, they are common in the Heroic Age of most peoples.

However, there existed for this idealism a balancing element worthy of our attention, since it helps us to understand the making of a legendary hero. This balancing element lies in the fact that the idealism of moral and physical beauty was coupled with the obligation of relating these qualities to specific persons, whether in *Faḥr* (a literary genre of vainglorious poetry), in *Madīḥ* (Panegyrics) and its ramifications, or in *Hiġā’* (Satire or Lampoons). Although these descriptions did not have room for any physical or moral analysis of any particular individual, they were restricted to the realm of the possible; and even when this possible was improbable, the descriptions remained true to the principle of concreteness. Add to this the fact that *Muruwwa* was not concerned with any features that could not be proved or exemplified physically, and it will become obvious how simple

30. *Op. cit.* 260.

31. Cf. G. VON GRUNEBaum: *Die Wirklichkeitweite der früh-arabischen Dichtung*. Wien 1937, 47 *et passim*.

it was for the Arab to develop a cultural hero out of any figure, real or legendary, who becomes famous or admired for typifying some feature of *Muruwwa*. Whether a leader, an ancestor, or the poet himself, the cultural hero becomes the epitome of the quality in question, to whom the best descriptions in verse and prose would be dedicated. The Arabs had quite a few of these heroes: for generosity, they had *Ḥātim aṭ-Ṭā'ī* (d. ca. 605); for trustworthiness, *as-Samaw'al*; for wisdom, *Luqmān* (Lokman of the Bible); for heroism and *Muruwwa* in general, *'Antara* (d. ca. 615). Of these, only *Luqmān*, who might have been the only figure of legendary or foreign origin, was not a poet. Thus the hero-poet was very much of a tradition.

The combination between poet and hero in the *Ġāhiliyya* was not exceptional, once we remember that the art of verse was not the monopoly of the poets. Most Bedouins could now and then utter a couplet in verse, without being ambitious to be called poets, and without claiming any communication with a private *ṣayṭān*. The effect of such ease at versification was that any hero who occasionally composed some verse would be considered a poet-hero (or a hero-poet). This is evidently only one side of the combination. The other possibility is to find a poet who through his moral and practical excellence achieved heroic status. This was not unusual either; for poetry could not have existed in a moral vacuum, and the poet who composed it had probably felt it, if not really lived it. But in this situation, where virtues were down to earth enough to acquire, it is obviously not strange to find that some poets actually lived up to what they championed and became the heroes of poems which they and others had composed.

### III. ISLAM AND THE POET

Obviously, the highest level of heroism in Arab history was reached by Muhammad, whose artistic achievement in the Koran was his only miracle. Poets who were famous warriors (e.g. *aš-Šanfarā*, *'Urwa b. al-Ward*, *'Antara b. Šaddād*, *'Amr b. Ma'dīkarib az-Zubaydī*, etc.) were not rare in Arab history, nor were those who distinguished themselves in other fields of excellence. Nonetheless, the example of the Prophet is of extraordinary importance considering the effect of the new religion on the culture and literature of the Arabs in general, and on the development of our subject, in particular.

Accused of being a poet and a madman,<sup>32</sup> the Prophet insisted that he was neither, and that the Koran was the Word of God, revealed to him

32. Cf. *Koran* XXVI and LXXII.



through the Archangel Gabriel (*an-Nāmūs al-A'zam*). Once established, the belief in the absolute perfection of the Koran, both in content and in expression, produced a radical change in the Arab conception of man and his world. What is of immediate concern for us here is, on the one hand, the new conception of, and relationship to, the spiritual world; and, on the other hand, the position of the poet in this new relationship. The development which took place in these two realms will be sketched in the following pages, which will deal with the nature of the new message, its impact both in stimulating and in limiting creative imagination, its claim for absolute truth, and the Şūfī way of re-claiming personal freedom in experiencing and expressing man's thirst for identity with the Absolute.

Some basic elements of the Muhammadan message may be suggested by what is commonly believed to be the very first *sūra* revealed to the Prophet. The *sūra* was occasioned by the appearance — in a dream, nightmare, or day-dream — of a vision which commanded Muhammad to "Read!"<sup>33</sup>

Twice Muhammad expressed his inability to read, but the third time the vision instructed him:

1. Read: In the name of thy Lord who createth,
2. Createth man from a clot.
3. Read: And thy Lord is the most Bounteous.
4. Who teacheth by the pen,
5. Teacheth man that which he knew not.<sup>34</sup>

Frightened by this vision, Muhammad ran and told his wife. She consulted her cousin, Waraqa b. Nawfal, who told her that This must be *an-Nāmūs al-A'zam*, i.e., the Archangel Gabriel.

In this first Koranic chapter, in the meditation which preceded it, and in the interpretation which followed it, we have sufficient elements for discussing the character of the new message: first, the new habit of seclusion and meditation, previously unusual<sup>35</sup> in the pagan society; second, the vision, which happens in a nightmarish situation, a dream or a day-dream;<sup>36</sup> third, the emphasis on language and writing as media of divine

33. There are more than one version to the story. Cf. TOR ANDRAE: *Muhammad, the Man and his Faith*. Trans. Th. Menzel, New York 1960, 43-45.

34. *Koran* XCVI, 1-5.

35. Seclusion and meditation were unusual as far as religious thinking was concerned, but not unusual for purposes of poetic composition. See al-Aşma'ī's comment on "the slaves of poetry" (عبيد الشعر) in Ibn Qutayba: *op. cit.* 22-23.

36. NICHOLSON hints at the possibility that the Prophet was epileptic. Cf. NICHOLSON: *op. cit.* 147-48. For a short discussion of this problem, see TOR ANDRAE: *op. cit.* 50-52.





inspiration; fourth, the explanation given by the first “Islamic” exegete, Waraqa b. Nawfal, that this was the Greatest Angel, i.e., the Archangel Gabriel. But, until that explanation Muhammad could have been deemed under the spell of any daemon, good or bad; for when he

first appeared as a prophet he was thought by all except a very few to be *maġnūn*, i.e., possessed by a *jinni*, or genie, (if I may use a word which will send the reader back to his *Arabian Nights*). The heathen Arabs regarded such persons — soothsayers, diviners, and poets — with a certain respect; and if Muhammad’s “madness” had taken a normal course, his claim to inspiration would have passed unchallenged.<sup>37</sup>

Muhammad’s visions remained private experiences, but the verses which resulted from the visions were his only proof of his prophetic mission, and of his communication with the spirit-world. It is fundamental to realize that Muhammad’s only miracle was performed in the field of literary creativity. The fact that a prophetic claim could be supported only by its imaginative and linguistic excellence gives us an idea both about the value of auditory inspiration in the *Ġāhiliyya* and about the supreme position which the Koran was judged to have attained in this realm. Not only was the Koran supreme; it was absolute. With unremitting insistence, the revelation declared that

1. God is One and Absolute
2. Muhammad is God’s Prophet
3. The Koran is God’s Word, transmitted by the Greatest Angel.
4. The Koran is not poetry, nor *saġ’* of soothsayers, nor madmen’s banter; it is not based on any relative inspiration, but has always been in a Divine Tablet in Heaven.<sup>38</sup>

Of course, these four points are not in syllogistic order. They cannot be, since they depend on one another, and especially on the fourth point. All four points are data of faith. On the human or natural level, one usually accepts data of faith on the basis of argument, experience, or miracle. But since these points are interdependent, an argument based on them becomes circular. Similarly, in Muhammad’s case, experience and miracle have their validity only through faith. Even Muhammad’s universal challenge to men and jinni to emulate the Koran<sup>39</sup> is not a convincing proof, since the final judge is personal artistic taste and imagination.

37. NICHOLSON: *op. cit.* 165.

38. Koran XXII, 85. « في لوح محفوظ »

39. Koran LXXXVIII, 17.



In the message itself, one cannot help noticing the concreteness of the Koranic descriptions of the supernatural world and of man's life in the hereafter. This concreteness leads NICHOLSON to say that "there is nothing spiritual in Muhammad's pictures of Heaven and Hell."<sup>40</sup> This is certainly an exaggerated statement, as we shall discuss later. But for the moment, suffice it to remark that as a result of his concrete imagination, similar to that of pre-Islamic poets, from which he might have borrowed "a good deal of his Paradise,"<sup>41</sup> Muhammad was accused of being a poet. He was obviously disturbed by the idea of being mistaken for a common *šā'ir*, inspired by an ordinary daemon. His reaction was almost categorical: "As for poets, the erring follow them. Hast thou not seen how they stray in every valley, and how they say that which they do not?"<sup>42</sup> In his comment on these verses, NICHOLSON says:

Muhammad was not of these; although he was not so unlike them as he pretended. His kinship with the pagan *Shā'ir* is clearly shown, for example in the 113th and 114th Sūras, which are charms against magic and *diablerie*, as well as in the solemn imprecation calling down destruction on the head of his uncle, 'Abdu 'l-'Uzzā, nicknamed Abū-Lahab (Father of Flame).<sup>43</sup>

Although Muslims believe that the style of the Koran is unique and defies any literary categorization, it is not impossible to see that the Koran follows a middle path between poetry and *sağ'*, i.e., the rhymed prose of the pagan soothsayers. Its originality, however, consists mainly in the force of its linguistic structure and imagery as well as in the novelty and intensity of its visions. In this respect, NICHOLSON seems to shed light on his own observation that "there is nothing spiritual in Muhammad's pictures of Heaven and Hell" by a quotation from A.A. BEVAN:

At first the idea of a future retribution was absolutely new both to Muhammad himself and to the public which he addressed. Paradise and Hell had no traditional associations, and the Arabic language furnished no religious terminology for the expression of such ideas; if they were to be made comprehensible at all, it could only be done by means of precise descriptions, of imagery borrowed from earthly affairs.<sup>44</sup>

40. NICHOLSON: *op. cit.* 167.

41. *Loc. cit.*

42. *Koran* XXVI, 224-26.

43. *Op. cit.* 159.

44. *The Beliefs of Early Mohammedans Respecting Future Existence*. In: *Journal of Theological Studies*, October 1904, 22, quoted in NICHOLSON: *op. cit.* 168.

If its imagery was concrete and realistic, it does not mean that the Koran did not open new perspectives on life and on the hereafter. These perspectives changed the old notions of the relationship between man and deity, reorienting and integrating some of the old pagan virtues within the new creed. With the new belief in retribution and in immortality, life acquired a different meaning, and transient things were endowed with a metaphysical dimension. Both a creed and a law, Islam induced the pious Muslim to feel divine presence everywhere in his life, and here the concrete imagery of the Koran played a definite role.<sup>45</sup>

Besides its concrete imagery and realistic descriptions, the Koran had mystic elements ready to be developed once the tradition of meditation had been developed. In any case, the lack of metaphysical terminology, coupled with the new notion of God's compassion, prepared the way for a loving attitude towards God to be expressed with the only available terminology, that of the concrete human love. This new attitude will be discussed in the following section. For the moment, it might be advisable to emphasize two of the major results connected with the imaginative and poetic activities stimulated by the new piety.

By introducing the concept of eternal life, Islam made each moment and aspect of the believer's life infinitely more meaningful than that of the pagan Arab whose life was encircled by Death. This new dimension could not fail to excite the believer's imagination concerning metaphysical matters, and to make him consider his waking hours a part of the one divine scheme. Although it preserved the pagan belief in the jinn, Islam distinguished between believing jinn, i.e., the angels, and unbelieving jinn, i.e., the demons. Moreover, the new piety introduced a new type, namely, "the religious athlete, who lives exclusively for his religious duties... Only under Islam does the introvert find a place in society."<sup>46</sup>

This new religious imagination incorporated much of the old beliefs. Indeed, the mark of the new religion is a strong drive towards syncretism around the unifying principle of the Koran.

As an extension of the communication with the supernatural through Gabriel, the Greatest Angel, Islam claimed absolute truth, i.e., a status beyond time and space, and consequently above history. This entailed intolerance for the future practice of any other means of communicating with the divine. Thus, poetry, magic, soothsaying, etc., although not

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45. Cf. the famous Koranic image of God as closer to man "than his jocular vein." *Koran* XVI, 50.

46. VON GRUNEBaum: *Modern Islam*. New York 1964, 24.

categorically banned, tended to be despised by the pious. The old daemons that survived in poetry were degraded to the status of mere devils, and lost much of their sacred touch. Prophecy was ended with Muhammad. Seers could only see interpretations of what the Koran described, but visions which contradicted the Koran were not allowed.

The forces of the irrational were not to sleep forever. These forces were incorporated within the early images of Paradise and Hell, and accompanied the Arab conquerors through the vast regions they occupied. Angels were fighting on their side, voices were heard from India to Mecca, and many other instances of the intervention of the supernatural in the lives and minds of the early Muslims became current belief.

One important side of the manifestation of the imagination without breaking the basic tenets of the new religion was the invention of traditions concerning the Prophet himself and his Companions,<sup>47</sup> or regarding the descriptions of Paradise and Hell. One classic example is the *mi'rāğ* (Ascension) story that resulted from these early elaborations on some succinct allusions to the nature of the hereafter. This was a vast field in which Arabs and non-Arabs contributed extensively under the guise of Traditions, history, biography, stories, anecdotes, and the like. Most of it, however, was given a touch of respectability by means of a quasi-religious authority, viz. the *isnād* method, or by incorporating the new imaginative flight in the explanation of the original cryptic text of the Koran or the Tradition. Thus, the theological, linguistic, and historical fields connected with religion have provided a vast scope for the supernatural, extra-rational dimension to flourish under the guise of rational, logical, or reasonable exegesis or apologetics.

This did not, however, allow any personal inspiration to enter the picture. The rule was that Revelation and Tradition are the final truth, and the only possible expatiation on this truth should be inferred from it just as logical conclusions are inferred from premises. The field of knowledge was thus limited to what is given as absolutely true, and to the complementary details which one could infer from what has been revealed, or from what was practiced by the ideal life of the Prophet. The rival Law schools, the Ḥanafī and Mālīkī schools, do not contradict this principle. The difference between them is only a matter of accepting any inference by analogy, as the

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47. These traditions were at the same time channels for the continuity of many pagan notions: "Inséparable de la poésie archaïque, comme elle, cette masse de récits est le prolongement du Paganisme arabe que l'Islam s'efforça de réduire ou de transformer. La toute-puissance de cet élément dans le développement littéraire va d'ailleurs se manifester dans le domaine suspect, celui de la biographie de Mahomet." BLACHÈRE: *op. cit.* III, 795.

former does, or confining truth to the Koran and the Tradition, as the latter does. In both cases, Truth was limited, or limitable. Hence, it was natural that Islamic Law would reach a point with the Sunni schools where all truth would be considered already attained, and the “door of speculation”<sup>48</sup> would be definitely closed.

#### IV. *Ta'wīl* AND ŠUFISM

In the context described above, the biggest loser was the poet. The Koran did not ban poetry totally, but attacked in particular the pagan spirit which it had championed. Considered as the “Seal of the Prophets”<sup>49</sup> Muhammad was at the same time the seal on the poets' claim to any vision of truth which contradicts the Koran. The *šā'ir*, whose main importance lay in his access to a spiritual knowledge above the normal human level, was deprived of his claim to such knowledge. The Koran accused the poets of sin and error. Although they still kept their magic tools, most poets lost their faith in the sacred character of their art. Poetry remained the strongest weapon in the hands of an individual or a tribe. Its function became more social and political, and it was gradually losing its claim to any revelation of truth; it could still claim inspiration, but not truth. In spite of the lingering belief in the poet's *šayṭān*, the tendency towards considering poetry as a craft (*šinā'a*) was growing. In his *Risālat al-ḡufrān*, al-Ma'arrī (d. 1057) is accompanied by his *šayṭān* on a cosmic trip on which he encounters tens of other poetic *šayṭāns*: here the poetic jinni has become a mere image, more sarcastic than serious.<sup>50</sup>

The desacralization of poetry through the imposition of an absolute spiritual truth chased poetry outside the walls of the religious fortress, not because poets could not find inspiration within the framework of religious truths, but because their inspiration would be unfounded, since the only accepted propositions were those based on a chain of authorities leading back to the prophetic source, whether in the Word of God or in the Tradition of His Prophet. Although the pretense of the scholarly methods, in particular that of *isnād*, did not prevent people from forging and inventing, it certainly did oblige them to bow to the principle that only One Supernatural and Absolute Truth exists.

48. To be understood, of course, as “interpretation” (*iğtihād*).

49. *Koran* XL, 33.

50. VON GRUNEBaum: *Kritik und Dichtkunst*. Wiesbaden 1955, 142-143; HEINRICHS: *op. cit.* 32-56; and N. NI'MA: *al-Ġinn fi l-adab al-'arabī*. Beirut 1961, 191 *et seq.*



One could find some parallel between this phenomenon and what happened in medieval Christianity: in both cases, it seems that revelation used philosophy as a tool. Rationality is harmless to religion as long as it is subjected to its ends. Since rationality does not necessarily stand for any particular metaphysical position, reason could generally be used in a distorted way to prove one religion or its opposite. Islamic philosophy before Ibn Rušd (d. 1198) had followed the same pattern. By so doing, the people of the Tradition, or Sunna, conservative on both levels of theology and socio-ethical rules, kept the poets in the predicament imposed upon them by the Koran. But the poets were not alone in this predicament, for this rule applied to all branches of knowledge which had any bearing on the spiritual or metaphysical realm.

This state of spiritual dogmatism had to meet with opposition sooner or later. Since this dogmatism was implemented on the social and political levels, its first opposition developed in the political sphere, concerning the right to the Caliphate, and constituted the original seed which grew into a radical dissent, spreading from the political level to the legal and religious levels, and to the whole intellectual and spiritual dimensions of Islam. Thus, Shī'ism, the new Islamic sect, assumed great historical importance, whence its essential relevance to the present investigation. For, although it did not escape dogmatic ossification, Shī'ism does introduce a basic dimension, without which Islamic mysticism would have been hard to conceive of. This new dimension was that of continuous divine guidance through the descendants of the Prophet.

The quarrel over the Caliphate divided the Muslims into two major sects: the Sunnis, who followed the first four Caliphs and then the Umayyad dynasty, and the Shī'ites, who claimed that 'Alī, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, and his descendants after him were the sole legal Caliphs, whom they called Imāms. The important difference between Caliph and Imām was that the former is a mere representative of the religious and secular *umma* (nation, or community) of Islam who could, in principle, be elected into or out of office, while the Imām was born as such, divinely inspired, and hence infallible. This new element brought back to life a sense of divine immanence. For it is correct to say that Islam is the most transcendent of all religions only, if we mean Sunni Islam. In Shī'ism, on the other hand, the Imām secures the continuity of revelation (or, at least, of inspiration), if not in the basic tenets, at least in dividing guidance and the understanding of the Word of God.

The new sect provided much room for esoteric interpretations of the meaning hidden under the veil of Koranic sounds and written words. For

discovering these meanings, the infallible Imām was an indispensable guide. "The conviction that to everything that is apparent, literal, external, exoteric (*zāhir*) there corresponds something hidden, spiritual, internal, esoteric (*bāṭin*), is the spiritual principle which is at the very foundation of Shī'ism as a religious phenomenon. It is the central postulate of esoterism and of esoteric hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*)."<sup>51</sup>

CORBIN argues convincingly that, aside from the historical affinities between the Shī'ites and the Šūfīs,<sup>52</sup> "the fundamental kinship between Shī'ism and Šūfism"<sup>53</sup> is based on this esoterism. Similarly, CORBIN emphasizes the spiritual mission of the Imām. "It is an initiatic mission; its function is to initiate into the *ta'wīl*, and initiation into the *ta'wīl* marks spiritual birth."<sup>54</sup>

By closing prophetic revelation, Muhammad left the *umma* in a paradoxical situation. One might say that, in some sense, Islam caused the first major break in the Arab's ingenuous fellowship with the spirit-world. Although God is *ar-Raḥmān*, *ar-Raḥīm*, His austere transcendentalism left the *umma* with only the Book. This paradoxical situation not only exalts the word, both as creative act and as cognitive medium, but it also sets limits to God's Word, closing its revelation with the Koran.

In this context, we can understand the extreme importance of Shī'ite, and especially of Šūfī doctrine in bridging "the infinite abyss between God and man on which one might say, Islamic doctrine is predicated."<sup>55</sup>

Šūfism goes beyond Shī'ism in that it does not confine divine inspiration to the Imām. Although Šūfism developed its own élite, and had its spiritual leaders, in principle at least, the mystic 'way' was opened for every one who wanted to take it. The perfect success of the quest for the Beloved was never guaranteed; it depended on the degree of mutual love between man and God. However, the possible result was sufficiently tempting for innumerable individuals to follow the 'way' and seek the annihilation of their will in the Beloved's Will.

With the Šūfīs, we have an outstanding illustration of the pattern which we tried to discuss in the first chapter of this study. VON GRUNEBaum succinctly describes the new religious attitude:

51. H. CORBIN: *Creative Imagination in the Šūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*. Princeton 1969, 78.

52. "Witness for example Ḥaydar Āmulī (fourteenth century)... who proclaimed that true Shī'ism was Šūfism and that reciprocally true Šūfism was Shī'ism." *Ibid.* 26.

53. *Ibid.* 78.

54. *Ibid.* 79.

55. VON GRUNEBaum: *Medieval Islam*, 136.



Law and dogma claimed a basis in reason. Dialectics was the means to ascend from truth to truth. The Şūfī spurned the logical process. Knowledge gained by demonstration was a very different thing from gnosis vouchsafed the intuitive soul. Not from outside with the aid of sagacious combinations of abstract concepts, but from within, under the dictation of the Friend who illuminates the self-searching heart, does the mystic arrive at his insights. Not ratiocination, but union with the One is the source of their cognition as it is the goal of their way.<sup>56</sup>

This radical religious attitude was later reconciled with Islamic orthodoxy by al-Ġazālī (d. 1111). “When al-Ġazālī’s ideas had been adopted by the consensus, the great movement of mysticism... had been secured for orthodox Islam.”<sup>57</sup> Eventually, Şūfism became a mode of religious experience open to all Islamic sects. As a religious movement, Şūfism developed such a vast scope that it was able to accommodate within its esoteric freedom widely diverging trends. Within Şūfism we find the desire to reunite with the divinity as with one’s mother, or in aš-Şiblī’s terms, “as little children in the bosom of God.”<sup>58</sup> In addition, within Şūfism the esoteric way allows the adept to go, not only beyond the Koran, but also beyond the state of prophecy and saintliness, and to declare his unity with God.<sup>59</sup>

In his attack on the alarming extremism reached by many Şūfīs, the Illuminist (*işrāqī*) Mullā Şadrā Şīrāzī (d. 1640) strongly disapproves of the *Şaḥīyyāt* ascribed to Bisṭāmī (d. 875), Ḥallāġ (d. 922), and others.<sup>60</sup> His position is relevant here, since it gives us an idea about the meaning and potential of esoteric interpretation. Mullā Şadrā, who was far from being a religious conservative, argues that if canonical texts were to be interpreted without rational justification, the words of God, as well as those of the Prophet, would become useless. “For the esoteric meaning (*al-bāḥīn*) cannot be accurate... It can be interpreted in different ways... This is also one of the most evil causes of corruption and of innovation, popular among those who call themselves the Şūfīs.”<sup>61</sup>

56. *Ibid.* 137.

57. *Ibid.* 137-38. See also W.M. WATT: *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*. London 1953, 15 *et passim*.

58. Quoted by VON GRUNEBaum: *Medieval Islam*, 129, from M. SMITH: *Studies in Early Mysticism*. London 1931, 172, quoting from ISAAC’S *Mystical Treatises*. Trans. Wensinck. Amsterdam 1923.

59. See NICHOLSON: *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*. Cambridge 1921, 79.

60. See Mullā Şadrā Şīrāzī: *Aṣnām al-ġāhiliyya*. Tehran 1962, 28-30.

61. *Ibid.* 30.



Mullā Ṣadrā reserves his greatest wrath for the *Bāṭiniyya*, who “attempt to destroy all the Šarī‘a by interpreting its outward meanings and making it accord with their opinion.”<sup>62</sup> To him, the evil of the *Bāṭiniyya* against religion is “greater than that of the devils.”<sup>63</sup>

Thus, for good or ill, the esoteric approach marks a new freedom for the individual to assert his personal vision of the Truth. The individual is now able to declare himself an epiphany of this Truth,<sup>64</sup> a declaration involving a central paradox that generates its characteristic ramifications on the level of poetic imagery.

We shall have to deal with this paradox in our discussion of Ġāmī’s *Laylī u Mağnūn*. For the moment let us consider briefly the way Šūfism affected the imaginative creativity of the Muslims. In this, our purpose is not to be exhaustive, but to emphasize certain aspects of the Šūfī influence on literary sensibility in general, and, in particular, on the mood and means of poetic expression which were crucial in the early development of the Mağnūn legend.

REVERDIN’s remarks concerning Plato’s religious experience and the expression thereof may shed light on the problems of expression which face mystics in general:

Non seulement le contact de l’être divin éblouit l’âme et l’aveugle, mais pour qui, à force de peine, a “découvert l’auteur et le père de cet univers, il est impossible d’aller conter à tout le monde qui il est.” (*Timée*, 28c). A cause de l’ignorance du vulgaire et de son défaut de préparation pour aborder de tels sujets, certes, mais aussi “parce que les mots sont impuissants à révéler ce que l’on a ressenti.”<sup>65</sup>

Not only Plato, but all great religious minds, when faced with the task of expressing their mystical experience, have had to content themselves with “aproximations successives, au moyen de mythes, d’images et d’allégories.”<sup>66</sup>

The Šūfīs dealt with this situation in a manner which had lasting results on the spiritual and aesthetic realms of Muslim culture. Among these results, the most relevant to our investigation are analyzed in GIBB’s

62. *Loc. cit.*

63. *Loc. cit.*

64. For example, Ḥallāğ in his famous saying, “Anā ’l-Ḥaqq” (I am the Truth) or “I am the Creative Truth, or God.” Cf. NICHOLSON: *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 79.

65. Olivier REVERDIN: *La religion de la cité platonicienne*. Paris 1945, 39-40.

66. *Ibid.* 40.

essay *Structure of Religious Thought in Islam*,<sup>67</sup> upon which I shall rely heavily in making the following remarks.

Highly relevant to the development of the Mağnūn legend in Arabic and Persian literatures is the interaction on (a) the psycho-religious level, and (b) the artistic level, between the spiritual elitism of the Şūfīs and the more instinctive drives of the popular mind.

a) On the psycho-religious level, two seemingly opposite tendencies were simultaneously developed and brought into conjunction. First, old beliefs, suppressed by orthodoxy, were provided with channels through which they penetrated the Muslim community; some of these beliefs, "like the hermetic 'sciences,' penetrated its imaginative universe to an extent which baffles the modern students."<sup>68</sup> Secondly, the reaction against "the doctrine of 'difference', so separating man entirely from God,"<sup>69</sup> resulted in extremist theosophical and incarnational doctrines, but "gradually, and especially in its popular forms, it came more and more to equate God's indwelling in the world with the animistic idea of divine powers and qualities inherent in material objects and persons."<sup>70</sup>

Thus, "the same circumstances which released the imaginative powers of the elites, also released, at a second remove, the inherited religious instincts of the masses."<sup>71</sup> Popular Şūfism revived saint worship, with its veneration for seers and teachers. "Thus, under the cover of Şūfism, saint worship reintroduced into Islam the old association of religion with magic."<sup>72</sup> Divination, charms, and the like make it difficult to "see wherein later popular darwishism differs from pre-Islamic animism except in mere externals."<sup>73</sup>

b) On the artistic level, we find again that the Şūfīs have generated and conjoined two tendencies: one towards the highly symbolic and hermetic, another towards the more instinctive and popular. The Şūfīs "asserted the rights of the imaginative reason in religion and the claim of the intuitive aesthetic impulse to seek an outlet in the face of its repression by the orthodox system."<sup>74</sup> As already mentioned, the spirit of orthodoxy prevailed not only in the religious, but also in the literary and linguistic

67. In: *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*. Boston 1962, 176-218.

68. *Ibid.* 211.

69. *Ibid.* 210.

70. *Ibid.* 212.

71. *Ibid.* 213.

72. *Ibid.* 215.

73. *Loc. cit.*

74. *Ibid.* 211.

fields. Moreover, Islam was denied the visual arts through which other religions channeled the intuitive aesthetic impulse. Thus, the Šūfīs

took their revenge by assuming characteristic forms of behavior and discourse. It is not coincidental that, at the time when the formal literatures of the Arabs and Persians had become completely dissociated from the popular literary arts, precisely these, and particularly the wine song, the short story and the romance, were taken up and recast as the main vehicles of sufi experience.<sup>75</sup>

## V. THE EARLY VERSIONS OF THE LEGEND

In the coming chapters, we shall see that the acquisition of a new imaginative freedom and the interpenetration of the two levels discussed above were a fundamental part of the ambiance which fostered the rise and development of the Mağnūn legend. For the moment, in order to realize the extent to which Šūfī influences could have penetrated the legend both in its themes and in its imagery, let us discuss briefly the structure of the early versions of the legend and the level of interpretation which could legitimately be applied to its imagery.

As far as we can ascertain, the earliest extant version of the legend is that of Ibn Qutayba (d. 889). Shortly after him, Ibn Dāwūd (d. 910) included in his *Kitāb az-Zahra*<sup>76</sup> some poetic fragments ascribed to Mağnūn. About a century later, Abu l-Farağ al-Iṣfahānī (d. 967) collated in his *Ağānī* numerous anecdotes and poetic fragments, ascribed to Mağnūn or told about him.

These are the main sources of the legend before *Maṣāri' al-'uṣṣāq* of Abū Naṣr as-Sarrāğ (d. 1106).<sup>77</sup> Since the oldest extant manuscript of Wālibī's *Qays b. al-Mulawwah al-Mağnūn wa-dīwānuh* goes back only to 1245 A.D.,<sup>78</sup> and since we are certain neither of Wālibī's identity nor of his period, let us for the moment regard the above-mentioned writers as his predecessors or possibly his contemporaries.<sup>79</sup>

75. *Loc. cit.*

76. See Ibn Abī Sulaymān Dāwūd: *Kitāb az-Zahra*, I. Ed. A.R. Nykl. Chicago 1932. Nykl believes that *az-Zahra* must have been written around 890 A.D. See his Introduction, *Ibid.* 2.

77. As-Sarrāğ: *Maṣāri' al-'uṣṣāq*. Beirut 1958, henceforth referred to in footnotes as *Maṣāri'*. For the list of sources which include short mentions of Mağnūn, see KRAČKOVSKIJ: *op cit.* 3-8 *et passim*. For long discussions of the main sources except Wālibī, see VADET: *op. cit.* "Deuxième Partie", Livres I, III, and IV.

78. See İNALCIK's Introduction to *Dīwān*, 34.

79. There is a possibility that Wālibī's original version had already been written before *Kitāb aš-Ši'r*. This problem will be discussed in the coming chapter.

An examination of these sources shows that Mağnūn's place steadily grows in importance,<sup>80</sup> until it attains its largest dimensions in the *Dīwān*, through which it reached the greatest reading public.<sup>81</sup>

We may infer from the material recorded by Ibn Qutayba and Ibn Dāwūd that, contrary to KRAČKOVSKIJ's opinion,<sup>82</sup> the figure of Mağnūn was already firmly established before the last quarter of the ninth century, since neither author seems to be inventing this figure. But whereas Ibn Dāwūd presents a fragmented image of Mağnūn, through poetic excerpts scattered among different love topics, Ibn Qutayba presents Mağnūn as a unified character and gives a narrative account of his story or legend. In either case, the material included does not exceed a fourth of what *Agānī* was to include in the second half of the tenth century. Nevertheless, Ibn Dāwūd establishes Mağnūn among the major love poets, while Ibn Qutayba presents us with the basic elements of his legend. These elements were later expanded and retold in different variations, but the figure of Mağnūn was unmistakably drawn by Ibn Qutayba.

In examining Ibn Qutayba's text, we note some of the major features of the accounts of Mağnūn's life and poetry.

a) Already in *Kitāb aš-Ši'r* one encounters the doubts concerning Mağnūn's name, his madness, and the authenticity of some of his poetry.

b) Compared with the majority of the chapters on other poets, the story of Mağnūn in *Kitāb aš-Ši'r* is distinguished by its concentration on a single theme, and by the predominance of dramatic settings in the treatment of this theme.<sup>83</sup>

c) Among the famous love-poets who were heroes of love-romances, Mağnūn is the only one depicted as a madman whose total alienation from society leads him to live with the wild animals of the desert.

d) *Kitāb aš-Ši'r* follows the *isnād* style, even when it does not mention the intermediary links between the author and the hero of the story. Unity of theme and succinctness of expression are Ibn Qutayba's main techniques in creating a narrative which resembles a short story. This story is made out

80. Cf. KRAČKOVSKIJ's analysis of this phenomenon: *op. cit.*, *passim*.

81. Cf. *Ibid.* 6.

82. "Der grundstock bildet sich ungefähr in der zweiten hälfte des 10. jahrhunderts, und er gibt im wesentlichen den ton an für die gesamte weitere entwicklung." KRAČKOVSKIJ: *op. cit.* 3.

83. The chapter dealing with Mağnūn (pp. 467-77) is longer than those dealing with Ġamīl (pp. 346-55), 'Urwa b. Hizām (pp. 519-23) or Qays b. Ḍarīḥ (pp. 524-25). The relatively long chapter on Kuṭayyir 'Azza (pp. 410-23) is not confined to the love-theme, but includes panegyrics and political poetry.



of variations on a theme; and the theme is illustrated by poetic fragments. Although the anecdotes we find in poetic anthologies tend to fulfill an explanatory function, some anecdotes in Ibn Qutayba's story of Maġnūn seem to stand on their own. This may illustrate the fact that the anecdotes about Maġnūn's love and madness seem to have been drawn from already established patterns, regardless of the particular verses associated with them.<sup>84</sup> This tendency to use the same motifs again and again in connection with heroes of popular themes is illustrated by later collections of such anecdotes.<sup>85</sup> However, Ibn Qutayba's special achievement resides in his success to sustain interest in a credible character. He subordinates to one theme the traditionally concrete details of poetic and prose descriptions, thus incarnating the common poetic clichés and narrative motifs into a living human being. All we know about this human being, at this point, except that he belongs to the 'Āmir tribe, is that he is the person who takes poetry so seriously as to live it concretely in real life. He incarnates poetry written about a mad lover, with an additional factor, so fundamental to his character: Maġnūn himself is the madman, the lover, and the poet at one and the same time.

Ibn Qutayba succeeds in imparting some unity to the anecdotes and poetic fragments he juxtaposes under the name of Maġnūn. In spite of the difference in the sources of the anecdotes, Ibn Qutayba relates the story in a homogeneous style and keeps his choice of poetic fragments at the level of the educated reader.<sup>86</sup>

However, the unity of composition ends here, and we soon notice that the different anecdotes are small entities, assembled with some degree of intricacy into a mosaic pattern. The lack of organic unity between the various parts of the narrative is evident in some contradictions in different reports about Maġnūn's behavior.<sup>87</sup>

Whereas substantially different accounts concerning purported matters of fact may safely be judged inconsistent, no such simple standard of consistency can apply to the realm of poetic vision and figures of speech. Within this realm, mosaic composition attains its full scope and does not depend only on oral tradition. This mosaic composition is inherent in the

84. Compare for instance the anecdote concerning Maġnūn's freeing of gazelles, because of their resemblance to Laylā, and the different choice of verses associated with it in *Kitāb aš-Ši'r*, 416-417 (told about an anonymous person); *Mašāri'* I, 62-63; *Aġānī*, 66-67.

85. Cf. *Mašāri'*, *passim*. We shall see that this is the case with Wālibī.

86. Cf. GAUDEFRY-DEMOBYNES: *op. cit.* X-XIII.

87. See for instance two contradictory accounts concerning Maġnūn's attitude towards wearing clothes, on pp. 469 and 474.

very principles of Arabic prosody, which seems to result almost necessarily in products of collective composition.

Built on the unity of the line, the Arabic poem itself presents a mosaic structure consisting of separate entities of meaning, concisely expressed in single lines. These entities are sometimes related to a general theme, and must follow one rhythm and one end-ryhme. However, even in the very few cases of narrative poetry, the necessity to keep the line as separate entity tended to disrupt the unity of the poem.

Since it was moreover a blemish to allow the structure of a sentence to run over from one couplet to the next, so that each couplet was thought of as a complete rhetorical statement, the greatest ingenuity was needed to concatenate the several statements together to create the impression of a continuous, or at any rate harmonious narration.<sup>88</sup>

With purely lyrical poetry, the task was much more difficult. Even when, through the cohesiveness of their theme and the intensity of their poetic state, some poets managed to integrate their verses in a certain unity of mood, this unity did not prevent the poem from disintegrating. In short, it would seem that the principle of the unity of the line impaired the unity of the poem, and made it vulnerable to changes in the sequence of its verses, and to haphazard additions and subtractions.

If the unity of the line made the poem a necklace of "pearls at random strung," oral tradition seems to have led to its total disintegration. In principle, the reciters, who had to memorize great numbers of poems, tended to keep in mind the more striking verses. Since these verses had no necessary organic relationship among them, it was easy to change their position, and to mix the verses of one poet or of different poets, as long as these verses were uniform in meter and rhyme, and vaguely compatible in theme. Due to the general lack of stylistic and thematic individuality, many of these verses become anonymous or at least ascribable to more than one poet. In other words, they become what one may call "floating verses".

Against this background, we realize the power of the *rāwī* to concoct a poem and ascribe it to a special poet, or even to invent an imaginary poet and attribute to him a whole *diwān* made out of "floating verses". As soon as he is invented, such a poet will represent a concrete universal, which embodies in a concrete human being the spirit of popular motifs.

88. A. J. ARBERRY: *Arabic Poetry*. Cambridge 1965, 7.

89. *Agānī*, 10.

To lead an independent, self-generating life, all this human being needs is the nourishing energy of popular imagination.

There are many indications of the great appeal that Mağnūn exerted on the popular imagination. As early as the middle of the ninth century al-Ġāhiz (d. 868) realizes that “people have not left any poetry said by any poet about any (girl called) Laylā without attributing it to Mağnūn.”<sup>89</sup>

The aristocratic attitude of Ibn al-Mu‘tazz (861-908) illuminates this problem further: “The common, simple-minded people are accustomed to attributing to Abū Nuwās every shameless and wanton poem, and they do the same in the case of Mağnūn: every poem that mentions Laylā they attribute to Mağnūn.”<sup>90</sup>

Moreover, the conventionality of the motif of the love-mad poet is illustrated by the following account by al-Aṣma‘ī (d. 828):

I asked a Bedouin from the clan of ‘Āmir b. Ṣa‘ṣa‘a about Mağnūn the ‘Āmirite. He said, “About which one are you asking me? Many among us have been accused of madness, so about which one are you asking?” I said, “About the one who used to compose amatory verses about Laylā.”<sup>91</sup>

After these accounts, made in the early and middle ninth century, the same pattern of Mağnūn’s popularity is manifested in the continuous increase in the corpus of his poetry.

Much, if not all, of the poetry Ibn Qutayba ascribes to Mağnūn was attributed to other poets. This is documented by ‘A. A. FARRĀĠ in his collection of the poetry said to belong to Mağnūn.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, an examination of the poetic excerpts of Mağnūn included in *az-Zahra* indicates that these are not significantly different from what we find under the various poetic themes of that anthology.

The doubt raised by Ibn Qutayba concerning Mağnūn’s real name and madness becomes a central problem for Iṣfahānī, who questions the very existence of Mağnūn. Iṣfahānī presents all sides of the controversy and concludes that, since most of the poetry mentioned in Mağnūn’s anecdotes is also ascribed to others, the author himself will not guarantee its authenticity.<sup>93</sup>

What the *Agānī* presents is not substantially different from *Kitāb aṣ-*

90. Ibn al-Mu‘tazz: *Ṭabaqāt aṣ-ṣu‘arā’ al-muḥdaiṯin*. Ed. E. Eghbal, London 1939, 34.

91. *Agānī*, 9.

92. See ‘A. A. FARRĀĠ: *Dīwān Mağnūn Laylā*. Cairo 1963.

93. See *Agānī*, 12.



Ši'r. Nonetheless, it provides us with a valuable document concerning the development of the story about a century after Ibn Qutayba.

One of the most fascinating parts of Iṣfahānī's account is the first section — about one tenth of the whole account — in which he raises the question of authenticity. Here, Iṣfahānī's refinement and literary subtlety are shown at their best. As one reads the various sides of the controversy, presented in the usual *isnād* mold, one begins to realize that the value of the *isnād* should not necessarily be limited to its role as a historiographical device. In the "authenticity" episode of Iṣfahānī's account, the *isnād* is transformed by Iṣfahānī's artistic sensitivity into a literary device. This device allows the author to portray one of the most lively pictures of the mental interplay between illusion and reality. By assuming an apparent neutrality vis-à-vis the *isnāds*, and by declaring his innocence and declining to guarantee what he cites, Iṣfahānī not only places the whole story in doubt, but also undermines any scientific value left in the *isnād* method itself. Thus, we realize that between historical authenticity and literary effect, the author of the *Agānī* has no difficulty choosing. Upon reading and re-reading the "authenticity" episode, in search of historical indications, one has the impression that Iṣfahānī wrote this episode in a somewhat playful mood. It is doubtful that in any other Arabic account the *isnād* is given such an artistic effectiveness. Because of the obvious contradictions between the texts (*matn's*) of the various reports, the *isnād* has a double, self-contradictory function: it purports to establish the truth of a certain report, but succeeds only in forfeiting its own validity. On one and the same page, we have the same person, ar-Riyāšī, report that he heard al-Aṣma'ī say (1) that Maḡnūn "was not mad, but a little crazy, like Abū Ḥayya an-Numayrī," and (2) that "two men were never known in this world — except by the name Maḡnūn: Maḡnūn of the Banū 'Āmir, and Ibn al-Qirriyya — but invented by the *rāwīs*."<sup>94</sup> Comparing both statements (of which the first takes Maḡnūn's existence for granted, and the second denies it), one cannot help reaching the conclusion that someone along the chain of this *isnād* must have invented something. And my belief, in this connection, is that Iṣfahānī himself, refined artist that he was, is the last to be exempted from all responsibility, in spite of his plea for innocence.

Trop souvent aussi, dans leur collecte de récits historico-biographiques, les érudits cèdent sans résistance au goût du romanesque ou du merveilleux. Abû-l-Faraj ... sait fort que les récits sur les amours de Majnûn et Laylâ n'ont aucun fondement historique et sont

94. *Agānī*, 6.





l'oeuvre d'un faussaire du II<sup>e</sup>/VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Malgré tout, il les rapporte avec une complaisance explicable seulement par le goût qu'il y trouve.<sup>95</sup>

One of Ibn Qutayba's most interesting attempts to bestow historical credibility on Maġnūn is the surprising last statement of his story, "Maġnūn has offspring in Naġd."<sup>96</sup> Yet, the real effect of this statement, so basically inconsistent with the rest of the story, is to awaken even the most credulous reader to the contradiction involved.<sup>97</sup>

Iṣfahānī goes far beyond Ibn Qutayba, both in the quantity of anecdotes and poetry which he attributes to Maġnūn, and in the effect of his mosaic composition. His composition leads the theme through an arabesque of variations which resembles a collage of short scenes, featuring one person in different, yet thematically related situations. Iṣfahānī does not, any more than Ibn Qutayba, develop the theme in any extensive temporal movement. The main extension remains spatial, and is built with additional anecdotes and some elaborate details, which seem to have ramified during the decades separating the two authors. The spatial juxtapositions rely on the same kind of short accounts we encountered with Ibn Qutayba.<sup>98</sup> The story expands horizontally, as a result of an associative progress, whereby the character of the personage gradually assumes its form by means of oblique strokes. However, what we have here is not a portrait painted by one man, but a mosaic put together out of shards of prose and fragments of poetry. Like most of the classics of Arabic literature, the *Agānī* is a collection of small entities lacking in organic unity. In this, the story of Maġnūn, just as the poems it includes, is made out of "pearls at random strung."

Compared with Ibn Qutayba's narrative, Iṣfahānī's version marks a substantial increase in the bulk of poetry as opposed to prose. Primarily a book of songs, the *Agānī* intersperses the material it includes with short information about songs and singers. It also lapses into some digressions which bear only a tangential relationship to the theme.<sup>99</sup>

95. BLACHÈRE: *op. cit.* 122.

96. *Kitāb aš-Ši'r*, 476.

97. According to Ibn Qutayba's story, Maġnūn is supposed to have remained unmarried and chaste, and to have died alone in the desert (see Appendix). Moreover, Ibn Qutayba does not know Maġnūn's real name and thus cannot ascertain whether or not he had offspring in Naġd. Cf. *Kitāb aš-Si'r*, 467.

98. The longest of these accounts is a somewhat expanded version of the one related in *Kitāb aš-Ši'r* by the sheikh from the Murra tribe. See the last episode of the Appendix, and *Agānī*, 71-74.

99. See *Agānī*, 31 and 47-49.



With Wālibī, the increase in the bulk of poetry reaches the extent of a *dīwān*. The commentary is fragmentary and generally short. Wālibī, as we shall see in the coming chapter, allows a mixture of the simple folkloric and the Ṣūfī levels of interpretation. The *Dīwān* retains the same structure we have seen in the two previous books, while relying more heavily on the mosaic arrangement of material. Here, one has the impression of reading an account by a popular story-teller in the tradition of the *samar*.<sup>100</sup> In Wālibī, there is no doubt raised about Mağnūn's existence, nor much effort expended to substantiate the sources of the material. We are very far here from the intensity and conciseness of Ibn Qutayba. The theme does not present any linear progression and the story seems to go nowhere.

The *Dīwān* is interesting, nonetheless, precisely because it is a *dīwān*, and because it is a concoction of various sorts of verse, borrowed and forged.<sup>101</sup> The conspicuous feature in the *Dīwān* is that the poetry added to the two previous versions tends to become narrative, or at least descriptive. In this, the *Dīwān* is the closest version to a poetic romance about Mağnūn in Arabic. To make it a real romance, however, one would have to rearrange its verses and fill in the gaps. As it stands, it can only testify to a non-organic collective composition, which juxtaposes the highest products of refined poetry and the most banal of prosaic verse.

Thus, before Niẓāmī, the *Dīwān* is the product of a development described by BLACHÈRE:

En somme vers la fin du III<sup>e</sup>/IX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la masse des poésies connues sous le nom de Majnūn constituait une oeuvre collective échelonnée sur plusieurs générations; cet ensemble, au cours des deux siècles suivants, paraît s'être encore grossi d'une foule d'apports a dominante "courtoise."<sup>102</sup>

In this connection, let us stress the fact that the additions to the *Dīwān* were only "à dominante courtoise", and that in the rise and continuous expansion of the Mağnūn legend, as well as in the structure of the *Dīwān*, we have an outstanding example of the interpenetration of Ṣūfī and popular ideas. Thus, we can hear Ṣūfī overtones in the "courtois" melodic phrases. It is true that they are only overtones and are not as yet intricately orchestrated into the main theme of the legend; nonetheless, they are the right prelude for subsequent developments of the theme.

100. Cf. BLACHÈRE: *op. cit.* 790-95, 657-58.

101. Cf. FARRĀĠ: *op. cit. passim*; and KRAČKOVSKIJ: *op. cit.* 47.

102. BLACHÈRE: *op. cit.* 658.



## CHAPTER THREE

### WĀLIBĪ'S DĪWĀN OF MAĠNŪN

Before discussing the *Dīwān*, it is perhaps advisable to note here that focusing our attention on Wālibī's text does not necessarily prevent us from referring to the texts which preceded it, or which were of the same period. Indeed, it will be argued that, since we are not sure of the identity, period, or even historicity of Wālibī, the importance of his version derives from its popularity, its inclusiveness, and its place as a common denominator among the different Arabic versions.

Since the structure of the *Dīwān* does not alter what we called the arabesque or mosaic style of the versions already discussed, it goes without saying that this mosaic composition admits, nay encourages, contrasts, digressions, and even clear contradictions. The resultant composition is not the kind of consistent whole which a more organic work can constitute; the incongruity of the different elements of the story has been pointed out by KRAČKOVSKIJ and others. Our concern here is to analyze the major poetic motifs in Wālibī's version, and to suggest an archetypal pattern, within which these motifs can be integrated.

Accordingly, the present chapter will consist of (I) a discussion of Wālibī and his text from the historical and literary points of view, (II) an analysis of the Maġnūn archetype, and (III) a short conclusion concerning the unity of the archetype and its significance.

#### I. WĀLIBĪ AND HIS *Qays Ibn al-Mulawwah al-Maġnūn wa-dīwānuh*

Wālibī follows the same *isnād* style which we have seen with the previous authors. With him, it becomes clear that the *isnād* is much less rigorous from the historical point of view and serves only as a conventional device, probably meant to lend credibility to his accounts.<sup>1</sup>

1. See KRAČKOVSKIJ: *op. cit.* 7, in which he expresses the opinion that Wālibī's text "kontaminiert ganz wahllos verse aus verschiedenen quellen und legt den grund zu der wucherung der einzelnen gedichte zu ganz monströser, klärllich gefälschter grösse."



This device cannot stand the least scrutiny, a matter which convinced KRAČKOVSKIJ to discard Wālibī as a historical source.<sup>2</sup> Even the most credulous mind cannot accept the blatant anachronisms included in the *Dīwān*. But the fact that these anachronisms were tolerated by the compiler and his public may point out that the *isnād* had become an accepted narrative device, notwithstanding its lack of historiographical reliability. Moreover, the obviously late date of some of the anecdotes and verses, falsely ascribed to Maġnūn, makes it very likely that these anecdotes and verses had been influenced by Šūfism.

By examining the *isnād* references, one can see that this anachronism is not necessarily due to a single, simplistic mind. In discussing this problem, KRAČKOVSKIJ may have accepted too quickly the hypothesis that the *Dīwān* has had only one author or *rāwī*. A closer look indicates that the figure of Wālibī himself may have been used as a narrative device. Although KRAČKOVSKIJ is probably correct in considering this version to have been completed before the twelfth century, it is questionable whether Abū Bakr al-Wālibī himself lived between the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>3</sup> If it is utterly incredible, save to the naïve, that the legendary life of Maġnūn stretched over two centuries, it is even less credible that the compiler could have claimed the same span of life for himself. Yet, if considered as the work of a single compiler, the *Dīwān* would indirectly make this claim for Wālibī. This becomes evident once we contrast two groups of statements, from which we can infer the time in which Wālibī lived. While the first group shows Wālibī as contemporary with Maġnūn, the second group shows him as living considerably later.

In the first group, we find statements such as: (a) “This anecdote goes back to Abū Bakr al-Wālibī, because he is the one who gathered his (i.e. Maġnūn’s) story and poetry *in his own time*” (italics supplied);<sup>4</sup> and (b) “Abū Bakr said: ‘A man from the ‘Āmir tribe told me, ‘I met Maġnūn’...”<sup>5</sup> These examples show an intention to make Wālibī a contemporary of Maġnūn, i.e., living at the end of the seventh century.

2. See *Ibid.* 7: “Die ganze version des Wālibī macht den eindruck grosser nachlässigkeit und verwirrt eher als dass sie hilft, sich in der geschichte des arabischen Maġnūn zurechtzufinden. Sie lässt ihn eine reise nach Babylon unternehmen, verlängert sein leben bis ins 9. jahrhundert, in die zeit der ‘Abbāsiden...”

3. *Loc. cit.*

4. *Dīwān* 1 (والحديث يرجع الى ابي بكر الوالبي لأنه هو الذي جمع شعره وحديثه في زمانه)  
“In his own time” could be referring only to Maġnūn; otherwise, it would be superfluous.

5. *Ibid.* 18. See similarly, in *Dīwān* 15, 17, 21, 63.



In the second group, we find statements such as: “al-Wālibī said: ‘A man told me on the authority of Iṣḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (767-850), on the authority of Abū ‘Umāra, that, ‘One of us went out towards Damascus’...”<sup>6</sup> Iṣḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī is included in some manuscripts, but omitted in others.

To accept both groups of statements as part of the original transmission of Wālibī is to believe that the author’s life extended to a legendary length. It all depends, then, on the manuscripts we consider; and, since KRAČKOVSKIJ has checked more than twenty manuscripts without finding one which is exempt from these anachronisms,<sup>7</sup> it seems safe to assume that Wālibī — even if the *Dīwān* had only one compiler — became as legendary a figure in the role of narrator as did Maġnūn in the role of the love-mad poet.

The legendary nature of Wālibī as narrator is further illustrated by the fact that the compiler of the *Dīwān* reports a statement by one transmitter who mentions Wālibī as his own source. “Abu l-Ḥasan al-‘Alawī said: ‘I asked al-Wālibī about the nicest thing that Maġnūn composed concerning chastity and truthfulness in love (*išq*), so he recited to me’...”<sup>8</sup> This instance shows that even though the usual “al-Wālibī said” (*qāla l-Wālibī*) could be written by Wālibī himself, the above-mentioned *isnād* suggests the existence of some one other than Wālibī as the ultimate compiler of the work or parts thereof. If we accept this possibility, it becomes easier to understand the opening statement which describes Wālibī as “the one who gathered his (*sc.* Maġnūn’s) poetry in his own time.” Such a statement is most probably a late addition, contemporary with the additions of poetry and anecdotes which include the anecdote about Abū ‘Isā b. ar-Rašīd and all the poetry mentioned in that context.<sup>9</sup>

It is conceivable, therefore, that some one by the name of Abū Bakr al-Wālibī really existed and collected the tales and poetic fragments attributed to Maġnūn, using the *isnād* method not as a scholarly but as a narrative device. Then later transmitters and copyists found it suitable to add to Wālibī’s original collection what the popular mind had already integrated within the Maġnūn legend. This tendency is corroborated by a

6. *Ibid.* 68 ، قال ، عماره ، قال ، (قال الوالبي ، حدثني رجل عن اسحق بن ابراهيم الموصلي عن ابي عماره ، قال ، خرج رجل منا الى ناحية الشام ...)

7. See KRAČKOVSKIJ: *op. cit.* 6-7, esp. 6, notes 10 and 11.

8. *Dīwān* 19. This statement exists in all four manuscripts consulted by İNALCIK.

9. Cf. FARRĀĠ: *op. cit.* 23. FARRĀĠ mentions that the whole episode of Abū ‘Isā b. ar-Rašīd and the poetry connected with it (*Dīwān* 29-36) are found only in the *Dīwān*.

later text of an author known to us, Ibn Ṭūlūn's *Baṣṭ sāmi' al-musāmīr*. This text includes numerous fragments and additions which are clearly of popular extraction, and written in language almost colloquial.<sup>10</sup>

We can ascertain the existence of some real person by the name of Abū Bakr al-Wālibī only by accepting the authority of later transmitters. KRAČKOVSKIJ believed that Wālibī could not have lived before the eleventh century.<sup>11</sup> KRAČKOVSKIJ came across only one mention of Wālibī, viz., that in Ibn as-Sarrāġ (d. 1106).<sup>12</sup> However, he dismissed this reference as a misunderstanding, since it implies that Wālibī was an older contemporary of Abū 'Amr aš-Šaybānī, who died around 821 A.D.

However, there are other references to Wālibī, in al-Mibradī (d. 1503),<sup>13</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 1556),<sup>14</sup> and Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 1200),<sup>15</sup> all referring to aš-Šaybānī as the direct transmitter from Wālibī. A more important reference still is that of al-Qālī (d. 967).<sup>16</sup> This reference is decisive both because it was recorded before the eleventh century, and because it relies on a chain of *isnād* which ends with Muṣ'ab az-Zubayrī (773-850) before reaching Wālibī. Since az-Zubayrī mentions an intermediary between him and Wālibī, it becomes clear that the latter had probably lived in the last part of the eighth century and the earlier part of the ninth.

This supports the notion that the oldest extant version, ascribed to Wālibī, and committed to writing in 1245 A.D., must have undergone continuous changes and have been expanded by many additions. These additions may well explain the numerous instances of anachronism and incongruity, which a critic like KRAČKOVSKIJ deplors. These same additions may also explain in part the permanence, one might almost say the universality, of the popular appeal of Wālibī's version. It was this

10. This is even noticed by the author himself, who cites 25 lines, then says: "I think that all these lines are falsely attributed to him, for they are not of his style, and not even up to the standard of the Islamic poets who are inferior to him." (وأظن أن هذه الأبيات كلها

مكذوبة عليه، فانها ليست من نمط لفظه، بل ولا ممن هو دونه)

Ibn Ṭūlūn ad-Dimašqī: *Baṣṭ sāmi' al-musāmīr fī aḥbār Maġnūn Banī 'Āmir*. Cairo 1964, 78.

11. See his argument: *op. cit.* 7.

12. *Loc. cit.*

13. Ġamāladdīn Yū. b. Ḥ. al-Maqdisī al-Mibradī: *Nuzhat al-musāmīr fī aḥbār Banī 'Āmir*. Manuscript Topkapısarayı müzesi Ahmed III Kütüphanesi, No. 2473. Cited in İNALCIK: *op. cit.* 28.

14. Ibn Ṭūlūn: *op. cit.* 10, 39, 40.

15. Abu l-Faraġ b. al-Ġawzī: *Damm al-hawā*. Cairo 1962, 380.

16. Al-Qālī: *Kitāb al-Amālī*. Cairo 1926, II 127-28. This reference was first noticed by FARRĀG: *op. cit.* 38, then mentioned by İNALCIK: *op. cit.* 28, n. 136.

version — not the standardized versions of Ibn Qutayba and Iṣfahānī — which admitted of continued popular contributions. In this continued process of accretion, Wālibī assumed, in the popular mind, an almost legendary image as the Maḡnūn *rāwī* par excellence.

Moreover, this extant version of Wālibī is our most representative guide to the development of the legend in Arabic between the eighth and the middle of the thirteenth century. For even if Ibn Qutayba and Iṣfahānī do not mention Wālibī, this should not necessarily be an unquestionable proof against his existence around the turn of the ninth century. On the one hand, Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) rarely mentions all his sources, and, on the other hand, the *Aḡānī* was not meant to be an exhaustive work either in material or in *isnād*.<sup>17</sup> Thus, instead of taking for granted the claim that Wālibī could not have existed before the eleventh century, and consequently accusing him of monstrosities of anachronism and bad taste,<sup>18</sup> it might be more reasonable to accept his possible existence at the turn of the ninth century and see the “monstrosities” of his version as later additions done under his name.

I should, here, like to conclude that what could be said of the existence of Qays b. al-MulawwaḤ is equally applicable in Wālibī's case. It is definitely conceivable that these two persons have existed and flourished, the first probably at the end of the seventh century, and the second possibly at the turn of the ninth century. For the purpose of this study, however, the uncertainty concerning their existence, names, and literary production, is but a minor problem. If anything, it can only help establishing the popular and legendary, or semi-legendary, aspects of these two characters fulfilling the roles of the protagonist and the narrator.

The essential point, however, is that the stories — true or legendary — about Maḡnūn started at the earliest in the middle of the eighth century, and grew in volume and diffusion through the century that followed. The main features of Maḡnūn's character were first recorded by Ibn Qutayba and Ibn Dāwūd in the last quarter of the ninth century, and elaborated upon by Iṣfahānī in the middle of the tenth century. Nevertheless, besides the fact that its original form might have constituted the earliest version, Wālibī's text, in spite of its deficiencies, has the advantage of including most of what those three authors transmitted, and of giving us an idea about the trend of the legend as illustrated by its extant (1245 A.D.) version.

17. See BLACHÈRE: *Histoire de la littérature arabe*, I 137-38.

18. KRAČKOVSKIJ: *op. cit.* 7.



## II. THE MAĠNŪN ARCHETYPE

In the present section, I propose to deal directly with the main archetypal characteristics of Maġnūn as illustrated in the *Dīwān*. These characteristics will be analyzed from the separate perspectives of poetry, love, and madness, keeping in mind the interrelation of these perspectives and their intrinsic connection with one another. Most of the verses used in the present analysis — as is generally the case with the whole *Dīwān* — tend to express stereotyped motifs. Our purpose, however, is to discern the original human experience which lies at the root of these motifs and which endows them with life.

### A. Poetry

Maġnūn is first and foremost a poet. This is how his existence is explained, whether as a single entity, a real person, or as an incarnation of the imaginative products of other poets and narrators. This is basically what earned him a place in such collections as Ibn Dāwūd's anthology, *az-Zahra*, where little is said about his other facets, Ibn Qutayba's *Kitāb aš-Ši'r waš-šu'arā'*, where it is explicitly stated that the author is interested only in the major poets,<sup>19</sup> and the *Agānī*, the main purpose of which is a collection of the hundred most famous songs, and of biographical anecdotes concerning the poets, musicians, and singers who created these songs.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, Wālibī's book is chiefly a *dīwān*, and as we have seen in discussing its structure, the anecdotes it includes revolve around the poetic fragments and are explanations of, or arguments for, these fragments. As such, they present a relationship between poetry and narrative basically different from the one found in a literary work such as *The Arabian Nights*, where "only in a few cases are the poems closely connected with the prose text, and have a function in the narration... and it even happens that they do not apply at all to the situation."<sup>21</sup> To the contrary, many poems are

19. *Kitāb aš-Ši'r*: "And I have dealt mainly with famous poets, those known by most men of letters." (وكان أكثر قصدي للمشهورين من الشعراء الذين يعرفهم جلّ أهل الأدب) ; p. 9: "And I have not mentioned in this book anyone who was more known for something else than poetry." (ولم اعرض في كتابي هذا لمن كان غلب عليه غير الشعر)

20. Among *Agānī*'s sources, al-Madā'inī (d. 849) differentiates Maġnūn from other madmen by saying: "al-Maġnūn, the one famous for his poetry." (المجنون المشهور بالشعر عند) S. *Agānī* 7.

21. M.I. GERHARDT: *The Art of Story-Telling*. Leiden 1963, 46. Cf. KRAČKOVSKIJ: *op. cit.* 36. The irrelevance of the poetry to the prose context is well illustrated in *Agānī* 40 and





included in the *Dīwān* for their own sake, without any narration at all, and mostly as a result of falsifications or later additions.

If we turn to the internal evidence and try to examine the image of Maġnūn both in the minds of other characters and as self-image, we realize that the poet in Maġnūn is quite prominent in both cases.

Other characters are aware of Maġnūn as lover and madman but seem to have as much, if not more interest in his poetry. His mastery of the language and poetry of the Arabs,<sup>22</sup> and the beauty of his melody and voice<sup>23</sup> made him quite worthy of attention, not only as poet, but also as *rāwī*. Among those young men who used to gather around Laylā, “he was the best one at reciting old Arab poetry,”<sup>24</sup> a quality that definitely helped endear him to her.

The social communicative side of his poetry is emphasized not only by the fact that he was a *rāwī*, but also by an almost consistent connection between his contact with others and the featuring of poetry as a center of attention. This is explainable by what we saw earlier, *viz.*, that the majority of the anecdotes 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. Thus we have, in the *Dīwān* as well as in the *Aġānī* and *Kitāb aš-Ši‘r*, frequent expressions such as: “Do you know Maġnūn and recite any of his poetry?”<sup>25</sup>; “I saw Maġnūn... and he recited to me.”<sup>26</sup>; or the immediate question about his poetry: “They said this is Maġnūn of Banū ‘Āmir, so I asked: ‘Do you recite any of his poetry?’”<sup>27</sup>; or the story of the noble Nawfal who, having suddenly come across Maġnūn, grazing with gazelles, first tries to communicate with him through reciting some of Maġnūn’s poetry, then the moment the latter responds, Nawfal’s first question is: “Have you composed any new poems since I saw you last?”<sup>28</sup>

This attitude towards Maġnūn is successfully crystallized by a major and famous anecdote, mentioned in *Kitāb aš-Ši‘r*<sup>29</sup> and repeated almost

52, where three lines from Muḥammad b. Umayya were attributed to Maġnūn and given an argument which is incongruous with the rest of his legend.

22. (فيفيضون في الحديث، فيكون أحسنهم فيه إفاضة) *Aġānī* 16.

23. (فما أنسى حسن نغمته وحسن صوته) *Ibid.* 55.

24. (وكان أرواهم لأشعار العرب) *Dīwān* 16.

25. (أتعرفُ المجنون وتروي من شعره؟) *Aġānī* 6.

26. (فرأيتُ المجنون... وأنشدني) *Ibid.* 7.

27. (هل تروون شيئاً من شعره؟) *Dīwān* 64.

28. *Dīwān* 59 (هل أحدثت شيئاً من بعدي؟); also *Aġānī* 54-55.

29. See Appendix.



verbatim in the *Aġānī*, then rendered in a short form in the *Dīwān*.<sup>30</sup> In the three versions, however, Maġnūn is treated in a manner strangely reminiscent of the way one would lure a wild gazelle into a trap. Still, the aim is clearly not Maġnūn's person, but his poetry. That is why Maġnūn has a *rāwī*, who is his only friend and contact with society. When the Murra man asks that friend what to do in order to draw near Maġnūn, his natural reaction is: "If you want his poetry, I have it all." The friend seems to believe that he is the only person of whom Maġnūn's *šayṭān* is not scared away. He is afraid that if Maġnūn is startled by others, he might be scared away from him too, "and his poetry will vanish."<sup>31</sup>

Yet a solution is found, namely the recitation of some of Ibn Darīḥ's poetry, which seems to have on Maġnūn the double effect of charming his *šayṭān* and challenging him at the same time. When the stranger uses this poetic charm, Maġnūn responds with poetic fragments of his own. The narrator, besides making these fragments extend to more than three pages, has the stranger go back with his poetic booty to Maġnūn's people, who, worried only about Maġnūn's poetry, beseech the stranger to go back and try to get Maġnūn's longest poem, *al-Mu'nisa*, explaining: "We have tried hard to copy it, but we could not."<sup>32</sup>

The poetic prominence of Maġnūn is finally confirmed by an interesting device, namely that of having another famous love poet admit Maġnūn's superiority over him. When asked by the caliph if there is any greater love poet than he, Kuṭayyir 'Azza admits that Maġnūn is the one.<sup>33</sup> This device is rendered particularly effective by choosing Kuṭayyir, Ġamīl's *rāwī*, to be the judge, thus placing Maġnūn on a higher poetic level than Ġamīl, who was the greatest love poet in the 'Udrī tradition.

This positive interest in Maġnūn's poetry is opposed, of course, by the attitude of Laylā's parents; for it was the fame of his poetry about Laylā that stopped her parents from consenting to their marriage.

30. *Aġānī* 72-73; and *Dīwān* 75-80.

31. Appendix. Italics supplied.

32. ( فقد جهدنا على نسخها فلم نقدر عليها ) *Dīwān* 80. Cf. also in other manuscripts (*Dīwān* 89-90) a similar attitude to obtaining this long poem, called *al-Mu'nisa*, where Kuṭayyir 'Azza performs, at the caliph's order, the ceremony of inciting Maġnūn into reciting this poem, "and when he (i.e. Maġnūn) recited the first line of the poem, Kuṭayyir said: 'Summon the official scribes to write down what he utters'" ( فلما نطق بأول بيت منها ) قال كثير علي بكتاب الديوان يكتبون ما نطق به )

33. *Dīwān* 13. The same device is used in regard to love, as we shall see. KRAČKOVSKIJ (*op. cit.* 45) refers it to Ibn as-Sarrāġ, overlooking again the fact that it was already mentioned by Ibn Qutayba in *Kitāb aš-Ši'r* 417.



Even Laylā herself, who started out by being attracted by his poetry and conversation, seems to complain of his divulgence of their secret and of the ill-repute his poetry earns her.<sup>34</sup> In any case, even those who do not seek Maġnūn's poetry and are rather hurt by it cannot help being aware of its importance.

This general attitude is corroborated by Maġnūn's self-consciousness as a poet. For, even in the depth of his desert isolation, he would not resist the challenge of a competition with another famous poet. While he expresses his admiration for Ibn Ǧarīḥ's poetry, he does not hesitate to say: "But I still am a better poet when I say..."<sup>35</sup> He then shows his critical consciousness by comparing different poems of his own, as he continues saying: "And if I am not a better poet in this, then I am better in the following..."<sup>36</sup>

The most obvious emphasis on this poetic self-consciousness is naïvely expressed before the end of the *Dīwān* as an introduction to the longest poem ascribed to him: "So I said," continues the reporter, "I implore you by Laylā's tomb to recite to me the poem which you said of Ṭimdayn; and I had taken along ink and paper, so he said: 'Listen to me and write'. Then he recited..."<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, Maġnūn seems to be aware of the conventionality of poetic imagery and hyperboles. He consequently claims to be a genuine lover and swears that he is saying the truth, while "some lovers lie."<sup>38</sup> Whatever the case may be, we have no way of investigating the truthfulness of these poets in their claims, but we can be sure, from Maġnūn's accusation, that he was conscious that much could be said out of sheer exaggeration and poetic convention. Thus, Maġnūn's claim is intended to provide credibility for his legend by insisting that his poetic expression is true to his feelings.<sup>39</sup> This is strengthened further by checking the accuracy of his physical description of Laylā, who asks another woman to observe

34. *Dīwān* 56, lines 6-7.

35. (أنا أشعرُ منه حيث أقول) *Dīwān* 80, and Appendix.

36. (فإن لم أكنُ أشعرُ منه في هذا، فانا أشعرُ منه حيث أقول...) *Dīwān* 80-81.

37. فقلت سألتك بحق قبر ليلى عليك أن تنشديني قصيدتك التي قلتها في ثمدين. وقد كنت أخذت ( معي دواة وقرطاساً، فقال. إرعني السمع واكتب، وأنشد يقول... *Dīwān* 81.

38. (بعض المحبين يكذب) *Iḡānī* 45.

39. See also *Dīwān* 53. in which the same claim is made in addressing a dove:

And that in complaining, I say the truth

And that in complaining, you lie.

وإني في الشكاة أقول حقاً وانك في شكاتك تكذبننا



her and say “whether Maġnūn lied or told the truth,” whereupon the verdict comes: “No, by God, he spoke veraciously.”<sup>40</sup>

A still more important aspect of his poetic consciousness is found in the text, namely that aspect which views poetry as a furthering tool, and at the same time a hindering instrument — a source of pain and a remedy, an enveloping veil and a medium of vision. 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. In addition to its most important role as mirror for Laylā, for God, and for Maġnūn himself, poetry could function as a charming power, or as a medium of psychological relief. In this latter role, poetry is often associated with crying, possibly because of their similar cathartic effect.<sup>41</sup>

If you deny me Laylā and the beauty of her conversation,  
you will not deny me, rhymes and tears.

فان تمنعوا ليلى وحسن حديثها فلن تمنعوا مني البكا والقوافيا

But, on the negative side, the need for expression proves also to be a sort of curse. No less than that of love or madness, the poetic daemon is possessive and intransigent, leaving Maġnūn with no alternative. This daemon is represented as one of the direct causes which led to Maġnūn’s suffering and ultimate madness. Moreover, if one is inclined to believe that Maġnūn’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 love. This tendency to see love or madness as pretexts for poetry is suggested in a statement ascribed to Kuṭayyir, the ‘Uḍri poet closely associated with Maġnūn. In answer to a woman who denigrates him, saying: “God has demeaned you, since he made you known only by the name of a woman,” meaning ‘Azza, Kuṭayyir says: “God has not demeaned me. By her, my reputation was enhanced, my life matters were enlightened, and my poetry became powerful.”<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, we have seen that madness was used hyperbolically to convey extreme love passion. Consequently it was often feigned in order to claim inspiration and total bewitchment by the muse of love and poetry.

Moreover, Maġnūn does not represent only the power of the spoken word, but also the magical effect of written symbols. Although the *Dīwān*

40. *Agānī* 50-51, ( لا والله قد صدق ). For another example of this motif, see lines 4-5 of ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a’s poem in A.J. ARBERRY: *Arabic Poetry* 41.

41. *Dīwān* 84.

42. *Kitāb aš-Ši‘r* 415: ( لقد سَمَّلَ اللهُ بكِ إذ جعلك لا تُعرف إلا بأمرأة. قال، ما سَمَّلَ اللهُ ( بي )، ولكن رُفِعَ بها ذكري، واستنار بها أمري، واستحکم بها شعري.



does not elaborate this aspect, the few instances it includes can be seen as sufficient seeds for the development of this motif within the context of the legend. Of these instances, the most important is the repetition of one sign of madness, namely, Mağnūn's tracing lines on sand,<sup>43</sup> a practice normally associated with divination. The occultist implication suggested by this practice is parallel to the repetition of efficacious formulae performed in rituals, and, in this particular case, the frequent *dikr* (incantation) of Laylā's name.

Thus, although this magic use of written symbols seems to be at an embryonic stage as far as the *Dīwān* is concerned, it would be wrong to assume that it is a coincidence. The general Arab attitude toward language, both in its spoken and written forms, the different allusions to magic elements in the Mağnūn legend, and above all, the elaborate system of Kabbalistic interpretations, well spread among the Ṣūfis, lead one to believe that Mağnūn's sand-drawings are too full of allusions to be meant simply as a picture of absent-mindedness.

In two other cases, writing is associated with the pain of separation. Mağnūn compares himself to a writing-reed:<sup>44</sup>

My craving for Laylā, though separation led Laylā far away,  
is like the moaning of a pierced writing reed.

أَحْنُ إِلَى لَيْلَى وَإِنْ شَطَّتْ النَّوَى بَلِيلَى، كَمَا حَنَّ الْبِرَاعَ الْمُتَّقَبَ  
and Laylā uses her tears for ink:<sup>45</sup>

I dampened (or filled) my inkwell with my tears, then with them  
I wrote what a distraught one would painfully write.

لَقْتُ الدَّوَاءَ بِدَمْعِ الْعَيْنِ ثُمَّ بِهِ كَتَبْتُ مَا يَكْتُبُ الْمَجْهُودُ إِذْ جَهْدًا

In addition to these instances, the allusions to the magical use of writing, especially in talismans, are more frequent both in Mağnūn's anecdotes and in his poetry.<sup>46</sup> As a matter of fact, with some stretch of imagination, it is possible to interpret Mağnūn's line about Laylā's written message to him as a Ṣūfī allusion to the revelation of the Koran:<sup>47</sup>

43. See Appendix; *Agānī*. 17, 58, 72; and *Dīwān* 26, 72. For divination by means of drawings in sand, see FAHD: *La divination arabe*. Leiden 1966, 196 *et seq.*

44. *Dīwān* 72.

45. *Ibid.* 71.

46. See *Dīwān* 92, line 2; *Agānī* 57, line 13.

47. *Dīwān* 72. Within the context of its poetic fragment, the second hemistich of this line could also be understood to mean: "I isolate myself with my sorrow wherever..." This

When none other than her epistle reaches me, I turn  
alone to revealing my secret wherever on earth I may be.

إذا جاني منها الكتابُ بعينه خلوتُ بيَّ حيثُ كنتُ من الأرض

This line could be as well a description of Muhammad's attitude whenever he received a part of the Book. The analogy is strengthened by the narrative, which makes Maġnūn receive Laylā's letter when "he had sought refuge in the cave of a great mountain, and while he was silent with cast down eyes, scratching the earth, and writing with his finger..."<sup>48</sup> This also has a clear similarity with the Prophet's seclusions for meditation in the cave of Ḥirā', where he received his first call.<sup>49</sup>

The last line mentioned above brings us to a still more important aspect of the role which poetry plays in the triadic personality of Maġnūn, namely that of the crisis of divulgence through poetry. This crisis is at the heart of the very act of expressing any reality. The need for expression is necessarily accompanied by the fear of betrayal. If this is true in respect to the more superficial truths, how much more it is when the expression has to transmit the Absolute Truth. The poet, then, no less than the prophet is torn between what he is obliged to communicate and his duty to keep the covenant of secrecy between him and his God. The duty of silence is not necessarily imposed by the beloved, by God, or by any reality that opens its secret to the seer; it is a natural consequence of being overwhelmed by a vision that is beyond the reach of words. If certain levels of understanding rely on the verbal medium, it is very possible that such visions, having no verbal equivalent, would remain beyond understanding. Here we reach a circle: no higher understanding without adequate words, and no adequate

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is not, however, contradictory with some states of the Prophet under the impact of revelation: "Sa condition physique s'en trouvait affectée: il s'attristait et son visage s'assombrissait." T. FAHD: *La divination arabe* 72. See also *Koran* LIX, 21: "If we had caused this Qur'ān to descend upon a mountain, thou (O Muhammad) verily hadst seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of Allah."

48. *Dīwān* 72.

49. Motifs of mountain and cave, in association with inspiration, are not exclusively Islamic, nor are they confined to any specific age or culture: "The ritualistic role played by 'caves', attested in prehistoric times, could likewise be interpreted as a mystic return to the mother, which would also help to explain the sepultures in the caves as well as the initiation rites practiced in these same places. Such primitive intuitions die hard." ELIADE: *The Forge and the Crucible* 41. In a still higher symbolism, mountains can represent psychological summits: "La retraite sur la montagne psycho-cosmique représente en effet une phase essentielle de toute mystériosophie: l'acte final en est constitué par l'embrasement d'extase; deviennent alors visibles à l'âme les Figures célestes qui transparaissent par l'organe de sa propre image-archétype." H. CORBIN: *Terre Céleste et corps de résurrection*. Paris 1960, 61.



expression without understanding. In this context, we can appreciate man's poetic creativity which keeps solving this paradox by coining new words and inventing new imagery. This imagery, though never perfect (i.e., so perfect as to spoil the game), fluctuates in density and transparency according to each creative person and his particular visions.

Before coining the new word or expressing the new image, however, there exists a period of silence, a period when the mind is not yet able to reduce the vision into its symbolic, verbal equivalence. This is the period of creative suffering known by poets and other creators, but most intensely known by visionaries and prophets. The first endeavor to imprison the vision within a medium, be it words, color, or the like, could resemble babbling, as a result of the speed of the vision and the inadequacy of the tools which try to capture it. In other words, the massiveness and strangeness of the images which explode in the mind leave the tongue utterly incapable of articulating the fulgurating process — hence, the feeling of the ineffability of the vision. What is expressed during this rapid stream of consciousness is parallel to images produced by a distorted camera, slowly snapping shots of a tornado in action.

Hence the trance, bewilderment, and awe the Prophet used to experience at the reception of revelation; Islamic Tradition reports, “il avait l'air de quelqu'un pris par l'ivresse et se sentait d'un poids énorme.”<sup>50</sup>

In this respect FAHD says:

On a voulu voir, dans Cor. 75, 16-19, une allusion à la grande peine qu'éprouvait le Prophète en recevant la révélation et à l'effort qu'il déployait pour en saisir le contenu et ne pas l'oublier; dans ce but, il ne cessait de «bouger les lèvres, jusqu'au jour où Allah lui révéla: 'Ne bouge pas ta langue avec lui (= le Coran) afin de l'(apprendre) plus vite. C'est à nous de le réunir et de le réciter; quand Nous l'aurons lu, tu en suivras la lecture; puis c'est à nous de le faire comprendre'. Alors, ajoute Ibn Sa'd, l'Envoyé de Dieu fut soulagé».<sup>51</sup>

If, for the prophet, there is ultimately a divine assurance concerning the composition and communication of his message, independently of his active participation, the situation of the poet is different. For unless we accept the claim of the pagan or even Islamic poet to be in communication with the spirit-world through his *šayṭān*, we will find it difficult to subscribe to FAHD's opinion that: “le poète était en relation de dépendance absolue à l'égard de son šaytan.”<sup>52</sup>

50. T. FAHD: *loc. cit.* 76.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.* 74.



This is an all too easy solution for the problem of inspiration, and seems to imply the conception that the poet is no more than a flute on which his whimsical *šayṭān* intermittently chooses to play or to stop playing. Many poets claim this relationship with their muse: RIMBAUD declares it, “Car Je est un autre. Si le cuivre s’éveille clairon, il n’y a rien de sa faute,”<sup>53</sup> and Farazdaq (d. 728) claims that his *šayṭān* deserted him in one crucial situation, then came back, sat in the corner of the house, and started ridiculing his helplessness.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, this claim does not seem to prevent Farazdaq from being famous for his conscious effort in perfecting his poetry, so that it was said of him: “Farazdaq carves in rocks”.<sup>55</sup> Nor does it prevent RIMBAUD from stating with the same breath that

Le poète se fait voyant par un long, immense, et raisonné *dérèglement de tous les sens*. Toutes les formes d’amour, de souffrance, de folie; il cherche lui-même, il épuise en lui tous les poisons, pour n’en garder que les quintessences. Ineffable torture où il a besoin de toute la foi, de toute la force surhumaine, où il devient entre tous le grand malade, le grand criminel, le grand maudit, — et le suprême Savant! — Car il arrive à l’inconnu! Puisqu’il a cultivé son âme, déjà riche plus qu’aucun! Il arrive à l’inconnu, et quand, affolé, il finirait par perdre l’intelligence de ses visions, il les a vues!<sup>56</sup>

This is, in short, the basic poetic problem symbolized by Maġnūn, even though his *Dīwān* displays only fragmented hints at this problem. These hints are a rather timid expression of a suppressed collective unconscious in search of its liberation from a highly reasonable conventionalism. Although the poetic fragments of the *Dīwān* do not break the confines of the reasonable, the legend woven around them bestows on the poet a new image that points the way towards more conscious efforts along its lines.

RIMBAUD’s conception of poetry and his own experience with “toutes les formes d’amour, de souffrance, et de folie” were expressed in a short time and with the highest intensity as the fulgurations of an exceptionally dynamic imagination. Owing to these fulgurations of his mind, shooting in all directions from one recognizable center, RIMBAUD seems to master the power of the irrational at its happiest poetic pitch. In contrast, Maġnūn’s legend and poetry, anecdotal in essence, leaves us only with a diluted effect.

53. *Œuvres*. Paris 1960, 345.

54. Cf. FAHD: *op. cit.* 74.

55. *Aġānī* XI, 55. Cf. Ṭ. ḤUSAYN: *Min Tārīḫ al-adab al-‘arabī*. Beirut 1970, 6-7.

56. RIMBAUD; *op. cit.* 346.



It is an over-stretched canvas, drawn by many hands, with much hesitation, naïve contradictions, and an obvious lack of a master's blending touch. Wālibī, whether real or legendary, remains a mere compiler, juxtaposing eruptions of a collective groping for a rebellious image. Yet, while it is true that Islamic literature had to wait for Nizāmī to give this image a powerfully unified shape, the basic lines of this image, however confused, are unmistakably present in the *Dīwān*.

### B. Love

RIMBAUD's statement clearly implies that "toutes les formes d'amour, de souffrance, et de folie" have to serve the ultimate aim of poetic vision. Now that we have seen that this is at least the implicit position of Maġnūn, let us turn to an examination of the aspects of his love.

The poetic conventions which produced the *nasīb* lead one to believe that love themes were frequently used as pretexts for poetry. Nonetheless, the *Dīwān* insists on depicting Maġnūn's love as an end in itself. A literary pretext is, in principle, an optional element, one alternative among many. But the main characteristic of Maġnūn's love and suffering is their fateful necessity, leaving the protagonist with no choice but to submit to his tormented destiny:<sup>57</sup>

Despite her deserting (me), her aloofness, and what  
befell me of her, I deem her love an inevitable decree.

واني على هجرانها وصدودها ————— وما حلّ بي منها، أرى حبّيا حتما

This necessity is explained by the belief in the predestination of love, a predestination that makes love-from-the-first-sight no more than a shock of recognition. In this context, even those anecdotes which make Maġnūn and Laylā fall in love in their youth, instead of their childhood, do not contradict this principle of eternal love; they differ only in determining the first time in which the two lovers meet.<sup>58</sup> The essential point remains best expressed by the following lines of Maġnūn:<sup>59</sup>

57. *Dīwān* 57. Also for the same meaning: *Ibid.* 67, line 15, and 29, line 19.

58. This choice usually depends on whether Maġnūn and Laylā are considered cousins, thus in contact since childhood, or of different families or tribes, thus meeting first in their youth. We shall see that Ġāmī uses the second alternative for the purpose of his Šūfi interpretation of the theme.

59. FARRĀĠ: *op. cit.* 114-15. First related by al-Waššā' in his *al-Muwaššā*. Cairo 1953, 81. It is interesting to note that the idea of the eternity of love was quite common. These same lines are also ascribed to Ġāmī and to Ibn Ḍarīḥ. Cf. FARRĀĠ: *op. cit.* 114. For more examples on the permanence and eternity of love, see *Dīwān* 4, 11, 14-22.



My soul has been in love with hers since before we  
 were born, and after we were drops of seed, then in the cradle  
 (Our love) lived as we lived, and became fully grown, and  
 it will not perish, even when we die.  
 But will be everlasting, through all conditions even when  
 we are in the darkness of the grave.

تعلّق روحي روحها قبل خلقنا ومن بعد ما كنّا نطافاً، وفي المهدِ  
 فعاش كما عشنا فاصبح نامياً وليس، وإن متنا، بمقرض العهدِ  
 ولكنّه باقٍ على كلّ حالة وسائرنا في ظلمة القبر واللحدِ

The motif of predestined love is quite frequent in the *Dīwān*:

By my faith I swear, Umm-Mālik,<sup>60</sup> you have perplexed  
 my life, and it is Fate that has driven me to you.<sup>61</sup>

لعمري لقد رنقت يا أمّ مالك حياتي وساقنتني اليك المقادرُ

Moreover, if the poet had the choice, he would not have chosen a love  
 which leaves him unrequited. His affliction is a result of divine decree:<sup>62</sup>

God decreed her kindness for others  
 but longing and exile he decreed for me.

قضى الله بالمعروف منها لغيرنا وبالشوق والإبعاد منها قضى ليا

Thus, he is tempted to wish what is equal to blasphemy, as he  
 questions God's decree and complains about his plight:<sup>63</sup>

O my (two) friends, by God, I have no control  
 over what God ordained for Laylā and ordained for me.  
 He predestined her for another man, and tried me with her love  
 why does he not try me with something else?!

خليلي لا والله لا أملكُ الذي قضى الله في ليلي ولا ما قضى ليا  
 قضاها لغيري وأبتلاني بجهها فهلاً بشيءٍ غير ليلي ابتلانيها

One story has it that the moment Maġnūn uttered these lines, "he was  
 robbed of his mind." (سلب عقله).

60. One of Laylā's nicknames.

61. *Dīwān* 106.

62. *Ibid.* 7.

63. *Agānī* 44. Also, for the first line, see *Dīwān* 95; for the second line, see *az-Zahra* 332. For what can also be interpreted as a blasphemous attitude, see e.g., *Dīwān* 82, line 5.



The blasphemy consists in what appears to be a momentary rebellion against the covenant with Love and its entailed suffering. Mağnūn seems to be aware that Love is a god whom he must obey, and that this god has his eternal will which a lover should patiently endure:<sup>64</sup>

O my (two) friends, my pains for Laylā are ancient,  
determined, and everlasting, though my bones will rot.<sup>65</sup>

خليليّ أدواني بليلى قديمةً محدّدةً تبقى وتبلى عظاميما

When more hopeful and less impatient, Mağnūn accepts his suffering and even yearns for more:

O love for Laylā, each night double my grief,  
o solace of love, we shall meet on the Last Day.<sup>66</sup>

In both these lines, Mağnūn's attitude is more compatible with Islamic mysticism. Love does not become necessary only because of eternal predestination. It is the essence and meaning of man's relation to God, and, hence, a defining characteristic of Mağnūn's archetypal existence:<sup>67</sup>

Life has no worth if you neither visit  
a beloved, nor move her with joy or grief

ولا خير في الدنيا اذا انت لم تزر حبيبا ولم يطرب اليك حبيب

Still more, Love is life itself. This is a central point in the *Dīwān*, as well as in the tradition which it represents. From this point of view, remoteness from the beloved becomes equivalent to separation from one's own soul. The variations on this theme are numerous: the beloved is the source of all signs of life. Since exile and alienation from her resemble death, her presence is a divine, resurrecting power:<sup>68</sup>

64. "Some Ṣūfīs claimed that God — Gloried be His Praise — tests people by love, so they try themselves through their obedience to their beloved and feel distressed by her anger and pleased by her satisfaction. They would thus prove the extent of their obedience to God — Mighty and Glorious — since He has neither like nor equal... Hence, if they deem it necessary to obey other than God on High, how much more would they follow His good pleasure." *az-Zahra* 17-18.

65. *Dīwān* 96. See for similar meanings: *Ibid.* 14, lines 5-7; 72, line 11; 102, line 20; 103, lines 2, 3.

66. Appendix. This attitude is depicted also in the anecdote about his visit to the Ka'ba.

67. *Dīwān* 8.

68. *Ibid.* 65. See also for similar meanings, *ibid.* 29, line 9; 79, line 12; 82, lines 6 and 15.



They blame me for (loving) Laylā, and yet if after its dessication,  
my corpse were nursed by Laylā, it will be fresh again.

ألام على ليلي ولو أن همامي تداوى بليلى بعد يسى لطلت  
Her words are the breath of life:<sup>69</sup>

If she would talk to pigeons, they would reply to her  
and if she addressed the dead, then they would talk again.

فلو أنها تدعو الحمام أجاها ولو كلمت ميتاً إذن لتكلما  
Her touch is a vital force:<sup>70</sup>

When I touch her, my hand all but becomes dewy  
and green leaves grow upon its tips.

تكاد يدي تندی اذا ما لمستها ونبت في اطرافها الورق الخضر

From these few examples, it is not difficult to notice that the almost divine power of Laylā's presence and words recalls the power of Christ. But Laylā does not seem to have been the only beloved who enjoyed such power. Along with excerpts from Maġnūn, al-Waššā' cites examples from other poets and then adds: "These have claimed that women's words cure blindness, heal the deaf, revive the dead, eliminate barrenness, and resurrect from the grave before Resurrection Day."<sup>71</sup>

Maġnūn's fortune in life is determined by his relation to Laylā. Depending on their reunion or separation, he fluctuates between happiness and sadness, health and illness, reason and madness, life and death. In any case, Maġnūn has no alternative. Laylā inhabits him, and the occult power of her mysterious presence allows him no escape:<sup>72</sup>

She's Magic; yet for magic one finds a talisman,  
and I can never find someone to break her spell.

هي السحرُ إلا أن للسحر راقياً وأنّي لا القى لها الدهرَ راقياً

Before such a presence, Maġnūn is totally bewitched; his mind and heart are held in bondage. Thus, he feels that the enmity of Laylā's parents towards him is unjust, since it is, as Maġnūn puts it:<sup>73</sup>

69. *Ibid.* 43.

70. *Ibid.* 41.

71. *al-Muwaššā* 67. Concerning Laylā's power to remove blindness, see *ibid.*, line 8, and *Dīwān* 43, line 21.

72. *Aġānī* 57.

73. *Dīwān* 2, line 16. For her possession of his heart see also *Dīwān* 5, line 14 and 9, line 12.



For no reason whatever, except that I love her  
and that my heart and mind are her captives.

على غير شيء غير أني أحبها وأن فؤادي عند ليلي أسيرها

The same situation is expressed by another frequent image:<sup>74</sup>

As if a rein were attached to my heart,  
she leads it wherever she proceeds, and I follow.

كأن زماماً في الفؤاد معلقٌ تقود به حيث استمرت وأتبعُ

Consequently, Laylā's absence makes the whole world worthless, and Maġnūn's paths become prison bars:<sup>75</sup>

As if the mountain-roads were the circle of a ring  
around me, never increasing in length or in breadth.

كأن فجاج الأرض حلقة خاتمٍ عليّ، فلا تزداد طولاً ولا عرضاً

Thus, nothing can replace Laylā, and nothing can stop his quest for her, neither society<sup>76</sup> nor a traditional repentance to God.<sup>77</sup> His surrender to this supernatural possession is total; it leads him beyond good and evil. Whether divine or satanic, his love for Laylā is irremediable:<sup>78</sup>

Welcome be the work of Satan  
if my love for her is Satan's work.

يا حبذا عملُ الشيطان من عملٍ ان كان من عمل الشيطان حُبياً

For, true to the Šūfī conception "that only the beloved can be the remedy for love-madness,"<sup>79</sup> Maġnūn's only solution to seek his freedom by means of more harmony with this absolute, more surrender to it, and hence, by an unrealistic attempt, to overcome his individual self in his desperate struggle for total unity with the beloved. This means more indulgence:<sup>80</sup>

74. *Dīwān* 63.

75. *Ibid.* 67, line 13.

76. *Ibid.* 2, line 15; 57, line 12; 85, line 4.

77. *Ibid.* 5, lines 12-14.

78. *Ibid.* 88.

79. Rūzbihān Baqlī Šīrāzī: *Kitāb-i 'Abhar al-'āšiqīn*. Ed. and introd. H. CORBIN and M. MO'IN, Paris 1958, 200: «که دواى جنون عشق جز معشوق نتواند بود»

80. *Dīwān* 29.



For Laylā's love I treat myself with Laylā,  
for wine a drunkard treats himself with wine.

تداويتُ من ليلي بليلى من الهوى كما يتداوى شاربُ الخمرِ بالخمِرِ

It is a lost struggle, and Maġnūn seems to know it. By breaking the covenant of secrecy, through poetry, Maġnūn lost his blessed union with Laylā. His indulgence could only lead him to more poetry, more madness, and hence more alienation which in its turn generates its own cause. For even when purified of everything else, Maġnūn keeps his poetry and madness; in his craving to achieve his hopeless reunion with Laylā, poetry and madness remain his only tools for vision.

Here we touch on a more basic problem, where Šūfī strains become more and more conspicuous. Could Maġnūn have avoided his alienation had he not succumbed to his poetic *šayṭān* and his maddening jinni? Not if we remember the full range of man's wordly condition as seen from the double perspective of romantic and religious outlooks. We have already seen<sup>81</sup> that whether in the Arabic, in the Islamic, or in the general context, alienation might begin by being a divorce between man and his social environment, but it often reaches the dimensions of a psychological and metaphysical rupture which is impossible to heal. To escape this alienation, one would have to stop the flight of Time:

I fell in love with Laylā when she was a heedless child  
when no sign of her bosom had yet appeared to playmates  
Two children guarding the flocks, would that we never  
had grown up, nor had the flocks grown old.<sup>82</sup>

Clearly this is an impossible, or at best, a romantic dream. Only in Paradise may our believers be blessed with an eternal youth; and this is the heart of the problem: Maġnūn has lost his Paradise:<sup>83</sup>

O my (two) friends, my Paradise is Lāylā, my Hell is her distance,  
and when I want to pray, sh'es my object of devotion.

خليليّ، ليلي جنتي، وبعادها جحيمي، ونسكي ان اردتُ صلاتيا

To reconquer Paradise, one would have to mend the split which broke the unity of the lovers, through the simple fact of their birth into the physical world. The bliss of primitiveness and childhood is only a reminder of the

81. See *supra*, Chapter I.

82. Appendix I.

83. *Dīwān* 96.





beatific garden of Eden. Once childhood is lost, reunion is possible only after the total freedom from this world, that is, after death.

Maġnūn is not only conscious that this final step is required, but he also seems to desire its fulfillment:<sup>84</sup>

Were the world twice yours  
and she be far away  
You would still be wanting Laylā. Indeed what  
leads you to love her is your own (wish for) death.

لو أنّ لك الدنيا وما عدلت به سواها، وليلي بائن عنك بينها  
لكنت الى ليلي فقيراً، وأنا يقود اليها ودّ نفسك حينها

This yearning for self-annihilation, whether conscious or not, implies not only the extinction of the ego, but also the abolition of the body. In this respect, the traditional 'Uḍrī chastity is just the beginning of a process which ends by a complete negation of physical existence. This applies to Laylā as well. The more Laylā approximates an absolute spiritual presence, the more she becomes an utter physical absence. Simultaneously, the alchemy of her obsessive presence transforms all nature into her image:<sup>85</sup>

I try to forget her remembrance, and yet  
it is as though Laylā is *typified* for me everywhere.

أريدُ لأنسى ذكرها فكأنما تمثّل لي ليلي بكل سبيل

In front of such an epiphany, it is difficult not to recall similar experiences: Orpheus, dead yet present in all aspects of nature; Christ's permanent presence through his mystical body; or BAUDELAIRE's "Forêt de symboles." While one can argue that such an experience might have been beyond the scope of a 'Uḍrī poet, one can hardly assert that it was above the reach of a Ṣūfī.

On this basis, perhaps, we can suggest that Maġnūn's references to nature were not merely conventional. Maġnūn's frequent associations of Laylā with the wind, the encampment, the hills of Naġd, the sand dunes,

84. *Aġānī* 9.

85. T. ḤUSAYN: *op. cit.* 517; and an-Nisabūrī: 'Uqalā' al-Maġānīm. Naġaf 1968, 55. It might be worth relating this image to the *typification* of the Beloved in Ibn 'Arabī's conception where "the real and invisible *Beloved* has to be *typical* (*mumattal*) in a concrete figure by the Active Imagination; through it He attains a mode of existence perceptible to the vision of that privileged faculty." H. CORBIN: *Creative Imagination* 154. See also p. 334, n. 34.



and his attitude towards doves, even locusts,<sup>86</sup> and other birds and animals, suggest the omnipresence of Laylā in nature and in the mind of Maġnūn:<sup>87</sup>

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 you.

وشغلتُ عن فهم الحديث سوى ما كان فيك، فإنه شغلي  
 وأديمٌ لحظ محادثي ليرى أن قد فهمت، وعندكم عقلي

Once he reaches complete madness, Maġnūn returns to his right mind only when Lāyla is mentioned; otherwise, nothing makes sense to him, nor can he sound reasonable.<sup>88</sup> In this context, the concrete appearance of a particular woman called Layla l-‘Āmiriyya loses its importance. Her beauty and love are only finite reminders of the eternal, perfect, and divine Beauty and Love. Once these latter are interiorized, reminders are unnecessary. Thus, from the viewpoints supplied by Plato’s concept of Love’s gradual ascent from the particular and limited to the absolute and perfect Beauty, as well as by the Ṣūfī interpretaion of Maġnūn’s attitude, we can understand the following anecdote, as related and commented upon by Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240):

There are some who in their Active Imagination contemplate the Image of the real being in whom their Beloved is manifested; they thus contemplate His real existence with their own eyes, and that is union with the Beloved in the Active Imagination; then, in contemplating Him, they are united with Him in a union whose delicacy and sweetness surpass any material, concrete and objective union. It is this (imaginative union) which absorbed the spirit of Qays al-Majnūn, who turned away from his beloved Laylā, saying: “Go away from me”... because Laylā who was present to his Active Imagination was more suave and beautiful than the real, physical Laylā.<sup>89</sup>

86. *Dīwān* 15, lines 18-20. It might be appropriate to add here that Ṭ HUSAYN and KRAČKOVSKIJ were unduly impatient with the apparent incongruity of the poetic excerpts of the *Dīwān*, probably because they were not ready to see the Ṣūfī substratum underlying these excerpts. Thus HUSAYN would have accepted some of Maġnūn’s sayings and acts, but “from a philosopher and not from a madman.” (ولكن من فيلسوف لا من مجنون) (*op. cit.* 507); see also KRAČKOVSKIJ: *op. cit.* 46-48.

87. *Agānī* 34; also *Dīwān* 14, has the two lines with minor variations.

88. On this point the reports are consistent. See, for instance, Appendix.

89. CORBIN, *Creative Imagination* 336. The quotation is from Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Kitāb al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*. Cairo 1911, II, 337. Cf. also Ibn Ṭūlūn ad-Dimašqī: *Basī sāmī’ al-musāmīr* 9.



This Šūfī anecdote adds to Maġnūn's attitude a dimension hardly explicit in the *Dīwān*. Yet, already Maġnūn's condition, supported by his inflamed imagination, was pointing in this direction. We have seen that traditional Arabic poetry generally portrayed ideal types. Moreover, the *Dīwān* has clear allusions to Maġnūn's idealization of Laylā, combined with the Šūfī tendency to overlook differences of creed, race, color, or class, in the unity of Love. Ibn 'Arabī declares:

My heart has become capable of every form:  
it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,  
And a temple for idols and pilgrim's Ka'ba and the  
tables of the Tora and the book of the Koran.  
I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's  
camels take, that is my religion and my faith.  
We have a pattern in Bishr, the lover of Hind and her  
sister, and in Qays and Layla and in Mayya and Ghaylān.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, Maġnūn was capable of loving gazelles, beasts of wilderness, and, above all, Laylā. He loved Laylā without caring whether she was short, sick, a black Ethiopian, or a foreign unbelieving Nabatean.<sup>91</sup> For her sake, Maġnūn has a Christian love for those who hate him.<sup>92</sup> The allusion to an Ethiopian Laylā, or a Nabatean Laylā, could give the impression that the *Dīwān* includes references to more than one beloved. This might have confirmed critics like T. HUSAYN and KRAČKOVSKIJ in their opinion that the *Dīwān* contains incongruities. Yet, this need not be the only way of interpreting the references and allusions to more than one Laylā. Wālibī — whoever he may have been — though a compiler, need not be confused or naïve, unless we insist on considering the *Dīwān* as a historical document for the identity of Laylā. But if we are open to the possibility of a Šūfī level of interpreting this collection, apparent instances of naïveté in the text acquire a more positive meaning, and many apparently random lines and fragments fall into place.

The wholeness of love and the notion that love transcends the physical conditions of a particular, finite beloved are echoed in many anecdotes and poetic fragments of the *Dīwān*. Laylā herself admits that Maġnūn has

90. *Tarġumān al-Ašwāq*. Trans. R.A. NICHOLSON. London 1911, 67. The translation has "Qays and Lubna" for the Arabic "Qays and Laylā": cf. p. 19, line 16.

91. See *Dīwān* 9, lines 3, 4, 5; 101, lines 5, 7, 23. Maġnūn's idealization of his beloved is attested by these examples, and by Laylā herself, when she says: "He has fatally fallen in love with me, without my deserving it." (لقد علق مني ما اهلكه دون ان استحق ذلك)

92. *Ibid.* 101, lines 24 and 25.



created of her an image far above her real qualities.<sup>93</sup> The same notion is implied in previously mentioned lines concerning love for love's sake, notwithstanding the special qualities of the beloved.<sup>94</sup> Consequently, we are led to believe that, even though the *Dīwān* does not formulate an anecdote like the above mentioned one of Ibn 'Arabī, such an anecdote is latent in the text.

Nevertheless, Maḡnūn faced a problem familiar to the Ṣūfīs: a beatific vision of the beloved cannot be repeated frequently or at will. (Moreover, the Ṣūfīs were divided over the mode of this vision, that is to say, over whether it is contingent on, or independent of, the visible.) In his explanation of the dialectic of love as expounded by Ibn 'Arabī, CORBIN gives us a key to the interpretation of this anecdote, and to Maḡnūn's frequent *dīkr* (remembrance and mentioning) of Laylā's name. From CORBIN, we learn that the Ṣūfī

... in and by his being... gives substance to the divine Name with which he has been invested since pre-eternity and which is his own Lord. In the privileged hours of his spiritual life the mystic knows and feels this without need of any other pledge than the *sympathetic passion* which gives him or rather which *is*, this Presence...<sup>95</sup>

Here, Ibn 'Arabī seems to use Maḡnūn for an example wherein "pure 'imaginative contemplation' (*mushāhadāt khayālīya*) ... can attain such intensity that any material and sensible presence would only draw it down." But this "most subtile phenomenon of love,"<sup>96</sup> which was ascribed by Ibn 'Arabī to Maḡnūn, is absent from the *Dīwān*. This phenomenon, as Ibn 'Arabī represents it, is by necessity rare. It cannot be a frequent occurrence that "the Active Imagination... places the invisible and the visible, the spiritual and the physical in sympathy," thus enabling one "to love a being of the sensible world, in whom we love the manifestation of the divine Beloved."<sup>97</sup>

Because of the *Dīwān*'s arabesque arrangement and lack of formal unity, it is difficult to suggest that this Ṣūfī notion of love was in the mind of the compiler, even when we know that it was a matter of common knowledge and practice. One can assert, however, that Maḡnūn normally yearned for seeing the concrete Laylā, but, unable to fulfill his desire, he

93. *Aḡānī* 50, line 16.

94. See *supra*, n. 91.

95. *Creative Imagination* 142.

96. *Ibid.* 156.

97. *Loc. cit.*

transfigured concrete reality by means of his Active Imagination and dreamt of total reunion with his beloved in the hereafter. Short of death, his identity with the beloved was bound to remain restricted to mere approximations of his ideal. Once he has lost his individual self and surrendered his life motivation to the unrealizable reunion with the beloved, he has to endure a sense of loss, and to seek refuge in his Active Imagination:<sup>98</sup>

When I don't meet Laylā I'm as if suspended  
with thin ropes, whirling between plain and mountain.  
Though if I wished, my yearning would be excited  
by images which words cannot express.

كأنني إذا لم ألقَ ليلي معلقٌ بسبين أهفو بين سهلٍ وحالقٍ  
على أنني إن شئتُ هاجت صبايبي عليَّ رسومٌ عيِّ فيها التناطق

Thus restricted to fleeting glimpses and short encounters, Mağnūn seeks to satisfy his passion through a world of dream — through poetry and madness. There, his imagination creates for him ineffable visions resulting in words and actions which fall outside the reasonable norms of a traditional outlook on life.

In what mode does Mağnūn's madness display itself? This will be the subject of our next section. For the moment, let us observe that, from the earliest anecdotes and texts ascribed to Mağnūn, what was retained of the conventions of erotic poetry described a character largely compatible with the Ṣūfī concept of man's relations to God. It is very difficult to draw a demarcation line in Mağnūn's poetry between the erotic and the mystical, or between the profane and the sacred. Whether Ṣūfī notions played a major role in the formation of the *Dīwān*, or whether one can say with Schiller that any naïve poet is, by nature, in harmony with the unity of God and nature, the fact remains that Mağnūn's *Dīwān* exhibits in a less systematic form most of the strains that distinguished Ṣūfī lovers.

In this respect, to say with HILĀL that Mağnūn's love, though inspired by the Islamic climate, was only 'Uđrī is to miss the mystical overtones of the *Dīwān*. Though cryptic, RITTER's remark on KRAČKOVSKIJ's essay,<sup>99</sup> a remark which applies to Ṭ. ḤUSAYN's position, remains, in my opinion, the best insight into the formative factors of Mağnūn's character.

98. FARRĀĠ: *op. cit.* 202.

99. See *supra*, chap. one, n. 15.

### C. *Madness*

As with his poetry and love, in general, and despite his claims to be unique, Maġnūn's signs of madness follow poetic convention. His distinguishing characteristic, however, lies in his going beyond the verbal limits of "poetic folly" to the point of becoming an existential incarnation of these signs. What other poets of love-madness were content to imagine, Maġnūn is supposed to have experienced in his body and soul. In this, he is again a precursor and an ideal of the Šūfīs, as attested by them and by later scholars. Consequently, VADET's perceptive observation that Maġnūn's madness was another type of "folie poétique"<sup>100</sup> should not induce us to overlook the distinctive mark of Maġnūn. Such a mark derives from the difference between metaphor *simpliciter* and a metaphor acted out in real life.

Madness is par excellence the realm of possession. Apart from its traditional connection with poetry and love, madness can occur in its own right, in which case it needs no poetic or erotic cause. We have seen that for the Arabs, whether pagans or Muslims, the jinn are real. Depending on their nature, the jinn can be good or evil. In either case, their presence robs the possessed of his normal judgment, thereby reducing him to a tool at their disposal.<sup>101</sup>

Madness, as conceived of in the *Dīwān*, seems to manifest itself in two forms which complement each other. First, it is a break with the commonly accepted norms of behavior, whether on a personal or on a social level. Second, it seems to stem from an alien power residing in the inner self, or in what we now call the unconscious, a power which breaks loose from the control of sensible judgment. Both forms, exhibited by Maġnūn, are consistent in the sense that the latter (i.e. being possessed by an alien or by a hidden, inner power) leads to the manifestation of the former (i.e. rejection of normal behavior). As mentioned earlier, both forms remain largely within literary convention; it is rather their continual and pathological repetition that makes them characteristic of Maġnūn.

While the psycho-spiritual image of Maġnūn is more relevant to our analysis of his madness, since it is more meaningfully connected with the irrational, his physical image derives its importance from its symbolic contribution to the narrative. By providing the story with some stereotyped elements of mad behavior, the physical descriptions reinforce the mimetic

100. VADET: *op. cit.* 368.

101. Cf. "Djinn" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

and realistic side of the narrative and bring it closer to the popular imagination. Moreover, the physical condition of Mağnūn becomes his distinguishing mark as an incarnation of the love-mad poet, and in contrast to other heroes of the same type of romance.

Though Mağnūn's fits of insanity are described in some poetic passages, the major bulk of this description is rendered by explanatory anecdotes. These anecdotes depict Mağnūn along lines very similar to what we find in *Maṣāri' al-'uṣṣāq*, showing signs of behavior generally attributed to madmen.

The majority of these descriptions tend to associate Mağnūn's madness not with furor, frenzy, or violence, but with symptoms of melancholy. Nevertheless, the *Dīwān* has occasional allusions to violent reactions in states of frenzy or of trance.

Practically all the general signs of madness mentioned in *Maṣāri' al-'uṣṣāq* are to be found in the *Dīwān*. It is worth noting, however, that the *Dīwān* stresses those physical signs which are explainable by inner states or motivations. It is true that social restrictions were the cause of Mağnūn's suffering, but once he reaches the state of insanity, society looks at him with compassion. Early in his evolution towards insanity, his family ties him up; thereafter, seeing that he took to biting his lips and tearing his garments apart, they set him free. There are one or two instances in which Mağnūn is followed and laughed at.<sup>102</sup> But this is done by children and seems to be meant to arouse pity rather than ridicule. In short, Mağnūn's madness, never used as a comic theme in any of the Islamic literatures, seems to have been taken too seriously to be ever deemed a source of laughter. This presents an interesting contrast to the Greco-Roman tradition where, according to O'BRIEN-MOORE<sup>103</sup> madness and frenzy often provided matter for comic parodies. Consequently, if we want to understand the curiously constant, serious tone given to the Mağnūn stories, we should be aware of the basic connection between his conduct and the Ṣūfī adoption of the legend. The Ṣūfīs oriented the legend towards inspiring awe and compassion, instead of terror or ridicule. Thus, Mağnūn is conceived of chiefly as a pathetic figure. The external manifestations of his madness, largely connected with his inner states, vary in intensity and oddity according to the conditions of his relation of Laylā. They can be either involuntary reactions to external stimuli, or ingrained attitudes, developed

102. See *Dīwān* 38 and 45.

103. A. O'BRIEN-MOORE: *Madness in Ancient Literature*. Weimar 1924, 37-42 and 53-66.





over a long period of time. In both cases, as already mentioned, poetry played an essential part.

The odd appearance of Maġnūn runs the whole gamut between short-lived weeping and pallor on the one hand, and, on the other hand, insane wandering at large in rejection of human society and its norms. Many of these manifestations can be seen in normal people under emotional stress: sadness, almost total lack of laughter, silence with the eyes cast down; or crying, yelling, tearing one's clothes,<sup>104</sup> exhibiting a bewildered appearance, and fainting. However, as his love obsession never releases him, these manifestations are so frequent that they become abnormal. They have the further significance of being parallel to some mystical states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*).

Thus, once advanced on this path, Maġnūn exhibits these signs to a pathological degree. He is almost continuously gloomy, crying and fainting. He lives for days without approaching food or water and wanders totally naked in the surrounding of the encampments, or out in the desert. His feeling of fraternity with animals and birds conveys a picture of his paradisiac purity, and is probably meant to express his communion with the totality of nature. However, at its extreme, this communion with nature fails to be complete, since it leads to his divorce from human society, a divorce which does not seem to be redeemed, even by Maġnūn's imaginative communion with Laylā.

In this respect, Maġnūn represents not only extreme asceticism, but also a definite pessimistic outlook on life in its social context. These two attitudes are independent and separable, as witness the Šūfis who, despite their rejection of many social norms, remain well-disposed towards men, and *in* society, if not *of* it.

Maġnūn's estrangement from society may be seen in greater relief when contrasted with the visionary and creative involvement with society on the part of another archetypal figure of Islamic literature, *viz.*, Joseph. In Joseph<sup>105</sup> we have an optimistic picture of the highest self-fulfillment within the scope of religious piety. Endowed with ideal beauty and with prophetic vision, Joseph puts his talents to the service of society and succeeds in realizing his dream. As a child, he has a vision of "eleven planets and the sun and the moon"<sup>106</sup> prostrating themselves before him. Later, at

104. Tearing one's clothes under the pressure of affliction or emotional shocks is still common among the Arabs.

105. See, for example, Ġāmī's *Yūsūf u Zulayḥā*.

106. *Koran* XII, 4.

the height of his power, “he placed his parents on the dais and they fell down before him prostrate, and he said: O my father! This is the interpretation of my dream of old. My Lord hath made it true...”<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Joseph’s chastity is rewarded by the fulfillment of his wish to bring Zulayḥā back from old age, ugliness, and blindness to youth, beauty, and vision.

As will be mentioned in the following chapter, Joseph can be seen as the type of the Ṣūfī who does not reject social and religious conventions of morality. Although imprisoned through the mischief and ignorance of others, he keeps his faith in people and forgives their weaknesses. Most importantly, he preserves his inner visionary freedom, which leads him out of his physical prison and crowns him as a prophet-king.

In contrast to the Joseph archetype, Mağnūn 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, an outcry for total freedom, and a desire to return to unity with nature, where life is imagined to be beyond good and evil. The *Dīwān* reiterates the romantic episodes of Mağnūn’s wild intimacy with nature. Totally naked, Mağnūn lets his hair grow all over his body. He grazes with animals and runs with them,<sup>108</sup> mainly with gazelles, who resemble his god: Laylā. This behavior marks his irremediable madness. Thus, several anecdotes identify his appearance with that of the jinn<sup>109</sup> themselves. The *Dīwān* insists on this characteristic of Mağnūn’s appearance, an insistence that could be interpreted both as an expression of the popular imagination behind the legend, and as a crystallization of Mağnūn’s identification with the irrational forces of nature.

Instances of such an identification are evident in the narrative, where someone, relating his encounter with Mağnūn, comments on the latter’s appearance by saying, “I had no doubt that he was a jinni”<sup>110</sup> or reports that, frightened at the sight of Mağnūn, he actually asked him, “Are you a human being or a jinni?”<sup>111</sup>

Here we find clear implications of the intrinsic connection between Mağnūn’s strange conduct and his much more important state of mental aberration. The aspects of this mental aberration are of special interest to

107. *Koran* XII, 100.

108. See *Dīwān* 58.

109. See *Ibid.* 15, 58, 89.

110. Cf. for example, *Dīwān* 64, line 10; 15, lines 14-15.

111. See *Ibid.* 12, line 16; 15, line 20.

our investigation, because they are expressions of the irrational possessing Maġnūn. Salient examples of this odd behavior are those in which the physical presence of Laylā literally bewitches him. Two famous instances are reminiscent of the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, Zulayḥā, viz. the episode in which Zulayḥā attempts to defend herself against the women who blame her for loving Joseph.

And women in the city said: The ruler's wife is asking of her slave-boy an ill deed. Indeed he has smitten her to the heart with love. We behold her in plain aberration.

And when she heard of their sly talk, she sent to them and prepared for them a cushioned couch (to lie on at the feast) and gave every one of them a knife and said (to Joseph): Come out unto them! And when they saw him they exalted him and cut their hands, exclaiming: Allah Blameless! This is not a human being. This is no other than some gracious angel.<sup>112</sup>

The angelic looks of Joseph are obviously contrary to the demonic demeanor of Maġnūn. The source of this sharp opposition may be the fact that Joseph is a perfect mirror of divine beauty, while in the *Dīwān* this role is assigned to Laylā. Bewitchment and mental aberration is the lot of those who contemplate the dazzling beauty as reflected in such mirrors.

This phenomenon is illustrated by two incidents that Maġnūn relates about his fascination with Laylā:

My father sent me to the encampment of Laylā's father and told me, "Ask him for some condiment." I went to him, stood at his tent, and called him. He said, "What do you wish?" I said, "Some visitors came to us, and we have no condiment for them, so my father sent me to ask you for some." He said, "Laylā, take out that churn and fill his container with butter." She brought it out. We began to talk, while she was pouring the butter into a wooden cup which I had with me. While the conversation distracted us, she kept pouring the butter. The cup was filled up, and neither of us was aware of it. It overflowed until our feet were soaked in butter.

I came to them another night asking for fire, and I was wrapped in a garment. She brought a rag on fire and gave it to me. Then we stood there talking. When the rag was burned up, I tore out a piece of my garment and set it on fire. As soon as that piece had been burned up, I tore out another piece and set it on fire, until I did not have any clothing left on me, except what covered my genitals. I did not know what I was doing.<sup>113</sup>

112. *Koran* XII, 30-31.

113. *Aġānī* 28-29.

Another anecdote shows his rage. When he meets Laylā's husband, he asks him if he had ever touched Laylā.

Her husband said, "By God, if you put me under oath, Yes." So Mağnūn grasped with both hands two handfuls of embers and held them until he fell unconscious, and until the embers and the flesh of his palms fell down.<sup>114</sup>

Whether in an ecstatic contemplation of the beloved, or in a frantic rage of jealousy, Mağnūn's behavior here is obviously abnormal. Such anecdotes are among the more accentuated touches in his picture; they are generally associated with Mağnūn's life in society, i.e., before he took to wandering in the desert along with the wild animals. With Mağnūn's total alienation from society (*tawahhuṣ*) the irremediable absence of Laylā initiates a process wherein her image is diffused into all aspects of nature, transforming them into symbolic epiphanies of her presence.

When this process occurs, Mağnūn's conduct becomes comparatively restrained, tending towards melancholy; his "madness" becomes another name for his deviation from norms of thought and conduct as established by human society.

The *Dīwān* exhibits narrative efforts to render an image of a person totally integrated into the natural animal world. Mağnūn's unity with nature is expressed not only negatively, through his demeanor and his shunning of society, but also positively through numerous hints which portray him as totally at home in his desert environment. While at the approach of a human being he stampedes like a wild horse,<sup>115</sup> Mağnūn is at peace with sub-rational as well as super-rational nature. He communes with super-human forces, a communion symbolized by his being possessed by Laylā, but this communion is achieved through his sensitivity to the subhuman elements in nature. The *Dīwān* succeeds in conveying the impression of a fundamental intimacy between Mağnūn and the world of symbols that surround him and always revive in him the memory of the beloved. Mountains, plains, and valleys, wells, trees, and the wind, gazelles, doves, and even locusts;<sup>116</sup> all nature is a book replete with variations on Laylā's name.

114. *Dīwān* 97.

115. See Appendix.

116. The *Dīwān* includes abundant examples of Mağnūn's company or fellowship with the animal and natural worlds. See for references to mountains, *Dīwān* 17, lines 2-6; 36, line 16; 39, line 15; and for a conversation between Mağnūn and the Tawbād mountain, *ibid.* 25, lines 15-19. Examples of references to valleys, p. 8, lines 15-16; to different kinds of birds, p. 20, lines 5-6; p. 22, lines 2-4; p. 25, lines 7-8; p. 29, lines 4-7. Intimacy with the



Thus, through fine touches of concrete details, through a collage of tableaux which in effect constitute variations on a theme, the *Dīwān* succeeds in drawing a convincing portrait of a living being. The strangeness of the environment in which this living being is made to move acquires credibility by means of the suggestive force of realistic details. This force is rendered even more convincing by the naïve air of naturalness and by the matter-of-fact attitude in the narrative description of this popular figure.

It would be neither easy nor legitimate to attempt any systematization of a madman's actions, especially when he is not created by a systematic mind but as a compilation of anecdotes derived from a rather popular and simple origin. Furthermore, one could argue on behalf of the compiler or compilers that it is self-contradictory to expect a systematic behavior from a person whose whole being is a repudiation of our social and intellectual systems. Consequently, all that one can hope legitimately to trace is the underlying general attitude and the symbolism of its manifestations as they relate to the dominant ideas of a specific period.

The above restriction is even applicable to the aspects of Maġnūn's psychological world. As with the notions of love and poetry, the lyrical and fictional expressions of Maġnūn's madness were not supported by an elaborate system. Among those who treated the Maġnūn theme, Ġāmī is the first to provide us with extensive, theoretical and historical writings that expound his philosophical and mystical views. Ġāmī goes even to the extent of including didactic explanations in his *Laylī u Maġnūn* itself.

Besides its lack of such views and explanations, the *Dīwān* presents a collective, arabesque composition based on loose juxtapositions that defy any strict systematization. Therefore, our ambition has to be limited to discovering a general pattern which might enhance our understanding of Maġnūn's madness and link together the more meaningful manifestations of this madness.

As with his physical behavior, Maġnūn's psychological attitude is one of withdrawal from the laws of reason, and of return to nature on its pre-rational level. It is the expression of a romantic nostalgia for a state of freedom from rational restrictions as much as his behavior was a rejection of social laws.

Yet, beyond the mere nostalgia of a romantic poet in society, exulting vicariously in primitive life, Maġnūn's irrevocable break with social and intellectual norms make him the symbol of the dropout par excellence. We

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wind, esp. the east-wind, the *ṣabā*, is a common motif: see, for example, p. 21, line 20; p. 39, line 15 *et seq.*; p. 40, line 11; and an especially telling line, p. 22, line 6. An example of references to water can be found on p. 30, lines 1-3.

shall see that with the Ṣūfis, this break has cognitive implications: it means that knowledge is possible only when free from the rationalistic cage, i.e., when it stems from the unconscious. Thus, dream, day-dream, poetry, trance, unconsciousness, etc. are the ways of envisioning the source of one's *ḡunūn* (madness), and of identifying with this source. On the other hand, spontaneous reactions, such as fainting, tears, shouts, total silence (dumbfoundedness) express the state of the subconscious under the overpowering shock of too much or too little vision.<sup>117</sup>

Here again, Laylā is the source of Maġnūn's madness and the subject of his obsession. She is the jinni who bewitches his mind. The notion that a person can be endowed with magic power or can even be a jinni in human form is a common motif both traditionally<sup>118</sup> and in the particular case of the *Dīwān*. Besides identifying Laylā with "magic itself,"<sup>119</sup> Maġnūn is aware that the talisman he needs should be effective against his particular jinni which is none other than Laylā.<sup>120</sup>

They said, 'He has been stricken by the evil eyes of a jinni?'

had they only realized, they would have said, 'stricken by the eyes of a human.'

وقالوا به من أعين الجن نظرة ولو عقلوا قالوا به أعين الأنس

The same motif is expressed by Ibn Durayd:<sup>121</sup>

She said abusively, 'He is touched by a demon.'

It is you — once you possessed him — who are his demon.

قالت، تعرض، مس شيطان به، بل انت، حين ملكته، شيطانه

In *Maṣāri' al-'uṣṣāq*, this motif is not left without an explicit generalization provided by Abū Muḥammad al-Ġarīrī, who says,

117. We shall have the occasion to elaborate on this point in our analysis of Ġāmī's treatment of the theme. For the moment, it might be well to specify that knowledge here should be understood as gnostic experience of the Beloved which the mystic attains through love. "Freed from the world of perception, he may advance to the cessation of all conscious thought. When wholly immersed in the contemplation of the Divine, the mystic loses consciousness even of his loss of consciousness and attains to the highest beatitude of the soul." (VON GRUNEBaum: *Medieval Islam* 135).

118. *Maṣāri' al-'uṣṣāq* includes many examples of love between the jinn and human beings, and of human beings having the magic power of love. See, for example, *Maṣāri' I*, 199 and II, 98-99.

119. (*هي السحر*) *Aḡānī* 57 and *Dīwān* 73, line 14; 44, line 2.

120. *Maṣāri' I*, 199.

121. *Ibid.* 232.



If remembrance becomes entrenched in the heart, and its dominion powerful, the foe (i.e. the person affected) cannot escape from it and is smitten by it as when a person is driven to madness by a touch of a jinni. The jinn would pass by him and ask, 'what is wrong with this one?' They would be told, 'he was touched (i.e. maddened) by a human being'.<sup>122</sup>

The identification between beloved and daemonic power is evident in Maġnūn's following line:<sup>123</sup>

O doctor of the jinn, woe unto you, find me a cure, for  
the doctor of humans is helpless against my ill.

ألا يا طبيب الجنّ ويحك داوني فإنّ طبيب الإنسان اعياه دائياً

It seems that in order to make peace with this daemonic power, hidden in the darker part of the soul, one has to surrender to it, i.e., to allow it as much freedom as possible, hence, to harmonize with it by giving free reign to its presence. Since the night of the soul is the realm of this possessing power, Maġnūn has to do his best to surrender to it continuously. One way of surrendering to this possessor is the constant remembrance of its presence.<sup>124</sup> Night time seems to be particularly conducive to such a remembrance. Maġnūn is a good example of those lovers who stay awake:<sup>125</sup>

I, the lover, bewildered and wandering with a pierced heart,  
observe the setting of the Pleiades, while the careless are fast asleep.

أنا الوامق المشغوف والهائم الذي أراعي الثرّيا والخلّيون نؤمّ

In order to lessen his anxiety, Maġnūn tries to sleep,<sup>126</sup> but even when he is able to sleep, his dreams revolve around his yearning for Laylā:<sup>127</sup>

122. *Maṣāri'* II, 99: The motif goes so far as to have stories about men in love with female jinn, such as the poet Mudriḡ ar-Rīḡ: see *Kitāb aš-Ši'r* 622. For comparison of the beloved to a jinni, see *ibid.* 625.

123. *Dīwān* 73.

124. See, for example, *Dīwān* 9, last line.

125. *Dīwān* 30. Similar allusions are found on pp. 11, line 2; 33, line 5; 37, lines 9-10. For an allusion to his constant remembrance, see p. 35, line 3; and for Laylā's constant presence in Maġnūn's consciousness, see p. 9, last line.

126. *Ibid.* 11, line 4.

127. *Ibid.* 45.



Dreams tell me that I see you.  
I wish nights' dreams were true.

تَحْبِرُنِي الْأَحْلَامُ أَنِي أَرَاكُمْ فَيَا لَيْتَ أَحْلَامَ الْمَنَامِ يَقِينُ

When awake, Maġnūn compensates for Laylā's absence by day-dreaming as well as by weeping and composing poetry.<sup>128</sup>

If you deny me Laylā and the beauty of her conversation,  
you will not deny me rhymes and tears.  
Since you deny me her words, why not forbid her  
image from coming freely to me, despite the distance.

فَإِنْ تَمْنَعُوا لَيْلِي وَحُسْنَ حَدِيثِهَا فَلَنْ تَمْنَعُوا مِنِّي الْبُكَاءَ وَالْقَوَافِيَا  
فَهَلَّا مَنَعْتُمْ إِذْ مَنَعْتُمْ كَلَامِهَا خِيَالًا يُوَافِينَا عَلَى النَّأْيِ خَالِيَا

This kind of compensation for Laylā's absence is also expressed in two famous lines of Maġnūn, mentioned by Ibn Qutayba:<sup>129</sup>

I feign drowsiness when I have no desire for sleep,  
hoping that your image may cross my mind.  
I leave the company of men hoping to converse  
about you with myself, in secret and alone.

It is worth noting here that in the last line, the *Dīwān* includes a variant which makes it more expressive of the desert and nocturnal worlds than the version of the lines used above. While Ibn Qutayba's line reads,<sup>130</sup>

وَأَخْرَجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْجُلُوسِ لَعْنِي أَحَدْتُ عَنْكَ النَّفْسَ فِي السَّرِّ خَالِيَا

the *Dīwān* has the following,<sup>131</sup>

وَأَخْرَجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْبُيُوتِ لَعْنِي أَحَدْتُ عَنْكَ النَّفْسَ بِاللَّيْلِ خَالِيَا

Wālibī's narrative, which lacks organic structure, does not describe the increasing entrenchment of Maġnūn in the world of desert and night. The *Dīwān* hints at, but does not develop, many of the motifs that were part of Ṣūfī trade-in-stock. The *Dīwān* does, however, insist on weeping and poetry as channels of psychological catharsis. We have already seen

128. *Dīwān* 84.

129. See Appendix.

130. *Kitāb aš-Ši'r* 477.

131. *Dīwān* 84.



Maġnūn's need for poetry. This need is sometimes given an exclusive psychological function, as when Maġnūn says:<sup>132</sup>

I climb the hills only because of yearning  
and chant verses only for remedy.

فما أشرف الايقاع إلا صبايةً وما أنشد الاشعار إلا تداوياً

As for weeping, one may easily recall that it was among the oldest motifs of the *nasīb*, as witnesses the first line of Imra' alqays's *Mu'allaqa*. However, in at least one of its numerous allusions to weeping,<sup>133</sup> the *Dīwān* provides us with a poetic image that endows tears with a significant psychological dimension:<sup>134</sup>

What runs down from the eye is not its water,  
but a soul which melts and drips.

وليس الذي يجري من العين ماؤها ولكنّها نفسٌ تذوب وتقطرُ

Wine, another means of loss of consciousness, is scarcely mentioned in the *Dīwān*. The motif of trance-like drunkenness would hardly be appropriate to the pious 'Uḍrī context. Thus, Maġnūn's allusions to wine<sup>135</sup> might be explained in terms of the common Ṣūfī motif of wine as a symbol of spiritual intoxication.

To these expressions of the subconscious power one can add the phenomenon of total perplexity at the sight of the beloved. This perplexity is a favorite motif of the Ṣūfīs. In Maġnūn's words:<sup>136</sup>

If she ever comes up to me suddenly  
I am stupefied, and know not right from wrong.

فما هو إلا أن أراها فجاءةً فأبته لا عرفٌ لدي ولا نكرُ

A more literal reading of the second hemistich is "I become perplexed, and unaware of good and bad conventions." But a less literal interpretation cannot fail to see in this line a mystic allusion to ecstatic vision.

On a more extreme level than this stupefaction and perplexity, we encounter a pathologically frequent phenomenon of loss of consciousness, through fainting. The frequency of this phenomenon led Ṭāhā ḤUSAYN to approach the Maġnūn figure somewhat sarcastically:

132. *Aġānī* 76.

133. Weeping is considered the best proof of love, *Dīwān* 17, line 17.

134. *Dīwān* 14. See for the same meaning, *loc. cit.* line 8.

135. *Ibid.* 19, lines 12 and 13; 29, line 12.

136. *Ibid.* 42.



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 madness.<sup>137</sup>

This is a correct description of Mağnūn's condition, which ḤUSAYN finds unrealistic because Mağnūn's love "always has strange manifestations, unfamiliar, and untrue to human nature, even to the nature of mad lovers."<sup>138</sup>

Yet, 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 Mağnūn, because when compared with the love stories of Ğamīl and Kuṭayyir, it appears to ḤUSAYN to be "the most insane and exaggerated among them, and the least meaningful."<sup>139</sup> Thus, by insisting on the necessity of realism, ḤUSAYN denies the legend the benefit of the doubt, thereby missing the symbolism it may contain.

Fainting is too frequent with Mağnūn not to symbolize more than a sickly and recurrent failure of the nervous system. Difficult to miss in the legend are the connections between fainting spells and the sight or mention of Laylā, and between fainting spells and the poetry uttered immediately before or after these spells.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, we have more than one account, according to which, Mağnūn's insanity was the result of his having said or heard some lines of poetry.<sup>141</sup>

Mağnūn's loss of self-consciousness and the intimate connection of this loss with inspiration (especially in the form of improvisation) strongly recall the state both of Ṣūfīs and, more importantly, of the Prophet himself, under the weight of receiving revelation.

One of the stories told of the famous Ṣūfī, aš-Šiblī, describes him as

137. Ṭ. ḤUSAYN: *op. cit.* 506.

138. *Loc. cit.*

139. *Loc. cit.*

140. See, for example, *Dīwān* 2, in which Mağnūn faints at hearing Laylā's verses, then improvises some verses the moment he regains consciousness; on p. 16, we see him faint after he recites his own poetry. See also other instances on p. 26, Appendix, and *Agānī* 16.

141. Cf. *Agānī* 10, 32, and 44. Mağnūn's subconscious is manifested sometimes in the form of the hidden voice (*al-hātif*) which seems to have been functional in leading him to his final madness: "He heard some one call 'O Laylā' in a dark night, or else he imagined it." (فسمع صائحاً يصيح يا ليلي في ليلة ظلماء، أو توهم ذلك)



having the same reaction to hearing love poetry as Maġnūn, especially poetry alluding to ecstatic vision: aš-Šiblī entered an insane asylum; there, a madman recited some verses in front of him, “whereupon aš-Šiblī screamed and fell unconscious.”<sup>142</sup>

Madness, then, in its more symbolic and deep psychological meaning, is comparable to love and poetry, in envisioning the beloved. It is another necessary means of communication with the beloved. More often than not the cause or result of this communication is poetry. Sometimes, however, the vision is ineffable. It is expressed by frantic shouts when violent, or by silence and weeping when calm and more continuous. Fainting probably symbolizes the state in which the lover is totally smitten by the presence or the vision of the beloved. This motif is popular with the Ṣūfīs, who pass from perplexity (*dahša*) to fainting (*iġšā'*) on the way to the vision of, and unity with, the Beloved. This motif is very common in *Maṣāri' al-'uṣṣāq*, describing both Ṣūfī and non-Ṣūfī lovers. The highest degree of this experience is expressed by the term *ṣar'* (i.e. epileptic fit, or death) and *ṣa'āq* (i.e., shout, yell; death). *aṣ-Ṣar'*, according to Ibn 'Arabī is “annihilation of self at the moment of divine epiphany.”<sup>143</sup> “Abu l-Ḥasan al-Aswārī said, ‘Sufism is my forgetting myself, and my waking to my Lord.’”<sup>144</sup> Is it then not possible to interpret Maġnūn’s fainting as a kind of waking to his inner world, where he can be united with the source of his love and poetry?

Of course the mystical interpretation of these manifestations of madness, relating them to the presence of a possessing spirit, is only one way of seeing the legend. Except for a few lines perhaps, one can interpret the whole *Dīwān* from nothing but a 'Uḍrī point of view. But then one could do the same for much of the poetry of the Ṣūfīs themselves.

### III. THE UNITY AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARCHETYPE

In the previous sections, we dealt with poetry, love, and madness separately. Although analysis and abstraction are preconditions for any intellectual understanding, we must not forget that we are dealing here with the product of a mind verging on the mythical. In such a product, the boundaries between the notions of poetry, love, and madness are fluid. Although the archetypal figure of Maġnūn places poetry, love, and

142. *Maṣāri'* I, 172.

143. (الفناء عند التجلي الرباني) Ibn 'Arabī: *Kitāb Iṣṭilāḥ aṣ-ṣūfiyya*. Tehran 1969, 7.

144. Quoted in 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamaḍānī's *Apologia*. Trans. and introd. by A. J. ARBERRY under the title of *A Sufi Martyr*. London 1969, 57.



madness in a triadic unity, thus making them inseparable, these dimensions of the triad remain distinct: they are different modes of achieving the same ideal.

In the analysis of these three modes, we have seen that they often merge, and that we can never separate them totally and still retain the distinctiveness of the Mağnūn character. In other words, the moment we eliminate any of these facets, Mağnūn ceases to exist as a distinguishable character, just as a triangle would cease to be a triangle if it were to lose one of its sides.

Although the *Dīwān* exhibits every aspect of a collective composition, thereby displaying the characteristics of an anthology, this anthology is carefully specialized. While Ğamīl and Kuṭayyir — probably the major historical figures behind Mağnūn's legend and poetry — have other concerns than that of love, Mağnūn's whole being is centered around Laylā. Thus, in spite of its arabesque style, the *Dīwān* very rarely alludes to anything which is not related to this obsessive quest. Having integrated in her person the powers of *šayṭān*, Aphrodite, and jinni, Laylā gives her Mağnūn no chance to separate these three supernatural agents. thus, none of the facets of his character is explainable except in connection with the other two.

This point may become more obvious by quoting the following, particularly interesting lines:<sup>145</sup>

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 obey.

يقولون، مجنون بهم بذكرها، والله ما بي من جنون ولا سحر  
إذا ما قرضت الشعر في غير ذكرها أباي وأبيكم أن يطاوعني شعري

By attempting to deny his madness, Mağnūn indirectly admits it. He insists that if there is any reason for calling him mad, it should not be on account of any other agent than Laylā. He thus establishes an intrinsic link between these two facets of his character and his obsession with Laylā. Therefore, the apparent divergence between the different dimensions of Mağnūn should not conceal the essential unity, integrating poet, lover, and madman in one character.

From the literary point of view, what concerns us most is the unity of the creative imagination in these modes of relating to reality. In this,

145. *Dīwān* 28.



Maġnūn seems to be an embodiment of the archetype described by Shakespeare's verse:

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact.<sup>146</sup>

To conclude this chapter, let us once again emphasize the fact that, in spite of the rigidity of its classical prosody, Arabic literature was able to develop a figure of a love-mad poet, who became the symbol of rebellion against social and rational norms. In Maġnūn, Persians as well as Arabs, Šūfīs as well as 'Udrīs, litterateurs as well as popular story-tellers expressed their thirst for the absolute. This thirst could not be quenched solely by means of a revealed, final book, but by personal, immediate, ecstatic vision. In spite of the restrictions set by Islamic orthodoxy, the pre-Islamic connection between the poet and the supernatural was revived. By reopening the door of personal vision, and by channelling the literary and spiritual legacy of different Islamic peoples into the creation of rituals appropriate for, and conducive to, this personal vision, Šūfism played a decisive role in the elaboration of the Maġnūn character.

Yet one should not forget two essential points: (1) The popularity of the Šūfīs between the eighth and twelfth centuries remained more at the level of ideas, personal experience, and spiritual disciplinship than at the level of organized method and ritual.<sup>147</sup> (2) The arabesque composition of the *Dīwān*, and the darkness covering the identity and ideas of its author(s) do not permit us to assert the Šūfī character of the *Dīwān* in any categorical way.

These two observations, however, do not apply to Ġāmi's *Laylī u Maġnūn*. How Ġāmi integrates his Šūfī ideology and rituals of ecstatic vision within his interpretation of the Maġnūn theme will be the subject of the coming chapter.

146. *Midsummer-Night's Dream* V, 1.

147. See VON GRUNEBaum: *Medieval Islam* 125.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### ĠĀMĪ

The previous chapters have emphasized the cultural elements which seem to have led to the rise and growth of the Maġnūn legend. My discussion of the *Dīwān* has centered on the analysis of Maġnūn as an archetypal figure. However, my remarks in relation to the symbolism of the legend were meant to follow only one of many possible ways of interpreting the text. My main concern was to delineate the archetype. The meaning given to this archetype in the different Arabic versions was found to involve a basic ambiguity deriving from the collective composition of the legend. In the development that took place between a possible original version and a later pseudo-Wālibī, it seemed that an intimate understanding of Šūfī notions was at work, and clear traces of these notions were pointed out in the *Dīwān*. Yet, archetypal significance cannot be detached from the narrative of the legend;<sup>1</sup> and, in the *Dīwān*, the narrative lacks the organic unity which could have given it a discernible symbolic pattern. However, if it lacks the individual stamp of one author, the narrative gains the scope of representing the universal and the typical. Therefore, it was found advisable to center the preceding chapter on elucidating the general significance of the archetype, without reaching any clear-cut conclusion concerning its level of symbolism in this particular case.

The present chapter will discuss two main points: (1) the new complexity in meaning and form developed in the treatment of the legend before Ġāmī, and (2) Ġāmī's *Laylī u Maġnūn* both in its representation of the Šūfī quest, and in its creative use of convention.

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1. Cf. Northrop FRYE's distinction between myth and archetype: "The myth is the central informing power that gives archetypal significance to ritual and archetypal narrative to the oracle. Hence the myth is the archetype, though it might be convenient to say myth when referring to narrative and archetype when speaking of significance." N. FRYE: *Fables of Identity*. New York 1963, 15.



## I. THE NEW COMPLEXITY IN MEANING AND FORM

Before discussing Ġāmī's romance, let us take a glance at the major features in the development of the legend since Wālibī. Two principal dimensions of the legend were expanded: (1) it grew into an epic romance, and (2) it was definitely adopted by the Ṣūfīs. Since M. Ġ. HILĀL has amply discussed the development in these two dimensions,<sup>2</sup> it may be advisable in the present context to turn our attention to a problem essential to both the Arabic and the Persian versions of the legend: the problem of ambiguity in the meaning assigned to the legend in its different parts or in its totality. With the Persian authors, we realize that this problem has more than one cause, and that such a problem is not easy to settle even when we know that a literary work has only one author and when we can identify this author. Thus, we shall here consider, with regard to the Maġnūn theme, (A) the ambiguity of meaning in relation to Ṣūfī symbolism and (B) the epic romance and the use of convention before Ġāmī.

### A. *Ambiguity and Ṣūfī Symbolism*

The ambiguity facing the critic seems to emerge from a basic dilemma which goes beyond identity of author and unity of work. It emerges from the very nature of the subject matter. The basic similarity between the erotic and the mystical experiences, and between romantic and religious poetry makes it well-nigh impossible to draw a line between the sacred and the profane in love poetry. Both by conception and by experience, love and mysticism have been closely associated. We have seen that historically, at least as early as Plato, love was considered a divine madness, and Platonic love was a religious quest for contemplation of the ultimate Beauty. Arabs and Persians were acquainted with the Platonic ideas concerning love. Some of these ideas are mentioned by Ibn Dāwūd, who was a Zāhirite and who violently opposed the claim of some Ṣūfīs to be in love with God. Ibn Dāwūd, the first to condemn al-Ḥallāġ<sup>3</sup> for his declarations of such a love, collects in his book, *az-Zahra*, the most typical expressions of 'Udrī love. Although aware of Plato's definition of love as divine madness,<sup>4</sup> Ibn Dāwūd refuses to see in this madness any channel for a direct relationship with the divine.

2. See HILĀL: *op. cit.* 123-75, 203-57, and 282-301.

3. "Ibn Dāwūd (d. 297/909), qui avait rendu la première fatwā d'excommunication contre al-Ḥallāġ." (MASSIGNON: *Al-Hallaj, martyr mystique de l'Islam*. Paris 1922, 353).

4. *az-Zahra* 15.

Bien loin de voir dans l'amour, l'élan de l'âme vers Dieu, le désir supérieur de l'esprit, Ibn Dāwūd en isola, avec un sens plus exact du ritualisme discipliné de l'Islam, tout le culte dû à Dieu. L'amour, bien loin de nous unir à Lui, n'est qu'une fatalité aveugle, d'ordre physique commune à tous les hommes, — le rôle de l'élite est de la subir sans y céder.<sup>5</sup>

However, the extremism of Ibn Dāwūd does not prevent the Ṣūfīs from taking an opposite extreme, even when their position may lead to their martyrdom. Similarly, the Ṣūfī approach to poetry was based on the same principle which inspired them in understanding the Koran: the *ta'wīl*.

aš-Šiblī, God have mercy on him, recited in his assembly one day: 'Two eyes to which God said: Be, and they came into being. They affect the heart like wine.' Then he said: 'I do not mean the wide eyes, but I mean the eyes of the hearts (عيون القلوب).'<sup>6</sup>

In the same manner, the Ṣūfī can use and interpret in his own way the very lines anthologized by Ibn Dāwūd and deemed only profane. Thus, aš-Šiblī repeats the famous lines of Mağnūn, as cited by Ibn Dāwūd:

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 you.<sup>7</sup>

as well as other lines in *az-Zahra*, not ascribed to Mağnūn by Ibn Dāwūd but later added to his poetry.<sup>8</sup>

Which one of these positions should the critic assume? Fortunately, the critic does not have to take sides. To understand this kind of poetry, one has definitely to be aware of the dilemma, but does not have to solve it. The effect of such a dilemma, and the plurisignation of imagery resulting therefrom, could only add to the richness and flexibility of the poetic world created by both the poet and his public. Thanks to this plurisignation, the same poetry can appeal to the popular imagination as well as to the spiritual refinement of aš-Šiblī.

5. MASSIGNON: *op. cit.* 176.

6. Abū Naṣr as-Sarrāğ: *Kitāb al-Luma' fi t-taṣawwuf*. Ed. R. A. NICHOLSON, Leyden 1914, 252.

7. See *supra* 85. Compare *az-Zahra* 24 and *Kitāb al-Luma'* 252; also *Ağānī* 34, and *Dīwān* 14.

8. See for instance *az-Zahra* 183, line 4, cited by aš-Šiblī in Abū 'Abdarrāḥmān b. Mūsā as-Sulamī: *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt aš-ṣūfiyya*. Ed. J. PEDERSEN, Leiden 1960, 344, line 5. See also *Dīwān* 1, line 14. Instances of lines common to 'Uđrīs and Ṣūfīs or exchanged between them are abundant. See concerning Ibn Masrūq, *Ṭabaqāt* 237, last two lines, and *Dīwān* 72, lines 18-19; concerning Abu l-Ḥusayn, *Ṭabaqāt* 301, line 8 and *Ağānī* 31, line 5.



What seems to aggravate the problem is the long interconnection between the experiences of mystical and human love. This problem is part of the general anthropomorphism which is difficult to eradicate from any imaginative, personal relationship with the deity. Consequently, not only our expression of this relationship, but also the experience itself seems to be an extension, if not a projection, of experiences which occur at the human level. In man's groping to express the feeling of self-exaltation that results from the mystical experience, the erotic metaphor seems to come closest to a satisfactory rendering of this feeling. Modern research tends to emphasize the essential resemblance between the two experiences of profane and of mystical love:

L'étude de ces régions limites où ressort plus clairement le facteur d'un auto-dépassement coactif, c'est-à-dire non expressemment voulu, amène aussi à remarquer les points communs qui existent entre les extases mystiques et les extases érotiques.<sup>9</sup>

Once they reach the level of ecstasy, profane and mystic love tend to have the same effect. When these ecstasies become particularly intense, "l'une peut être la conséquence de l'autre ou l'une et l'autre peuvent naître en même temps."<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, when, in the context of 'Udrī poetry, the physical side of desire is suppressed, love metaphors become equally applicable to a divine or to a human beloved. It is worth noting here that not only were the 'Udrī poets influenced by the new religious piety introduced by Islam, but also, and more significantly, they transposed the religious conception of man's attitude toward God to the level of man's attitude toward his human beloved. Thus, in the strict religious sense, it would be unlikely that religious people should deem pious such lines of Maġnūn as:<sup>11</sup>

I see myself, when praying, direct my face to her  
 even when the house of worship is at my back.  
 أراني إذا صليتُ يمتُّ نحوها بوجهي، وان كان المصلّى ورائيا

The transposition of religious notions to the realm of love is summed up in the following verses:<sup>12</sup>

9. J. EVOLA: *Métaphysique du sexe*. Paris 1968, 126.

10. *Ibid.* 127, quoted from H. VON KRAFFT-EBING: *Psychopathia Sexualis*, trans., Paris, 12.

11. *Aġānī* 56.

12. *Al-Muwaššā* 71.

Those who died in the faith of love  
 have found death a honeyed spring  
 Qays, 'Amr, and al-Muraqqiṣ before them  
 were the interpretation of the Koran (or Revelation) of Love

إِنَّ الْأَيَّ مَاتُوا عَلَى دِينِ الْهَوَىٰ وَجَدُوا الْمَيِّتَةَ مِنْهَا مَعْسُولًا  
 قَيْسٌ وَعَمْرُو وَالْمُرَقِّصُ قَبْلَهُمْ كَانُوا لِتَتْرِيْلِ الْهَوَىٰ تَأْوِيلًا

Inasmuch as these circumstances made it easy for the Ṣūfīs to use erotic language, they make it difficult for us to recognize the symbolic level of a poem. Hāfīz is probably the most famous case in point.<sup>13</sup> But whereas we may doubt the Ṣūfī intention of Hāfīz in much of his poetry,<sup>14</sup> it would be difficult to doubt Ibn 'Arabī's intentions, especially since he warns the reader against any possible suspicion.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Ibn 'Arabī recites:

When she kills with her glances, her speech restores to life  
 as tho' she, in giving life, thereby, were Jesus,  
 The smooth surface of her legs is (like) the Tora in brightness,  
 and I follow it and tread in its footsteps as tho' I were Moses.<sup>16</sup>

And we may remember, in this context, that Ibn 'Arabī was among those who furthered the adoption of Maḡnūn by the Ṣūfīs.<sup>17</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī was only one of many Ṣūfīs who conceived of Maḡnūn as an ideal lover, and who considered his madness a symbol of beatific vision.

13. Cf. R. PARET: *Symbolik des Islam*. Stuttgart 1958, 43-44.

14. Cf. *ibid.* and H. R. ROEMER: *Probleme der Hafizforschung und der Stand ihrer Lösung*. Wiesbaden 1951.

15. See Ibn 'Arabī: *Tarḡumān al-aṣwāq* 12.

16. *Ibid.* 49. Of particular interest for the elucidation of the problem under discussion is the following interpretation which accompanies the above lines: "She kills with her glances": referring to the station of passing away in contemplation (الفناء في المشاهدة). "Her speech restores to life": referring to the completion of the moulding of man when the spirit was breathed into him. She is compared to Jesus in reference to Kor. xxxviii, 72: "And I breathed into him of My spirit," or Kor. xvi, 42: "That We say to it 'Be', and it is." "Her legs": referring to Bilqīs and the glass pavement (Kor. xxvii, 44). "Is like the Tora in brightness," because the Tora (التوراة) is derived from the phrase , ورى الزند , "the stick produced fire." The four faces (أوجه) of Tora, namely the four books (the Koran, the Psalms, the Pentateuch, and the Gospel), correspond to the fourfold light mentioned in Kor. xxiv, 35 (المشكاة والمصباح والزجاجة والزيت), *ibid.* 51.

17. Ibn 'Arabī's contribution to Maḡnūn's Ṣūfī image was not only through poetic references to him (see *Tarḡumān* 67), but also through bestowing credibility on the anecdote about Maḡnūn's shunning of Laylā because he was totally absorbed by her presence in his imagination. CORBIN: *Creative Imagination* 336.

Already aš-Šiblī (d. 945), himself accused of madness and shut up in an insane asylum,<sup>18</sup> gives Mağnūn as a Šūfī example:

Whenever Mağnūn 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 Laylā.<sup>19</sup>

It is worth noting that the terminology used here by aš-Šiblī (e.g. *gayba*, *baqā’*, *šuhūd*, etc.) refers to Šūfī states (*aḥwāl*).<sup>20</sup>

Mağnūn’s total surrender to his Possessor’s image seems to have earned him canonization by the leading Šūfīs. Thus, his madness is explained by al-Ġunayd (d. 910): “Mağnūn of the Banū ‘Āmir was one of God’s saints, and God concealed his saintliness with his madness.<sup>21</sup> His passionate love is symbolically interpreted by al-Ġazālī (d. 1111): “Mağnūn of the Banū ‘Āmir was seen in a dream. He was asked: ‘What has God done to you?’ He answered: ‘He forgave me and made me the proof of the Lovers’.”<sup>22</sup>

In short, by the time of Rūzbihān Baqlī Šīrāzī (d. 1209), a contemporary of Nizāmī “l’idée de *tajallī* atteignant à sa limite dans l’amour de Majnūn, nous permet de pressentir la voie par laquelle l’amour théophanique fait éclater la limite sur laquelle échouait l’amour ‘odhrite.”<sup>23</sup>

In his Introduction to ‘*Abhar al-‘āšiqīn*, CORBIN sums up the two major Šūfī attitudes to human and divine love: (1) some Šūfīs, the pious (*zuhhād*) remained aloof to human love; (2) others saw in human love the entrance to the Way. In view of the importance of this latter attitude for the understanding of Ġāmī’s *Laylī u Mağnūn*, we may benefit here from CORBIN’s summary of Rūzbihān’s description. In relation to the second group of Šūfīs, CORBIN observes:

18. See Abū Naṣr as-Sarrāġ: *Kitāb al-Luma’* 50.

19. مجنون بني عامر كان اذا سُئل عن ليلى فكان يقول أنا ليلى، فكان يغيب بليلى عن ليلى حتى يبقئى. (بمشهد ليلى ويغيب عن كل ما سوى ليلى، ويشهد الأشياء كلها بليلى), *Kitāb al-Luma’* 360.

20. Cf. G.-C. ANAWATI and L. GARDET: *Mystique musulmane*. Paris 1968, 128. Also, concerning the Šūfī meaning of Mağnūn’s obsession with Laylā’s image, cf. *Kitāb al-Luma’* 360.

21. *Baṣṭ sāmi’ al-musāmīr* 106.

22. *Loc. cit.*

23. H. CORBIN: “Introduction” to Rūzbihān Baqlī Šīrāzī: ‘*Abhar al-‘āšiqīn* 15.



Leur progression sur la voie conduisant de l'amour humain à l'amour célestial ne consiste pas en un transfert de l'amour d'un objet à un autre (Dieu n'est pas un *objet*), mais en une métamorphose du *sujet* de l'amour: à sa limite, l'amour extatique de Majnûn fait de lui, non pas simplement le modèle à imiter, à transposer par le soufi; Majnûn est lui-même alors le *miroir* de Dieu (â'yina-ye Haqq), ou mieux dit l'oeil par lequel Dieu se contemple soi-même; l'amour de Majnûn est devenu l'amour au sens vrai.<sup>24</sup>

### B. *The Epic Romance and the Use of Convention*

With the Persian poets, the Mağnûn legend was not only vastly enriched on the symbolic level, but it was also expanded and raised to the level of an epic romance. The new epic and symbolic dimensions were largely interconnected, if not by a causal relationship, at least to the extent of their mutual interaction.

It was Nizâmî's achievement to transform the structure of the legend from an arabesque of anecdotes and poetic fragments into an organically conceived, poetic romance. The effect of the new form was twofold. First it invested the legend with temporal extension, thus allowing its events to go beyond the mosaic, almost atemporal, juxtaposition of anecdotes. This new temporal sequence helped create a more believable protagonist, possessing a life that has a discernible curve, no matter how insane or unconventional this curve may seem.

Secondly, the sequential development and the unity of narrative, largely due to the unity of the author's personality, produced some harmony in the imagery, while raising the whole narrative structure to a higher level of complexity.

Obviously, in exploiting the potential of the new symbolism and the scope of the epic romance, Nizâmî was not inventing these two dimensions. By his time, the epic form had already been established by Firdawsî (d. ca. 1020), and most of the imagery had already been stereotyped.<sup>25</sup> As in Arabic literature, oral tradition played an important role in furthering conventionalism in Persian poetry. Poets, no less than reciters and storytellers, were accustomed to perform in public, and their poetry, especially that of the epic and panegyric genres, relied much on conventional imagery.

Such poetry can only be composed if the poet has at his command a ready-made stock of traditional and familiar phrases, half-lines and

24. *Ibid.* 13-14.

25. Cf. A. BAUSANI: "Letteratura Neopersiana". In: A. PAGLIARO and A. BAUSANI: *Storia della Letteratura Persiana*. Milano 1960, 251-52 et passim.



lines, which he can throw in when he is at a loss for the precise words he needs... So it is that standard qualifications, similes, and metaphors become associated in the poet's mind with certain types of persons and situations.<sup>26</sup>

Although the above quotation refers in particular to the *Šāhnāma*, it is also true of the epic romance and of the *ġazal*. Thus, Niḡāmī's poetic talent, though amply displayed in his creative use of metaphor, did not escape being entangled with an already traditional "excess of overelaborate imagery."<sup>27</sup> This overelaboration had more than one reason. In the first place, Persian poetry had inherited most if not all of the poetic motifs and clichés elaborated in Arabic poetry by both Arabs and Persians.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Persian poetry multiplied the old imagery, while exhibiting a strong tendency towards metaphor instead of the common similes of Arabic poetry. RITTER points out a possible role played by the linguistic nature of each of these two traditions of poetic diction:

Jene durch ein bedeutsames ka'anna "es ist als ob" eingeleiteten Vergleiche haben bei dem Perser kein Gegenstück; dafür beherrscht die Metapher die ganze Dichtersprache in einem Maße, wie wir es aus keiner europäischen noch vorderasiatischen Literatur kennen.<sup>29</sup>

This strong Persian tendency seems to be particularly appropriate to the mythical mind, which is at the basis of great poetry. By transmuting objects into each other, metaphor establishes a certain unity between them, a unity that goes beyond the mere resemblance revealed by other kinds of tropes. This transmutation coincides perfectly with the mythological atmosphere in poetry, in which may be said "eine Sehnsucht nach jenem frühen Zustand der Unmittelbarkeit, des ungeschiedenen Einsseins mit der Natur noch als lebendig geföhlt zum Ausdruck komme."<sup>30</sup>

The same nostalgia for reunion with Nature — whether seen as epiphanies of the immanent Godhead, or as signs (*āyāt*) of His power and beauty — is an essential feature of Šūfī poetry. This does not mean that Šūfīs, even the pantheists among them, do not go deeper than the level of natural appearances; it only means that, to the Šūfīs, these appearances

26. R. LEVY: *An Introduction to Persian Literature*. New York 1969, 78.

27. *Ibid.* 82.

28. Detailed illustrations of this subject are found in U. M. DAUDPOTA's *The Influence of Arabic Poetry on the Development of Persian Poetry*. Bombay 1934; see also H. RITTER's comment in his *Über die Bildersprache Niḡāmīs*. Berlin 1927, 2; and BAUSANI's discussion of the rise of Persian poetry, *op. cit.* 239-43.

29. *Über die Bildersprache Niḡāmīs* 4.

30. *Ibid.* 5.



come alive and begin to function as symbols of a higher, eternal reality. Furthermore, in the concept of Nature, one must not forget to include human nature as well. For ultimately, all external natural signs acquire their value from their capacity to direct man towards discovering God within his own soul. In this, not only natural objects, but especially other human beings, are necessary reminders of the Divine Beauty which resides within man. They are necessary only as sign-posts on the traveller's Way towards unity with his eternal Self.

Thus, both for poetic and for Šūfī purposes, the metaphoric capacity of the Persian language was fully exploited in order to add more complexity to the conventional imagery. This complexity was doubled by the symbolic ambiguity which we have already described.

However, if Persian poetry distinguishes itself from Arabic poetry by its power to combine the epic breadth and the symbolic level, Persian poetic creativity was soon subjected to a limited number of themes, and to a repetition of worn-out imagery. This repetition went far in weakening the tensive value of the metaphors; it reduced them to "tied" images, "a tied image being one so employed that its meaning and associational value is the same or nearly the same for all readers."<sup>31</sup> Consequently, most of these conventional metaphors lost their power to achieve semantic transference. They became clear equations, readily understood and liable to be codified. Ecstasy is symbolized by wine, the lips by sugar or ruby, the face by the moon, and so on. "Šūfī poetry gladly adopted this custom and created a whole nomenclature of symbols which were metamorphosed into the transcendental."<sup>32</sup> But the use of this nomenclature was obviously not confined to the Šūfis.

Thus it is always difficult and in most cases impossible — unless we are dealing with known and avowed mystics — to determine when the conception of love or of wine indicates the actual thing and when on the contrary the poet has in mind a metaphor, an allegory, whether in a factual or transcendental sense.<sup>33</sup>

With Nizāmī, we have one of these borderline cases. Most critics rightly tend to consider him the best Persian poet in the genre of the romantic epic.<sup>34</sup> Comparing him to his predecessors, ARBERRY remarks

31. *A Handbook to Literature* 232.

32. J. RYPKA: *History of Iranian Literature*. Ed. K. Jahn. Dordrecht 1968, 85-86.

33. *Ibid.* 85.

34. Cf. BAUSANI: *op. cit.* 640: «La letteratura persiana troverà.. il suo più grande narratore, e forse, non è esagerato dirlo, il suo più grande poeta, in Nezāmī di Gangè.»



that “in Nizāmī we encounter a genius of universal significance, the first in Persian literature worthy to take place beside Firdausi.”<sup>35</sup>

However, in spite of some mystical sense that can always be discerned (or imagined) in his poetry, we may well say with ARBERRY that Nizāmī “turned away from religious poetry when his *Maḥzan al-asrār* failed to achieve its author’s purpose.”<sup>36</sup>

Keeping the above remarks in mind, I should like to devote the rest of this chapter to Ğāmī’s *Laylī u Maḡnūn*, which may illustrate the transmutation of the legend into an allegory of mystic love. Although Ğāmī emulates Nizāmī and Amīr Ḥusraw, one must not forget that he is generally regarded as the last of the great classical Persian poets.<sup>37</sup> As such one may apply to him RYPKA’s following generalization:

The constant re-use of themes, customary in the Orient, must not grow into a mere soulless copying, to which in the hands of a master it has in fact never descended. Here too there exists, on the part of the poet, an honest wrestling with his work within the given limits.<sup>38</sup>

This wrestling produces imagery which, as a rule, is not constructed by creating new poetic objects, but by restructuring the relationships between conventionally “tied” images.<sup>39</sup> Thus, even when both theme and imagery are not original, a real poet can always contribute a new perspective which gives new life to old symbols. “For even the most banal cliché or the most plainly factual report is formulated from a certain standpoint, and represents a certain trend of associations and expectations.”<sup>40</sup>

What new perspective does Ğāmī contribute to the Maḡnūn legend? And how does his interpretation of the Maḡnūn archetype recontextualize narrative details, traditional imagery, and doctrinal motifs? These will be the main questions underlying our analysis of his *Laylī u Maḡnūn*.

## II. ĞĀMĪ’S *Laylī u Maḡnūn*

Perhaps the most general result that the study of Ğāmī’s version may yield is an idea about the pattern of development in symbolic conscious-

35. A. J. ARBERRY: *Classical Persian Literature*. London 1958, 122.

36. *Ibid.* 129.

37. *Ibid.* 425.

38. J. RYPKA: *op. cit.* 89.

39. Cf. BAUSANI: *op. cit.* 251, and 252: “la magia del poeta sta nel far giocare abilmente insieme gli oggetti mantenendone le forme (luna-volto, ricciolo-bastone de polo).”

40. Ph. WHEELRIGHT: *Metaphor and Reality*. Bloomington 1968, 16.



ness. Since Ġāmī uses virtually the same material found in the Arabic versions, not inventing new motifs, but harmonizing and orchestrating the old ones, the examination of his poem may illuminate the symbolic potential of these versions. Also, occasional comparisons with the versions of Niẓāmī and Amīr Ḥusraw may shed light on some basic differences among the Persian interpretations of the legend.

Ġāmī's writings provide us with evidence concerning the Šūfī intention behind his poem. Besides his other poetic works and his theoretical and historical writings, Ġāmī offers us a helpful guide to his own conception of poetic creativity as illustrated in his critical books. Chief among these is his *Lavāmi'*, a commentary on *al-Qaṣīda al-ḥamriyya* of Ibn al-Fārīd. Ġāmī's interpretation of this poem gives us many important clues as to the symbolism in his own poetry. The author's *Lavā'ih*, *Aṣī'at al-lama'āt* and *Šarḥ-i rubā'īyyāt*, as well as his *Naqd an-nuṣūṣ*, *Nafaḥāt al-uns* and *Lārī's Takmila* provide us with guidelines for understanding the doctrinal background of Ġāmī's poetry.

Obviously, such guidelines cannot be regarded as a table of equivalence. Every poem, no matter how conventional it may seem, expresses a particular angle of vision, and deserves a particular approach. Accordingly, the following pages will center on what I think to be the major features of uniqueness in Ġāmī's *Laylī u Maġnūn*: (A) Ġāmī's conception of the Maġnūn archetype and his technique in using it as a channel for his own quest in life and art; (B) some examples of the creative use of convention within the framework of Ġāmī's poem.

#### A. *The Archetypal Character and the Quest of Maġnūn*

The archetypal pattern that Maġnūn represents is easily discernible in Ġāmī's poem. Here the triadic character of Maġnūn is clearly drawn; and while each of the sides of this "magische Dreieck" can be separately analyzed, the fundamental unity of the character is not difficult to demonstrate.

Perhaps the main factor which produces this unity is the fact that Maġnūn has become a persona symbolizing the author's own quest in life and art. This symbol is prominent not only in the *maṣnawī* under discussion, but also in the voluminous *Dīwān-i kāmīl-i Ġāmī*.<sup>41</sup> A look at the Index of the *Dīwān-i kāmīl*<sup>42</sup> will show that, aside from Ġāmī's *taḥalluṣ*,

41. References are made to the edition of H. RAẒĪ, Tehran 1962.

42. See *ibid.* 876-81.

the frequency of Mağnūn's name is matched only by that of Laylī. This attachment to Mağnūn is not a mere cliché. For in addition to the fact that Laylī had become a symbol of Divine Beauty, Mağnūn's character represents a dilemma in which Ġāmī himself seems to have been involved, viz., the dilemma between the obligation to keep the secret of love and the irresistible drive to divulge this secret at the highest moments of intimacy, i.e., under the maddening pressure of ecstasy. In this respect, we notice a striking similarity between Mağnūn's problem and that which led Ḥallāğ to his martyrdom.<sup>43</sup> Not only is Ġāmī highly aware of this problem, but he also adds to it a dimension which renders it more complex and more interesting from both the human and the poetic points of view: Ġāmī seems to be poignantly conscious of the ultimate futility of human endeavors, including poetry. This might not be surprising when it comes from a Šūfī or an ascetic, but it is quite a revelation when it comes from someone for whom poetry was almost a *raison d'être*, as witness Lārī's words that Ġāmī "was constantly occupied with, and meditating upon poetry and poetics."<sup>44</sup>

And yet, despite Ġāmī's huge poetic production, we often hear him repeat a note of self-admonishment:

Ġāmī, leave polishing of phrases, cease  
writing and chanting falbes, hold thy peace;  
Dream not that "Truth" can be revealed by words;  
from this fond dream, O dreamer, find release!<sup>45</sup>  
جامی تن زن سخن ترازوی تا چند افسونگری وفسانه سازی تاچند  
اظهار حقائق بسخن هست خیال ای ساده دل این خیال بازی تا چند

One would be inclined to consider this admonishment a convention<sup>46</sup> if it were not fundamentally connected with the whole question of knowledge and expression, reality and appearance, and ultimately with the paradox of poetic creativity, when poetry is the product of a spiritual

43. We have already discussed this problem as it is manifested in the Arabic *Dīwān* of Mağnūn. See *supra* 74 *et passim*.

44. (دائم الاوقات شغل شعر وشاعری میداشتند وانديشه بر آن می گاشتند) 'Abdalḡafūr Lārī: *Takmila-i ḥavāšī-i nafaḥāt al-uns*: šarḥ-i ḥāl-i Mavlānā Ġāmī. (Harāt) 1343/1964, henceforth referred to as *Takmila*.

45. Ġāmī: *Lavā'ih*. Ed. and trans. by E.H. WHINFIELD and Mīrzā M. ḲAZVĪNĪ, London 1928, 55. Further quotations from *Lavā'ih* are taken from this translation. The corresponding Persian text is quoted from the facsimile in the same edition.

46. WHINFIELD mentions the fact that "the *Masnavī* finishes in the same strain." (*Ibid.* 55, n. 2).



experience that ends in silence. This is only a ramification of the central Šūfī paradox of the *fanā'*. For if we accept the Šūfī logic which conceives of the goal of perfect love as self-annihilation in the Beloved, then it will follow that the end of perfect gnosis is loss of reason, and the end of perfect expression is silence.

Consequently, if pursued to its logical conclusion, the doctrine of the *fanā'* should lead to a real annihilation of anything that draws close to the divine Beloved. Short of insanity, total silence, or death, the *fanā'* remains a figure of speech, and a good matter for poetry.

Theoretically, the Neoplatonic strain in Šūfism can suggest a solution for the dilemma. Since the world of appearance is an emanation from the Real, and the world of plurality is an extension of the One, natural objects can be conceived as mirrors reflecting the Divine, man being the purest mirror in which God contemplates Himself. It is in this sense that a martyr like Ḥallāġ could say “anā l-Ḥaqq”, and a madman like Maġnūn could say “anā Laylā” and be regarded by the Šūfīs as “ā'īna-i Ḥaqq”<sup>47</sup> Also, it is chiefly in this sense that we may interpret the quest of Maġnūn in Ġāmī's poem. As the persona of the poet, he represents the struggle of the Šūfī to purify his soul through love and suffering, and to be spiritually reborn as a clear image of Divine Beauty.

1. O Ġāmī! Behold that every atom of the creation  
is in the eyes of the clear-sighted
2. A cup broken by the blows of (pre-) eternity.  
All around it a name is written.
3. What cup is that cup? — The cup of the Eternal  
Whose name is that name? — The name of the *sāqī*.
4. From the cup, seek peace in wine;  
and through the name, behold Him Who is named.
5. In the One Who is named, lose the sign;  
in His being, be lost to the world.
6. So that you may be free from your own being,  
and from the darkness of your selfishness.
7. You reach a realm above which there is no realm; it is attained  
only through loss of consciousness.
8. Of the world of no sign, we have  
given you a sign. The rest is up to you.

جـامی بنگر کز آفرینش هر ذره پیشم اهل بینش  
از زخم ازل شکسته جامی ست گردا گردش نوشته نامی ست

47. Cf. *supra* n. 24 and 102-3.



آن جام چه جام جام باقی وان نام چه نام نام ساقی  
 از جام بیاده گیر آرام وز نام نگر بصاحب نام  
 در صاحب نام کن نشان گم در هستی وی شو از جهان گم  
 تا باز رهی ز هستی خویش وز ظلمت خود پرستی خویش  
 جایی برسی کزان گذر نیست جز بیخبری ازان خبر نیست  
 با تو ز جهان بی نشانی گفتیم نشان دگر تو دانی<sup>48</sup>

Although the English translation of these lines falls short of rendering the rhetorical and imaginative subtleties present in the original, one can still obtain an idea about the allegorical meaning of Ġāmī's poem. In the above-quoted lines, we may note several allusions to the poet's conception of life and of poetic creativity, as well as some of his basic symbols. Most intriguing among these lines is the first *mišrā'* of the second line (از زخم ازل شکسته جامی ست). The main ambiguity lies here in the word *zahm*, which can mean, among other things, both blow and wound. The first of these two meanings renders an image of a world of broken pieces, or atoms, each of which is compared to a cup which contains part of the Eternal Wine. From this Wine, Ġāmī wants to drink, so as to find peace and freedom from world and self, and be annihilated in the Being of the One to Whom the name belongs. This is the quest of Mağnūn. If "Laylī" is the name of the cup, and the cup is a fragment of the Whole, then through this fragment, Mağnūn will have a taste of the Wine which is hidden in appearances and which enchants the mind into an ecstatic unity with its divine source. For concrete beings are fragments, separate from the totality of Being, only as they appear to the limited human vision. In essence, they are facets of the indivisible Unity of Being:

All are attributes of Deity which have descended from the zenith of the Universal and the Absolute to the nadir of the particular and relative. (They have descended) to the end that thou mayest direct thy course from the part towards the Whole, and from the relative deduce the Absolute, and not imagine the part to be distinct from the Whole, nor be so engrossed with what is merely relative as to cut thyself off from the Absolute.<sup>49</sup>

This clear Neoplatonic<sup>50</sup> conception of existence brings us to the second meaning of the word *zahm*, viz., wound. This meaning conveys the

48. Ġāmī: *Laylī u Mağnūn*. In: *Haft Aurang*. Ed. and introd. by M. MUDARRIS GĪLĀNĪ, Tehran 1337/1958, 897. All references to Ġāmī's *Laylī u Mağnūn* are to this edition.

49. *Lavā'ih* 7.

50. Cf. WHINFIELD's "Preface" and "Appendices" to *Lavā'ih*, I-XVIII, and 47-61.



image of fissure between concrete things, through which runs the same life-blood. But the image can lead to a double-entendre, since blood is commonly regarded as an archetypal symbol of death.<sup>51</sup> Thus the emanation of existence from the One, generally compared to sun-rays emanating from the sun, is rendered here by means of an organic image that contains its inner contradiction. As a symbol of both life and death, blood unites opposites and infuses vitality into the more static image of broken cups. The combination of both symbols, life as a basic wound and the fragmented condition of the particular and relative, creates an image of rare complexity. Yet it is not an optimistic image. It depicts creation as a somewhat violent explosion and gushing forth, not as the traditionally more serene fountain of light emanating from the Sun. And here lies the pessimism expressed through this image, which is not only central to this passage, but also reflects the mood of the whole allegory.

Moreover, this passage contains the moral of the story. Coming right after MaġnŪn's death, the passage sums up ĠamĪ's conception of life and of both the ŠūfĪ and the poetic quests. This is borne out by the fact that the central image which we have tried to elucidate is rendered more complex by including a play on the word *ġāmī* (a cup) which obviously alludes to the poet himself. Thus, we have the possibility of interpreting the *mišrā'* as referring to Ġāmī himself, broken and wounded by the very act of eternal creation. In this context, we may understand the desire of the mystic poet to free himself from his own separate existence (line 6) and mend the break, or heal the wound of his separation by losing his individual self in the Unity of the Absolute.

Acquiring its meaning from the first two lines, the rest of the passage points the way towards redemption. Although the existence of particularized things is imperfect and resembles the existence of broken cups, the way back to reunion with the absolute Whole should begin through drinking from the cup of the relative *sāqī* (*sc.* the human LaylĪ). Although the One is ineffable (line 7), and ultimate knowledge of the One results in silence, the poet can approximate an expression of the One through symbols.

Thus, we have again the three dimensions of the MaġnŪn archetype as we have encountered them in Wālibī. Here, however, love, madness, and poetry are interiorized, and projected into a persona whose journey towards death and spiritual rebirth is allegorized by external events. Yet, all

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51. Cf. WHEELRIGHT: *op. cit.* 114.





through, we find the same insistence on love, madness, and poetry as channels of communication with the Beloved.<sup>52</sup>

Although her own beauty is finite,<sup>53</sup> Layli reflects Divine Beauty. She is the cup — a sort of Holy Grail — which contains the water of life, the wine which liberates Maġnūn from being conscious of his limited self and makes him one with the Whole.

Relatively little happens in Ġāmī's poem, and what happens is not very eventful. As with Niẓāmī and Amīr Ḥusraw, the structure is based on episodes, many of which are repetitive. Intended as a spiritual quest, the movement of the narrative is outwardly cyclical, although, from the standpoint of Maġnūn's spiritual progress, it could be regarded as spiral. Hardly any new elements are added to a plot already well known before Ġāmī. As we shall see, Ġāmī does not boast of being inventive in his plot, and yet he claims individual inspiration. An insight into this inspiration might be gained from a close look at the first episodes of the poem.

The first seven episodes are a general introduction, following the common Islamic tradition. As a rule, they move from the general to the particular. The first, in praise of God, has a telling *maṭla*':

O (God)! The dust of your land is the crown of the proud;  
mad in you is the reason of the wise.

ای خاک تو تاج سربلندان      مجنون تو عقل هوشمندان  
(750:1)<sup>54</sup>

What follows is a *munāğāt*, based on an ample use of traditional Šūfī symbols (e.g., 750:13-15), and ending with a touching imploration for help in the poet's old age (752:1-6) and for inspiration in his poem (752:7-8).

The second episode continues in the same vein, verging on the didactic, and emphasizing the necessity of transcending the world of plurality to the intuition of Oneness. The same episode prepares the way for the following one dedicated to the praise of Ḥwāġa 'Ubaydallāh Aḥrār (d. 1498), the *pīr* of the *Naqšbandiyya* order to which Ġāmī belonged.<sup>55</sup> Ġāmī's position

52. See, for instance, *Haft Aurang* 769, lines 17-19; 805, line 23; and 806, lines 1-2.

53. Cf. The judgement of Maġnūn's father, as he tries to persuade Maġnūn to seek another girl: *ibid.* 785, lines 11-15.

54. The number 750 stands for the page, and the number 1 for the line. Unless other sources are indicated, all references are to the afore-mentioned edition of *Haft Aurang*.

55. Ġāmī eventually, and somewhat against his own will, was recognized as the *pīr* of this *Ṭarīqa*. See 'A.A. ḤIKMAT: *Ġāmī*. Tehran 1320/1941, 66-76, and H. RAẒĪ in his "Introduction" to *Dīwān-i kāmīl* 96.



as the virtual poet and theoretician of this order might explain much of the didacticism which mars the poetic flow of the *maḡnavī* under discussion as well as that of his poetry in general.

The fourth episode, though dealing with a traditional theme, the *Mi'rāġ*, has a particular relevance to the present allegory, because we can interpret it as a symbol of the Šūfī parallelism between Macrocosm and microcosm. Muḡammad's *Mi'rāġ* is described as a physical ascendance through the Heavens (755:15; 757:3) until he reaches the Throne, where he is liberated from time and space, and where he returns to the One as a drop of water returns to the sea (757:4-10). This passage is important because it emphasizes *al-ḡaḡīqa l-muḡammadiyya* (757:11) and orients the reader towards understanding the Light of Muḡammad (757:18) as an inner experience.

The fifth episode describes Šūfī love. The *maṡla'* establishes the doctrine of love as the source of creation:

When the pre-eternal morning breathed (or spoke) out of love,  
love inflamed the Pen with the fire of desire.

چون صبح ازل ز عشق دم زد عشق آتش شوق در قلم زد  
| (757:20)

This line presents a traditional motif that repeats an image of creation through the divine imperative "Be!", an image used in the first episode (750:10-16), where the poet combines descriptions of the Creative Verb in both its oral and its written forms. However, while maintaining the linguistic metaphor for divine creativity, the poet introduces a new element, namely, the causal relation between love and creativity, a relation that may easily be applied to the poetic realm.

The same episode reiterates Ġāmī's conception of love: without love one is not human (759:7); yet above the common love for women, one should attach one's heart to a *pīr*, whose beauty is the mirror of souls, and whose words are the key to the highest mysteries (758:18):

Of the desert of life this is the flower.

Of the sea of metaphor this is the bridge.

صحرای وجود را گل ست این دریای مجاز را پل ست این  
(758:20)

Both images in this line are keynotes for the rest of the poem: in the desert of life, the spiritual beauty, and the gnostic wisdom of the *pīr* are our guide

to the Creator. As an interpreter of Divine Truth, he is the bridge over which the wayfarer crosses the sea of metaphor.

In the following episode, the poet explains his reason for choosing the Maġnūn theme: in all the fields of eloquence, the most inspired, and the most welcome is the song of love. After alluding to his two predecessors, Niẓāmī and Amīr Ḥusraw, and praising their achievement, Ġāmī claims that he will be happy to follow them and have his face covered by the dust stirred up by their fast steeds. Then, in a sudden transition, the poet exclaims:

Nay! Nay! I am drowned in the Qulzum sea.  
Why make my ablution with dust!

نی نی غرقم بوج قلم از خاک چرا کم تیمم  
(760:7)

In order to wipe out the dust from his face, the poet will rely on the fountain of his own inspiration (760:8) and sing his mystic melody (760:18).

This mystic melody does not immediately begin with the story of Laylī and Maġnūn. Ġāmī lingers further to convey, in the following episode, what he specifically means by love. He strikes a note of grief over his Šūfī friends and masters — *pīrān-i masālik-i tarīqat* (761:9) — who have passed away. In order to escape his sorrow (761:16-17), he asks the *sāqī* to pour him some of the wine allowed to “men of heart” (760:22). Then, after he announces his aim to write a poem rhyming with Šūfī customs (761:24, he repeats his request to drink

From that wine which, like a candle, illuminates  
the soul and burns the moth of reason.

ز آنمی که چو شمع جانفروزد پروانه عقل را بسوزد  
(763:8)

As already mentioned, Ġāmī’s narrative does not deviate from the episodic structure adopted by Niẓāmī and followed by Amīr Ḥusraw: Moreover, in laying less emphasis on the dramatic than on the inner, spiritual side of the story, Ġāmī is led into long descriptions of Maġnūn’s emotional and psychological states, with little more than a single, virtually insignificant incident in each episode. While this treatment of the legend gives him much scope for minute lyrical and descriptive details, it does not allow his plot to go beyond a conceptualized allegorical structure. Accordingly, not only the imagery is to be taken symbolically, but also the

events of the plot must be seen as stages on Maġnŭn's "course from the part towards the Whole."<sup>56</sup>

In general, this course tends to exhibit a spiral curve which begins with a finite ego and expands until it dissolves into the infinite totality of Being. As a rule, the more Maġnŭn advances on his way, the more he grows out of his egoism as well as of his attachment to finite things. By the same process, his love and madness are gradually intensified to the point where he becomes capable of reconciling opposites and beholding this world "under the aspect of Eternity."

We must not forget, however, that we are dealing here with an inner experience which takes place within the microcosmic self. In its spiral curve, the self goes through a cycle of death and rebirth reflected on the various planes of Maġnŭn's attitude towards the world. The planes that seem to be most emphasized in the poem can be divided into four categories bearing on the development of Maġnŭn's attitude to LaylĪ, to society, to nature, and to religious rituals, whether traditional or ŢŭfĪ.

Insofar as Maġnŭn's love for LaylĪ derives from a kind of possession, it obviously motivates all his behavior. As a symbol of Divine Beauty, LaylĪ represents the axis around which Maġnŭn's life revolves. Accordingly, our analysis will center on the phases of this love, without losing sight of its ramification on the social, natural, and ritual planes.

In contrast to the previous versions of the legend, Qays does not meet LaylĪ in their childhood. He is first put on the scene as the type of the happy-go-lucky, youthful poet, with love in his blood, and songs on his lips (766:5-7). His heart has such power over his reason that people think he was insane (766:9). He feels attracted to a certain *KarĪma*, but soon discovers her unloyalty; so he sets out again looking for beautiful girls (766-768).

By not making Qays fall in love as a child, ĠĀmĪ seems to imply that this love was not occasioned by mere circumstances, or as a result of immaturity. The first love experience of Qays, resulting in disillusionment, substantiates this notion. Thus, the author prepares the way for presenting the first encounter between Qays and LaylĪ as a shock of recognition. After by-passing many a beautiful woman, Maġnŭn reacts to LaylĪ's appearance as though she were a vision which steals away his heart (769:16), his patience, and his mind (769:19).

Soon the two lovers are assailed by troubles. The first of these is a combination of social norms and natural law. Both society and time

56. Cf. the quotation from *Lavā'ih* 7, *supra* 110.



conspire against them and make them dread the approach of night. They pray for the sun to remain victorious until the Day of Judgment (770:9-10); but as night falls, social norms oblige them to separate.

Henceforth, Ġāmī exploits the motif of day and night in their traditional symbolism of good and evil, as well as in their symbolism of Time. The archetypal motif of night serves as a dark curtain which falls at the end of many scenes and suggests the rhythms of physical nature. While it symbolizes death — the death of the sun, which in turn stands for inner light — the night motif is used as a narrative technique that brings several episodes to their conclusion and prepares the reader to the raising of the curtain with the rebirth of the sun. Owing to the central role of the day and night motif, and to the many levels of symbolism associated with it, we shall have the occasion to study it in some detail in the coming section.

Ġāmī dedicates a special episode for the first night of separation, thus giving full scope to what we may call the cosmological obstacle which faces the soul in its worldly prison (770-772). Night is a black dragon (771:12) tightening its jaws on good and bad things alike (771:13). Yet, through the night burns the fire of love (772:5) with fear and hope; and the lovers wonder,

In the heart, the anxiety of what the night may beget.  
When the day comes, what face will it show!

در دل غم آنکه شب چه زاید چون روز شود چه رو نماید  
(772:8)

With the rebirth of day, Qays hurries towards Laylī, his water of life (773:7), only to meet with a new order of obstacles, set for him this time by his own friends and companions. Laylī opens to Qays the secrets of her heart, confessing her love and suffering (773:17-774:4). This confession leads Qays into a trance which symbolizes his first mystic experience. But this trance is soon interrupted by his friends, who gather around him and deprive him of his vision (774:5-12).

The next day, however, Qays succeeds in meeting Laylī in private. But while the social obstacle is momentarily removed, our protagonist is faced with another obstacle that takes place in his own psyche. Here we have the third sphere of struggle which endangers the course of the journey. This struggle is led against the temptations of the animal soul, symbolized by the she-camel (775-778). The moment Qays loosens his grip on the reins, his camel tries to carry him where she desires.



After overcoming these obstacles, Qays is presented with a final test. This time, it is the beloved who shuns him, in order to measure the depth of his love (780-781). Qays passes the test and concludes with Laylī the pact of love. This pact — clearly reminiscent of the Šūfī notion of the answer of mankind to God's eternal question, "*a-lastu bi-Rabbikum?*"<sup>57</sup> — sets the story on a definite course, in which external events become incidental and can result only in leading the story to its logical conclusion. This conclusion is logical insofar as it is based on Šūfī premises. Thus, after the pact of love, Qays loses his mind, becomes known as Mağnūn, and is proud of his new name (782:18-22). What follows is a series of trying events that are meant to symbolize the purification of the soul through suffering. No parental or social pressure is able to stop Mağnūn from becoming more entrenched in love. However, this pressure deprives him from Laylī who is forced to marry another man.

In relating these events, Ğāmī relies heavily on the Arabic versions of the legend, while making sure to intersperse the narrative with Šūfī comments. Such comments, however, tend to weaken an already transparent allegory. Nonetheless, some of these events are employed in an interesting way, making it possible for Ğāmī to lead Mağnūn's journey towards more communion with the divine. This is done through emphasizing Mağnūn's increasing intimacy with nature, evolving into his transcendence of human society, and ultimately of Laylī herself. Moreover, the author adds to his predecessors' versions conscious allusions to Šūfī manners and rituals in describing Mağnūn's way towards becoming one with the Whole.

Early in the story we are given a hint about Mağnūn's natural friendship with the wild animals of the desert. On the way to his first pilgrimage (795-797), these animals are his only companions; "he is like a king, and they like his army" (796:3). But the description of the journey towards Mecca is meant to convey a sense of the difficulties encountered through the desert of life, and the presence of the animals — among which we have ants and snakes — is still associated with the pain of walking with bleeding feet over hard stones and thorns (796:1-5).

This association with the animals becomes more recurrent after Mağnūn loses hope of marrying Laylī. Thus after her father rejects him (812-815), Mağnūn leaves society and lives in the desert in total harmony with the animal world (815:25-816:5). This harmony is increased with every step that leads him away from society. Paradoxically, it seems to represent a

57. "Am I not your Lord?", *Koran* VII, 171.



return to a primitive bliss after each ascendance to a higher stage of purity achieved through suffering. Thus, after Laylī's marriage, Mağnūn becomes "liberated from good and evil thoughts" (854:20) and puts his whole trust in the purity of his animal friends (855:2).

This purity that accompanied Mağnūn on his traditional pilgrimage serves again as an external symbol of Mağnūn's last stages of development. In these stages, Mağnūn's religious practices tend to be identical with those of the Šūfī's, and Ğāmī succeeds in integrating some old motifs with some new elements to serve his purpose. This success can be contrasted with Ğāmī's earlier allusions to Šūfī ritual. As an example, we may mention the episode in which Mağnūn finds out that Laylī was married:

Mağnūn, upon hearing this melody  
rose up and began his Šūfī dance.

مجنون ز سماع این ترانه  
برخواست برقص صوفیانه  
(853:8)

In this line, using the word *tarāna* to denote the bad news, Ğāmī slips easily into associating it with *raqs* (dance), which forces upon him another association with the word *samā'* (hearing; also, in Šūfī terminology: listening to ritual music). Although these associations could be interpreted as indicative of Mağnūn's trance,<sup>58</sup> the reference to the Šūfī ritual remains abrupt, and hence fails to be convincing.

In contrast, Ğāmī makes a better use of Šūfī customs in the final episodes of his poem. After having relied on the motif of Mağnūn's intimacy with the animal world, the author introduces a new Šūfī element in the plot. In order to draw Laylī, Mağnūn is led to wear a sheep-skin, and to join her flock (879-883). The symbolism here is not difficult to detect: coming towards the end of Mağnūn's journey, it clearly alludes to the Šūfī *Tarīqa* as the most efficacious way of fulfilling his quest. Similarly, the archetypal figure of the shepherd recalls Ğāmī's praise of Ḥwāḡa 'Ubaydallāh Aḥrār in the opening episodes of his poem. In his narrative device, Ğāmī was helped by the etymology of the word *taṣawwuf*, which was believed to derive from the Arabic word *ṣūf* (wool), and among whose connotations we find *ṣafā'* (purity).<sup>59</sup>

58. This interpretation might be inferred from the rest of the episode, cf. 853-54.

59. Another possible derivation is mentioned by CORBIN, viz., the Greek word *sophos* (sage), cf. *Creative Imagination* 30, n. 5. Although we cannot ascertain whether Ğāmī was aware of this meaning, we can be sure that it falls within his conception of *taṣawwuf*, esp. in the sense of *Ḥikmatu l-Iṣrāq*, cf. WHINFIELD's "Preface" to *Lavā'ih* 8.





Through the Šūfī way, Laylī's shepherd, compared to Moses (880:10-11), leads Maġnūn to attain a vision of the Beloved. At this stage, Laylī has become a clear symbol of God, and the journey is totally internal. In this context, the reconciliation between day and night becomes reality. This reconciliation had already begun after Laylī was forbidden to meet Maġnūn (801:5). Here, however, the meeting takes place at night (881:7 and 883:12), and Ġamī makes it plain that this union was an ecstatic vision, in which Laylī's appearance dazzles Maġnūn and makes him lose his consciousness (882:12 and 18-23). That this experience represents an ecstatic vision is clear from the fact that, when Maġnūn regains consciousness, he addresses Laylī as the "Light of the Illustrious Lamp" (883:2, *وی نور چراغ ارجمندی*),<sup>60</sup> and refers to his being earth, whereas she is an eternal, Supreme Throne (883:3, *ای عرش برین تو وزمین من*). Again our author yields to the temptation of explaining his allegory and makes Maġnūn state explicitly that Laylī is only a vision produced by mystic drunkenness (883:6-7).

Here it is daylight which comes to deprive Maġnūn of his inner vision, and the episode ends with the recurrent complaint against the Wheel of Time, or Fortune (883:23). Yet the protagonist is led to a still higher state by the same shepherd, who is this time compared to Jesus. Maġnūn implores the shepherd to bring him back to life as he did before:

Your breath kindly caressed me  
and, like (the breath of) Jesus, gave me a new life.

انفـاس تو بلطف بنواخت      وز نو چو مسیح زنده ام ساخت  
(884:17)

In order to satisfy Maġnūn's desire, the author uses an old motif in a new context: Maġnūn is led to Laylī's tent as a beggar.<sup>61</sup> Laylī's apparition puts Maġnūn in the same bewilderment as before; but the real trance occurs when, instead of filling his cup, she breaks it (885:19). This act brings Maġnūn to the highest point of both his suffering and his mystic ecstasy.<sup>62</sup> His appearance as a beggar represents his achievement of *faqr* (spiritual poverty), which is the epitome of mystic virtues.<sup>63</sup> He is no more in need of

60. Cf. the Koranic reference to God: "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp, etc.," *Koran* XXIV, 35.

61. This motif is already to be found in Wālibī, see *Dīwān* 49.

62. For the motif of Maġnūn's delight in being rejected and mistreated by Laylī, see H. RITTER: *Das Meer der Seele*. Leiden 1955, 390-91.

63. Cf. T. BURCKHARDT: *Introduction aux doctrines ésotériques de l'Islam*. Paris 1969, 120.



cups, since he is in a state which allows him to drink directly from the water of life. He has reached a stage where his shimmering *aḥwāl* have become *maqāmāt*.<sup>64</sup> At present, he does not have to seek anyone outside himself. In his *maqām* (887:25), he is visited by a vision of Laylī, the last vision in which he recognizes her (886-887). Thereafter, he remains rooted in his *maqām* like a tree, with the birds of madness nesting in his head (888:8-11). When Laylī comes back to him, Maḡnūn has no single atom of reason left in him (888:21). He meets her with the question: “Who are you?” (888:25), then he sends her away (889:3); for the drop of water has drowned in the Ocean of Love (889:10), and Maḡnūn has lost all sense of duality (889:11) between lover and Beloved.

Yet, in his “station” of total love and madness, and right before his death, Maḡnūn is given time to recite his poetry! (890-892) This gives us final evidence of Ĝāmī’s conception of Maḡnūn as an archetypal character whose unity with the Absolute is achieved through the threefold channel of love, madness, and poetry.

#### B. Ĝāmī’s Creative Use of Convention

After the episode relating Maḡnūn’s death (892-896), Ĝāmī adds six episodes, two of which describe Laylī’s sorrow, illness, and death (899-905). However, these episodes are anti-climactic: they come as an unnecessary dénouement of a story in which climax and dénouement are one. In its spiral ascent, Maḡnūn’s progress could have its real end only at the highest point of expansion, in which the hero dissolves into the Whole. This point is symbolized by Maḡnūn’s physical *fanā’* which is the starting point of his total *baqā’* in union with the divine. After this point, what happens to Laylī is of little importance: her existence had become superfluous the moment Maḡnūn’s cup was broken by his divine Beloved.

However, Ĝāmī insists again on giving us a general clue to his allegory. Thus, the short episode that follows Maḡnūn’s death (896-897) is meant to explain that Maḡnūn was able to transcend the world of appearance and become one with the Real. Ĝāmī concludes this episode with the passage analyzed above.<sup>65</sup> As already mentioned, this passage contains not only the mood of the author, but also the moral of the story, on which our analysis of the poem may have shed some light.

64. For the distinction between the two terms, see *ibid.* 119-120.

65. See *supra* beginning of Chap. Four, II A.

Is that passage really central? And are we justified in our interpretation? Was the poet aware of what is implied in his imagery, or was it the result of a happy rhetorical coincidence? These are some of the questions that we have to ask before analyzing another passage of *Laylī u Maġnūn*, which may give another illustration of Ĝāmī's creative use of convention.

Of course, there is always the danger of reading too much into a poem. But this danger seems to me less grave than remaining blind to the richness of poetic ambiguity. On the one hand, Ĝāmī does not claim that the poet himself has to be aware of all the ambiguities involved in what he expresses in his unconscious, ecstatic visions (897:8). Indeed, he makes it clear (897:9) that it is up to us to understand. On the other hand, our poet does not refrain from claiming originality in his imagery. His insistence on his "ḥayāl-i ḥāṣṣ"<sup>66</sup> makes it incumbent upon us to attempt an appreciation of his poetic contribution, instead of adopting the somewhat common, but facile attitude of accusing him and his contemporaries of playing sheer rhetorical games. From recent critical works on Ĝāmī's period, "we can clearly see the principal characteristics of Ĝāmī's harmonic, consistent and, for his time, undoubtedly progressive literary-historical and critical conception."<sup>67</sup>

It is true that, on the poetic level, harmony and consistency are not sufficient. They can be present in a literary work without imparting to it any poetic tension. And that is precisely what is generally felt to be lacking in Ĝāmī's poetry. One possible explanation is that one can hardly be passionate about *fanā'*, even when it is believed to lead to the *baqā'*. In Ĝāmī's case, BAUSANI observes that

Il desiderio della nulla, la fuga dalla bestemmia dell'Essere verso la sola positività, che è il Non Essere, sembra essere l'unica vera «passione» del pur freddo Ĝiāmī: siamo, come più volte dicemmo, in pieno periodo mistico della letteratura persiana...<sup>68</sup>

Ĝāmī's metaphysical outlook, combined with a desire for originality resulted in making him one of the major precursors of the "Indian style" (*sabk-i hindī*) in Persian poetry. In an analysis of one of Ĝāmī's poems, BAUSANI has pointed out three main aspects of this style, *viz.*, the

66. "The meaning of this, in V. A. KAPRANOV's opinion, 'fundamental term', is interpreted as the 'specific (for every respective poet) imagery'." (A.N. BOLDYREV: *Literary-Critical Opinions of Ĝāmī and his Contemporaries*. In: *Yād-nāme-ye Rypka*. The Hague-Paris 1967, 65).

67. *Loc. cit.*

68. BAUSANI: *op. cit.* 474-75.

concretization of abstract objects, the overaccurate study of the imagery, and an effort to enrich this imagery by the introduction of common objects into poetic diction.<sup>69</sup>

What I should like to do here is to show that the general “coldness” and over-intellectualization of Ġāmī’s style do not prevent him from achieving, at times, the necessary ambiguity which keeps a poem alive.

As already mentioned, Maġnūn’s quest faces three main planes of obstacles. These are similar to concentrated circles which move from the cosmological to the social, then to the instinctive realm. Thus, Maġnūn’s movement towards freedom takes the opposite direction and grows, in a spiral curve, towards final reconciliation. Accordingly, the first reconciliation occurs on the instinctive plane. This is symbolized by the fraternity between gazelle and wolf (855:8-9). On a higher plane, Maġnūn achieves social and emotional reconciliation, symbolized by his crying over the death of his rival, Laylī’s husband (873-875). Finally, as we have already seen, Maġnūn transcends the Wheel of day and night.

Yet, before leading the protagonist to his final rebirth, Ġāmī accentuates the phases of Maġnūn’s self-purification by relying on the archetypal opposition between light and darkness, and making the break of a new day stand for the reawakening of Maġnūn’s spiritual and physical worlds. This motif is consistently used in the poem. Whenever it occurs, it is associated with some form of positive relationship with Laylī.<sup>70</sup> An example of the way Ġāmī concentrates his imagery around this motif could be seen from the following passage:

1. As the morning, Jesus-like, began to breathe  
and brought out its standard from a yellow reed,
2. The breeze of its breath, sprinkling musk  
over green trees and dropping blossoms,
3. Its golden banner, scattering gold and pearls  
(born out of) a shell of azure,
4. Qays was delivered from the breath of the Night Dragon  
and held his breath from sighs and groans.
5. He called out to his travelling camel  
and went forth on the way of ecstasy.
6. He rode, singing the hymn of Love  
until he arrived at the camp of the Beloved.
7. Since he had no way to the shadow of (Laylī’s) tent,  
he reined in from a distance.

69. *Ibid.* 470-75.

70. Cf., for instance, the opening passages of the episodes beginning on pages 772, 795, 825, 828, 857.

8. Having seen no sign of the tent-dweller,  
he began reciting his story to the tent itself:
9. 'O Qibla of light and bridal-chamber of houris,  
in your shadow the sun is veiled.
10. Laylī is like the light of my eyes.  
You are the veil over my clear sight.'

وز زرد قصب علم بر آورد	چون عیسیٰ صبحدم بر آورد
اخضر شجر وشکوفه ریزی	باد دم او بمشک بیزی
نیلی صدف وگهر فشانی	زرین علمش بزر فشانی
وز آه ونفیر دم فروبست	قیس از ازدهای شب رست
واندر ره بیخودی قدم زد	بر ناقة ره نورد دم زد
تا ساحت خیمه گاه جانان	میراندیشید شوق خوانان
از دور زمام خود نگهداشت	در سایه خیمه چون نه ره داشت
میگفت بخیمه داستانی	نادیده زخیمگی نشانی
در سایهات آفتاب مستور	کای قبله نور وحجله حور
تو پرده چشم روشن من	لیل است مرا چو چشم روشن

(772:11-20)

When isolated, few of the metaphors in this passage are really original. Yet, together, they become polyreflective and serve to depict this particular phase of Maġnūn's development as an integral part of his whole quest.

In achieving this, Ġāmī makes his imagery function on two planes. In the first place, he relies on the flexibility of Persian grammatical structure, which provides his meanings with horizontal ambivalence. In the second place, he draws on the philological and etymological denotations of words, thus investing the meaning with a vertical ambivalence. This second type of ambivalence gains a great deal from the historical and doctrinal connotations of words.<sup>71</sup>

The passage under discussion exhibits both types of ambivalence. In the first *mišrā'* of the *maṭla'*, Ġāmī plays on the word *subḥdam* (early morning, dawn) which introduces a keynote, soon to become a leitmotif: the word *dam*. Several denotations of this word, included in S.HAĪM's *Farhang-i Ġāmī'*, are relevant to the present passage: (1) breath; (2) bellows; (3) instant, moment; (4) a smell, a scent, a perfume or sweet

71. Our best external evidence for this kind of plurisignation in Ġāmī's poetry is to be found in his own commentary on *al-Qaṣīda l-ḥamriyya* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Cf. Ġāmī: *Lavāmi'-i Ġāmī: šarḥ-i qaṣīda-i ḥamriyya-i Ibn-i Fāriḍ*. Ed. H. AL-ĀĠĀ, Tehran n.d., *passim*.



odor; (7) mouth, opening; (9) a draught or drink; (11) incantation (esp. by the effect of one's breath), conjuration; (13) life; (14) a poetical meter. Some of its connotations are: *dam-i ṣubḥ* (dawn, morning-tide, early in the morning) and *dam-i 'Īsā* (the miraculous breath of Jesus).

In order to describe the reawakening of Mağnūn's life, within and without, Ġāmī orchestrates a triumphant march of the vital forces of nature and sets it in harmony with Mağnūn's quest. *Dam-i ṣubḥ* associated with *dam-i 'Īsā* — as it were by incantation or conjuration — breathe life into the world of nature and triumph over the Night Dragon.

This triumph of life is personified through the presence of 'Īsā, a presence that ramifies into various connotations, especially in opposition to the Night Dragon. *Azdiḥā* (a standard; the constellation Dragon) is used in the meaning of *azdarḥā* (dragon) and hence constitutes a complex metaphor symbolizing the forces of death: the standard of the black dragon of night, and its evil breath are set in opposition to the standard of the dawn, bringing life with the breath of Jesus.

The multiple symbolism of this struggle recalls two archetypal heroes. The first is Saint George — here associated with Jesus — who triumphs over the dragon and rescues Qays. The second is Jonas — here associated with Qays — who comes back to life from the belly of the whale.<sup>72</sup> The fourth line presents the climax of the struggle, in which Qays is delivered from death. The verb *rastan* (to grow, to come forth, to spring; to be delivered or liberated; to get rid of; to escape) conveys the sense of springing out of the dragon's belly. This sense relates the present passage to the previous one, in which Ġāmī develops the image of night as a black dragon swallowing everything (771:12-13). On the other hand, *rastan*, connected with the growth of plantation, reiterates the image of the reawakening of *aḥzar šağar* (line 2) and constitutes a common denominator between the image of vital growth and the function of *Ḥiẓr* (an Islamic combination of Saint George and the prophet Elias, both symbolizing eternal life) whose name connotes eternal greenness.

The new greenness of life liberates with it the whole world of colors and perfumes (lines 1 and 2) while replacing Qays's sighs and groans with a song of love. Qays is free now to ride towards Laylī, and to address his *munāğāt* to her tent, which is a veil obstructing his vision. The tent is another kind of shell which conceals the pearl of the sun (cf. line 3) —

72. "The passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale..." (J. CAMPBELL: *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York 1956, 90).

*ḥayma* recalls *ḥayma-i kabūd*, a metaphor for the sky — which is another hiding place of the sun-gazelle symbolizing the Beloved.<sup>73</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Qays succeeds in obtaining a vision of Laylī, but soon the privacy of the lovers is interrupted (773). However, since this episode is only a “station” on Maġnūn’s Way, it does not prevent him from finally fulfilling his quest to dissolve in the Sun.

(So that) I become, free from intellect and distinction,  
in His rays like an insignificant atom.

گَردم فـارغ زهوش و تمیز در پرتو آن چو ذره نـاچیز  
(843:13)

Maġnūn reaches this “station” through physical death in his desert exile. Then, begins his *baqā’ ba’d al-fanā’*.<sup>74</sup> And yet, is this the only end to which this archetypal vehicle could lead?

73. The same metaphor recurs in the *maṭla’* of another passage: “When in the morning, from the gazelle-like sun, the earth put on golden ringlets” (825: 17),

(چون صبحدم از غزاله خور پوشید زمین غلاله زر)

74. For comments on this notion, cf. RITTER: *Das Meer der Seele* 18, 147, 633, and 635.







## CONCLUDING REMARKS

It may be appropriate to introduce these concluding remarks with a confession. The story of Mağnūn and Laylā, ever since it was conceived, has not ceased to enchant popular imagination, and inspire poets and narrators. It has received some critical attention, yet hardly commensurate with its fame or importance. However, what really intrigued me in the subject was the discovery that the Mağnūn theme was not necessarily confined to the Islamic context. ARAGON's epic romance, *Le Fou d'Elsa*<sup>1</sup> — perhaps one of the most beautiful works of modern French literature — is a remolding of this theme from the perspective of a modern concept of life and literature. The intriguing phenomenon was that the story of Mağnūn had been frequently used as a symbol for a mystic quest, and thus it had seemed hardly compatible with the ideals of a Marxist poet. This phenomenon incited me to take a fresh look at the story in order to discover the basic elements which make it so potent as to become the Song of Songs of Šūfī poetry, while keeping it open to an almost directly opposite Weltanschauung. I had, therefore, intended to examine some prominent Islamic versions of the story, then contrast them with *Le Fou d'Elsa*, thus hoping both to elucidate the permanent characteristics of the Mağnūn theme and thereby to gain a new perspective, from which to approach the different variations on that theme.

As my research developed, I found out that my initial project could not be realized within the scope of a dissertation, except at the price of remaining too theoretical and too sketchy. The archetypal approach, which I have deemed adequate for understanding the character of Mağnūn, has its strength as well as its weakness. On the one hand, it allows us to discover the perennial characteristics of a mythical or semi-mythical hero, and to transcend the limitations of the individual and

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1. Louis ARAGON: *Le Fou d'Elsa*. Paris 1963.

the local. On the other hand, it tends to seek its criteria outside the literary field and to make us overlook the individual stamp that infuses life into a work of art.

In order to avoid this shortcoming of the archetypal approach, I have found it necessary to limit this study to the Arabic and Persian expressions of the theme, and to concentrate, first, on the rise and development of the theme, then on two representative versions, namely, those of Wālibī and Ğāmī. I believe, however, that my initial intention opened my eyes to the necessity of a wider perspective than those already adopted in approaching the subject, a perspective that may allow us to see the picture in a more universal framework.

Here I should like to sum up the results of this investigation, then to suggest further research on the subject by sketching a comparison between the quests of Mağnūn as conceived by Ğāmī and Aragon. A stylistic comparison — unless elaborately detailed and documented — will not be profitable. Moreover, my references to the Marxist and Surrealist world-views can be safely considered a matter of common knowledge, and hence need no documentation.<sup>2</sup>

## I

The general question underlying the previous chapters concerns the existential situation confronting the “I” with the “Other”. No matter what terms we use to describe this confrontation — finite and Infinite, part and Whole, relative and Absolute, microcosm and Macrocosm, man and God, — it would seem that the finite, relative “I” experiences a sense of separation that results in an existential anguish, and creates what is generally called “a thirst for the Absolute.”

This thirst is not easily quenched. The Absolute is too infinite to be fathomed by the human mind, or to be possessed within the human body. Moreover, “Nature loves to hide”, says Heraclitus. Yet, the burning thirst for the Absolute seems to make this world look like a desert — the appropriate landscape of Mağnūn’s journey — and to set sensitive souls on an unremitting quest for the hidden Water of Life. Many a journey may lead to a mirage, but since no one can guess the result, this mirage does not fail to endow existence with a meaningful goal, and to enliven it with hope. At any rate, Mağnūn would declare on

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2. For an elaborate study of the Marxist foundations of *Le Fou d'Elsa*, cf. CH. HAROCHE: *L'idée de l'amour dans "Le Fou d'Elsa" et l'oeuvre d'Aragon*. Paris 1966.

Ġāmī's behalf, 'It is not very important to find the Water, it is the pleasure and pain of the quest that count.'<sup>3</sup>

For its visions of the Invisible, pre-Islamic Arabia found its guides in poets, seers, and madmen. The *Šā'ir* was a combination of the three. But his vision was only one of many: Arab society was made out of many tribes and worshiped many gods. However, with the rise of Islam, this multiplicity of visions was replaced by the Revelation, the many gods by the One, and the poets by the Prophet.

Thus the poet lost his prerogative of communication with the spirit-world. Organized religion monopolized this prerogative and held the poet's vision to be a pure figment of a misled imagination. Further chains on the imagination and on psychic freedom were added by the adoption of Greek rationalism. Inspiration as well as conduct had to comply with established rules. It would seem that these rules, added to a general human disillusionment with the material world, led to a reaction that found one of its best expressions in the Mağnūn figure.

In the previous chapters, it was argued that, although the rise of the Mağnūn story was due to a specific historical context and to a specific literary tradition, it was formulated in a structure, simple enough as to accommodate various levels of interpretation. The mosaic structure of the story made it a compilation of various anecdotes and poetic fragments revolving around the love-madness of a certain poet called Mağnūn. Even when one accepts KRAČKOVSKIJ's argument that a real Qays b. al-Mulawwaḥ did exist, such an argument does not prove the identity between the historical Ibn al-Mulawwaḥ and the figure of Mağnūn presented by the texts of Ibn Qutayba, Iṣfahānī and Wālibī. Indeed, we are dealing here with a legend that was the product, not only of the popular mind, but also of Šūfī motifs.

A major part of the present study was devoted to prove that the Mağnūn legend achieved its universal appeal because it expressed a collective need for rebellion against the rationalist claims of society. If reduced to his basic characteristics, Mağnūn remains a poet, a lover, and a madman. Each of these aspects of his personality constituted a common motif in Arabic poetry. However, Mağnūn's uniqueness rests on two foundations: first, the intrinsic unity between the three aspects of his character, a unity without which he loses his defining characteristic; secondly, the fact that he is the only love-poet who is described as actually

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3. Cf. *Haft Aurang* 851:25, and 852:1.

insane, and who leaves society in order to live and die with the wild animals of the desert.

Thus, love, madness, and poetry, considered as archetypal channels for communion with the divine, were fused in one legendary character who symbolized different quests in different contexts. In all these contexts, however, Mağnūn represents the rejection of established intellectual, social, and psychological limitations and symbolizes the basic yearning of the “I” to be at one with the “Other”. His project is to fulfill the eternal human desire to make the part identical with the Whole, a project that is conceivable only within the realms of love, madness, and poetry.

In the Arabic context, it was argued — contrary to what is generally believed — that the Mağnūn theme does not simply express a romantic nostalgia for life in nature, but it also exhibits clear Sūfī overtones. Before reaching Ğāmī, Mağnūn had become, in CORBIN’s words, “le miroir de Dieu (*â’yîna-ye Haqq*) ou mieux dit l’oeil par lequel Dieu se contemple soi-même.”<sup>4</sup>

However, it was Ğāmī’s contribution to set Mağnūn on his allegorical quest for self-purification, a quest that leads him to self-annihilation in union with the Friend.

## II

In the previous chapter, we ended our discussion of Ğāmī’s poem by asking whether the quest he assigns to the Mağnūn archetype was the only possible one.

In answer to this question, we may begin by quoting WHEELRIGHT’s comment on Heraclitus’s notion of our apprehension of the Real:

From the contextual and perspectival character of reality it follows that the nature of reality is intrinsically and ultimately hidden from any finite exploration. When Heraclitus declared that “Nature loves to hide” and that “The Lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals, but gives signs,” he was indicating a fundamental and permanent characteristic of What Is, and not a temporary state which man’s increasing knowledge would some day succeed in rectifying.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, neither Ğāmī nor ARAGON — both poet-oracles and decipherers of oracular signs — is expected to give us a final code for the

4. *‘Abhar al-‘āšiqīn*, 14.

5. *Metaphor and Reality*, 172.

hidden reality of Nature. However, a comparison between their different treatments of the Maġnūn legend may shed light on a basic human approach to the apprehension of reality. Such a comparison may illuminate not only the general meaning of the archetype, but also the works of the two authors and their historical contexts. The terms of the comparison are innumerable. Here, I shall suggest only two angles of approach which may be useful for future research.

1) Perhaps the first task of the critic would be to compare the two different ways in which these two poets conceive of the "Other". This will involve an examination of the poets' ideologies. Such an extra-literary examination is not only warranted in this case, but also necessary. Each of these two poets starts out from a definite ideology which he tries to express through his work. Accordingly, the method of approach should cope with the poets' concepts of life and with the role they assign to the creative individual.

The basic difference between Ğāmī and ARAGON would seem to lie in their definition of the Real. Ğāmī's conception is largely Neoplatonic: the Real is ultimately immutable. Although God is immanent in nature, although He manifests Himself in an infinity of epiphanies and is especially mirrored by the beauty of the human soul, His essence transcends history. From this perspective, we can understand Ğāmī's conception of man's nature, a conception which strikingly recalls Pascal's "roseau pensant":

Man, in regard to his corporeal nature, stands at the lowest point of degradation; nevertheless, in regard to his spiritual nature, he is at the summit of nobility. He takes the impress of everything to which he directs his attention and assumes the colour of everything to which he approaches.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in order to achieve union with the divine Beloved, Maġnūn's struggle is essentially internal; it is the purification of his soul from any concerns with the historical vicissitudes of the material world.

ARAGON, by contrast, identifies the Real with History, the essence of which resides in the laws of dialectical materialism. Man cannot find salvation outside History. If there is a paradise, the only place in which it can be attained is on this earth.

It is true that, as a Surrealist, ARAGON resembles Ğāmī in believing that the human soul contains a microcosmic image of the Real, and that ultimate salvation is achieved by liberating this image from the distorting

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6. *Lavā'ih*, 7.

frames of social and moral limitations. Yet, the basic question is how to achieve this freedom in order to realize a perfect identity with the Real.

2) The second question that one may raise would involve the implications of the above world-views on the literary conceptions of the two authors, and especially in relation to these authors' variations on the Mağnūn theme.

What Ğāmī and ARAGON seem to have in common is expressed by RIMBAUD's famous outcry: "Changer la vie. Car la vraie vie est absente!" But RIMBAUD was claimed by the Marxists, as well as by the Surrealists, who exhibit a clear mystic strain.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, our method for changing life seems to depend on the manner we conceive of "la vraie vie." Ğāmī and ARAGON express the same dissatisfaction with the "here and now", and the same yearning for a blissful paradise. But, whereas Ğāmī aims at sacrificing the "here" for a perfect "now" in union with the divine — and ultimately for a timeless *baqā' ba'd al-fanā'* — ARAGON has to struggle within the stream of History, hoping to realize his paradise on earth. He does not subscribe to BAUDELAIRE's ideal, "anywhere out of this world;" he dreams of realizing his paradise "everywhere *in this world*."

However, this paradise has to wait for the future. Thus ARAGON's Medjnoun, roaming the streets of Granada on the eve of its reconquest by the Christians (A.D. 1492), dreams of his future union with Elsa, a union in which all personal, social, and historical contradictions will be resolved.

ARAGON finds in the Mağnūn archetype an adequate symbol for his concept of man's imaginative and emotional faculties; he thus uses it, but redirects its quest. However, no matter how the new quest differs from the old one, the image of the Real — latent in the human soul — can be actualized only through a combination of love, madness and poetry. In Ğāmī's quest, these channels are meant to transcend the imperfections of history; in ARAGON's, they are meant to accelerate the coming of a paradise on earth.

Yet this Paradise, on earth or in heaven, remains far away. ARAGON's protagonist might sing the Future and be mad in love with it, but he still has to face war, persecution, and the vicissitudes of Time — the source of his hope and fear:

J'ai tout mon temps d'homme passé  
Sans lendemain dans les fossés

7. Cf. A. BALAKIAN: *The Literary Origins of Surrealism: A New Mysticism in French Poetry*. New York 1947, Introduction *et passim*.



Attendant une aube indécise  
La mort à mes côtés assise.

(*Le Fou*, p. 17)

Similarly, Ğāmī's quest to transcend this world does not save him from Time, and the hope for the *baqā'* does not prevent him from repeating at the approach of death:<sup>8</sup>

Alas! While I am gone, many a day will pass,  
many a rose will grow, and many a spring will smile.  
Many times will (the months of) Tīr, Dīmāh, and Urdībihišt  
come again, when I am as dry as dust.

دریغاً که بی ما بسی روزگار      بروید گل و بشکفتد نوهار  
بسی تیر و دیمه و اردیبهشت      بیاید که ما خاک باشیم و خشت

Ğāmī's sadness in his old age, and ARAGON's realization that "il n'y a pas d'amour heureux" make one wonder whether idealism is frequently doomed to end in some disillusion.

Facing reality with dream, exciting the memory of an original beatific vision, or poetically creating their own beatific visions, these poets seem finally to realize that the abyss of physical death gapes between them and the Beloved. Thus we are back again to the Arab poet's less idealistic, if not less poignant,

Only God and the mountains will remain.

Meanwhile, through their love and madness, and especially through their poetry, these poets cover the abyss with their enchanted gardens, with the beauty and fragrance of their roses, and with the songs of their nightingales.

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8. *Takmila*, 40.





APPENDIX  
AL-MAĞNŪN<sup>1</sup>

Some say Mağnūn was Qays b. Mu'ād, others say he was Qays b. al-Mulawwah. Some say he belonged to the clan of Ġa'da b. Ka'b b. Rabī'a b. Ṣa'sa'a. Others say he belonged to the clan of 'Uqayl b. Ka'b b. Rabī'a.

He was nicknamed al-Mağnūn (the Madman), since his reason had left him because of the intensity of his passion. al-Aṣma'ī used to say that he was not mad, but a little crazy, like Abū Ḥayya.<sup>2</sup> He was one of the best poets, but they have ascribed to him much tender poetry similar to his own, such as the lines of Abū Ṣaḥr al-Hudālī:<sup>3</sup>

By the One who makes us laugh and cry, live and die,  
whose will is supreme,  
She makes me envy the wild beasts  
when I see them in couples, unstartled and serene.  
O separation from Laylā, you have brought me to the end,  
further than separation has ever brought any man.  
O love of Laylā, each night double my grief.  
O solace of love, we shall meet on the Last Day.  
I was at one with you; you said: "He knows no disaffection!"

I visited each day; you said; "He has no patience!"  
When she is mentioned, my heart becomes brisk  
as a bird flutters when raindrops moisten it.

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1. The following is a translation of the chapter on Mağnūn in Ibn Qutayba's *K. aṣ-Ši'r waš-šu'arā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭaqāfa, 1964). Although the story itself is not unknown to the Western reader, and excerpts of Ibn Qutayba's text have already been included in some translations, it seemed advisable to translate the integral text of Ibn Qutayba so as to give the reader a full picture of the earliest extant version (or performance) of this legend.

2. Abū Ḥayya an-Numayrī, a poet of the second half of 8th century, popularly accused of being a great "liar" and thought to be epileptic. Cf. *GAS* II, 464-65.

3. Abū Ṣaḥr al-Hudālī a poet of the second half of the 7th century, known for his love poetry. Cf. *GAS* II, 405.



Strange are the efforts of Time to drive us apart,  
 and when an end came  
 to what was between us,  
 Time stopped, and Fate was still.

And such as the lines of Abū Bakr b. ‘Abdarrahmān b. al-Miswar  
 b. Maḥrama:<sup>4</sup>

While we were speeding down the Balākit plain,  
 and the camels were hurling us forward,  
 At night, memories of you assailed my heart.  
 I was too weak to keep going.  
 When longing for you summoned me, I shouted: “Here I am!”  
 and to the two cameleers: “Turn around the mounts!”

When, as children, Maḡnūn and his companion Laylā used to tend  
 the lambs together, he grew attached to her with a childlike love, which  
 he expresses as follows:

I fell in love with Laylā when she was a heedless child,  
 when no sign of her bosom has yet appeared to playmates.  
 Two children guarding the flocks. Would that we never  
 had grown up, nor had the flocks grown old!

When he grew up, 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 beasts. He would not put on any  
 garment without tearing it to pieces, nor would he understand anything  
 unless Laylā was mentioned to him. Once she was mentioned, he would  
 recover his reason and talk about her without dropping a letter.

Once Nawfal b. Musāḡhiq came to the tribe to collect the alms tax.  
 He stopped by a gathering of the tribesmen and saw Maḡnūn, naked,  
 playing with earth, so he gave him a cloak. Someone asked him: “May God  
 keep you! Don’t you realize who this is?” Nawfal answered: “No!” The

4. Abū Bakr b. ‘Abdarrahmān b. al-Miswar b. Maḥrama: a poet who probably lived  
 in the first half of the 8th century. His grand-father, al-Miswar b. Maḥrama b. Nawfal az-  
 Zuhri, was a *ṣaḡḡbī* and died in 64/683. Cf. ZIRIKLĪ: *al-A’lām* VIII, 123-24.



person said: "This is Maġnūn [Qays b. al-Mulawwaḥ]. He does not wear clothes and he does not want any." Nawfal was told that if he wanted him to talk sensibly, he should mention Laylā to him and ask him about his love for her. When Nawfal did so, Maġnūn gave him his attention, and talked to him about Laylā, reciting his poetry about her. Nawfal asked him: "Is it love that has brought you to this state?" "Yes," said Maġnūn, "and it will bring me to a worse state than this." Nawfal asked: "Would you like me to help you marry her?" "Yes," replied Maġnūn, "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 Maġnūn, and Nawfal said: "Yes." Maġnūn 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. Maġnūn put them on and went with him like the soundest of his companions, talking with him and reciting poetry. The news reached Laylā's family; they came to meet them with arms and said to Nawfal: "By God, O son of Musāḥiq, we would die before Maġnūn 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 Maġnūn to go away. Maġnūn said: "By God, you have not kept your word!" Nawfal answered: "Your departure is easier for me than bloodshed." So he (i.e. Maġnūn) went away.

Concerning this event, Maġnūn says:

Halt with me, Companions, at a station which  
 Time, ruining Time has worn.  
 In every station, there is a diwan of knowledge,  
 the remembrance of diwans has kept nothing alive.  
 I see the returning (pangs) of love kill me,  
 and their beginning was sufficient for me.  
 I meet blows of despair that kill me,  
 and smiles of hope that bring me back to life.

Concerning the return of his reason whenever Laylā is mentioned, he says:

Woe to him whose mind has been stolen (by deceit),  
 and who is led to follow any course.  
 Disowned by companions, except for censors,  
 I am mocked by those who would prefer to shun me.  
 Whenever Laylā is mentioned, I become reasonable,  
 and from a manifold passion, my mental powers return.



They say: “He is sane, with no phantom of any jinni,  
nor any touch of madness, except the lies he invents.”

A man from the Murra tribe went on business towards aš-Šām and al-Ḥiḡāz, passing close to Taymā' and as-Sarāt in Naḡd. Suddenly a huge tent came in sight. Since he was caught in the rain, he drew towards the tent and cleared his throat. A woman there addressed him saying: “Come in.” [When he related the story] he said: “So I went in. Their flocks and camels passed by. They were great in number and had many herdsmen. She said [to the people around]: ‘Ask this man where he is coming from.’ I answered: ‘From the direction of Tihāma and Naḡd.’ She asked: ‘O servant of God, through what parts of Naḡd did you pass?’ I replied: ‘All of them.’ She questioned: ‘With whom did you stay there?’ I answered: ‘With the ‘Āmir clan.’ She drew a deep sigh and asked: ‘With which family of the ‘Āmir clan?’ I replied: ‘With the Ḥarīš.’ She shed tears, [and asked:] ‘Did you hear any mention of one of their young men, called Qays and nicknamed Maḡnūn?’ I responded: ‘Yes, indeed, I stayed with his father and went to see him.’ She inquired how he was, and I told her that he was wandering in the deserts with the wild beasts, possessing neither sense nor understanding except when Laylā is mentioned to him; then he weeps and recites the poetry that he has composed for her.” [The man from Murra continued] saying: “Then she removed the veil that was between us, and I saw a moon-face, the likes of which my eyes had never seen before. She wept and wailed until, by God, I thought that her heart would break. I said: ‘Woman, don’t you fear God?’<sup>5</sup> I have not said anything objectionable, have I?’ She continued to weep and wail for a long time, then said:

Would that I knew, while dangers are so many,  
when Qays’s camel will be saddled for return.  
May my soul be his ransom who does not prepare his camel,  
and who is lost if God does not protect him.

Then she cried until she fainted, and when she regained consciousness, I said: ‘And who are you, O handmaid of God?’ She answered: ‘I am Laylā, who has caused his ill-fortune and does not comfort him.’” The man from Murra concluded, saying: “I have never seen any grief or anguish, nor any passion similar to hers.”

The father and clan of Maḡnūn had gone to the father and people of Laylā to ask them in the name of kinship [to have pity on him], informing them of what had afflicted him. But Laylā’s father rejected [their plea] and swore never to give her to him in marriage.

5. This implies the common expression: “Fear God!”, i.e., be reasonable!



People suggested to Mağnūn's father that he take him to Mecca to have him seek the help of the House [of God] and pray to God in the hope that he would forget her, or that God would relieve him of his affliction. Thus, he went on a pilgrimage. While he was walking in Minā<sup>6</sup> with his father holding his hand, and was about to perform the Ğimār rite,<sup>7</sup> someone called out: "O Laylā!" Mağnūn fell down, unconscious. People gathered around him clamoring and threw water on him. His father cried by his side. He regained consciousness. Jaundiced and perturbed, he began to recite:

A caller called as we were in the [pilgrim] tract of Minā;  
 unknowing, he excited the sorrows of the heart.  
 He called another Laylā, and it was as if  
 by "Laylā" he set to flight a bird caged in my chest.

Al-Hayṭam (Ibn 'Adiyy) relating on the authority of Abū Miskīn, said: "One of our young men travelled until he reached the well of Maymūn. There (he saw) a group of people on a certain mountain. In their midst was a young man whom they had caught hold of. He was tall, fair, curly-haired, with big dark eyes, the most handsome man I had ever seen. Yet he was jaundiced, emaciated, and pallid." "I asked about him," continued the narrator, "and they said: 'This is Qays, known as Mağnūn. When he was stricken with his affliction, his father, al-Mulawwah, brought him to al-Ḥaram seeking refuge and cure in the House (of God). Al-Mulawwah thought that Mağnūn should seek refuge at the tomb of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace!).' I asked: 'What is he doing here and why are you holding him?' They replied: 'Because of what he does to himself, for he treats himself so vilely that even his enemies would have mercy on him. He pleads: 'Take me out to breath the east wind of Nağd.' So we bring him out here, and he turns towards the region of Nağd hoping that the east wind would blow in his direction. We do not like to leave him alone, for fear he might throw himself down from the mountain. Be kind, come close, and let him know that you have come from Nağd. When he asks you how things are in Nağd and in his home, let him know.' I said: 'I will do so.' They told him: 'O Abu l-Mahdī, this is a man who has come from the region of Nağd.' He breathed so deeply that I thought his heart had broken. Then he began to ask me about it, valley by valley and place by place. While I described it for him, he cried in the most intense and heartbreaking manner. Then he recited:

6. A place in Mecca near the Ka'ba.

7. Throwing of stones at stone pillars at three different stages of the Pilgrimage.





Would that I knew if the two hills of Qanā,  
     through the length of nights, have changed after my parting,  
 And if the high winds blow on Nağd,  
     when they carry the smell of lavender,  
 And what the sand-daisy would do  
     if some night it should journey to a moist and generous soil.  
 Will the wind ever blow the locks of my hair  
     over a (horse) slender of hips and fast in gallops!  
 And should I ever hear the sounds of camels  
     moving up from valley to abundant valley!

Along the same lines, he also says:

At Mecca, by night, the pilgrims prayed to God  
     beseeching forgiveness for their sins,  
 While I called: 'O God, my first request for myself  
     I make for Laylā, then be my reckoner.  
 If I have Laylā in my life-time  
     no worshipper's repentance will be greater than mine.'

A sheikh of the Murra tribe travelled out to the 'Āmir land to meet Mağnūn. "They directed me to a tent," he said, "so I went to it and saw his father, a very old sheikh, and his grown-up sons. Their flocks were much in evidence, and their wealth was great. I asked about Mağnūn; they all wept and cried, while the sheikh explained: 'He was indeed my favorite among all of these. He fell in love with a kinswoman who could entertain no hopes for the likes of him. After the relation between them became known, her father was averse to giving her to him in marriage. Then he gave her in marriage to another man, and my son became mad out of passion and deep affection for her. We imprisoned him and put him in fetters. But he would bite his tongue and lips until we were afraid that he would bite them off. When we saw that, we set him free. He is in the desert with the wild beasts. Every day we have people take food for him and place it where he can see it. When they move away from it, he comes to eat. If his clothes wear out, they bring him other clothes and throw them where he can see them. Then they go away. He sees them, comes to them, throws out what he is wearing, and puts them on.' Then I asked them to show me where he was, so that I could go to him. They directed me to a young man from their quarter and said: 'He is still friends with Mağnūn, who does not like anyone else's company except his. He learns his poetry and brings it to us.' So I went to him and asked him to tell me what to do in order to draw near to Mağnūn. He said: 'If you want his poetry, I have it all. I shall go tomorrow, and if he has composed anything I



will bring it to you.' I said: 'No, instead, show me the way, so I can go to him.' He objected: 'If he is scared away by you, I am afraid he also might be scared away from me, and his poetry will disappear.' I insisted that he show me where Maġnūn was. He said: 'All right, seek him in the desert. When you see him, approach him in a friendly way, and do not show fear. He will threaten and menace you, and probably throw something at you if he has anything at hand. Then sit down as if you were not looking at him, but glance at him out of the corner of your eye. When you see that he has calmed down and begun to make marks in the sand with his hand, recite some poetry to him if you know by heart any of Qays b. ʿAḏīḥ's, for he admires him.' "

"So I went," (the narrator) said, "and wandered all day, but found him only in the late afternoon, sitting on a sand-hill, on which he had traced lines with his fingers. I drew near to him without being afraid, and, by God, he bolted just as wild animals do when they catch sight of a human. At his side there was a heap of stones, and he picked up one of them. Nevertheless, I drew closer until I sat down near him. He remained quite a while as if he were still startled and ready to run away. But when I sat still long enough, he calmed down and began making marks in the sand with his fingers. I looked at him and said: 'Qays b. ʿAḏīḥ was indeed excellent when he said:

I shall drain my tears by crying,  
     fearing what has not been, but will be.  
 They said: 'Tomorrow or a night thereafter brings the parting  
     from a beloved who though not yet departed, will depart.'  
 I never feared that my death would be by my own palms,  
     yet whoever is fated meets his fate.'

He cried at length and said: 'But I am a still better poet when I say:

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 breast.'

Suddenly some gazelles appeared. He sprang up to follow them. I went away, then returned the next day, but did not find him. I went back to inform them. They sent the man who used to take him food, and he brought the news that it was still untouched — he had not eaten anything. Then I returned again the third day, and did not succeed in finding him. I looked at his food; it was untouched. Then, the next day, his brothers, relatives, and I went out in the morning. We searched for him all day and all night, but



could not find him. The next morning, we looked over a very stony valley and suddenly saw him, dead, among the stones. They bore him home and buried him.”

Mağnūn has offspring in Nağd. No poet has ever excelled him in expressing the meaning of his saying: “You kept me close until you put a spell on me...” Similar to it is the saying of Ibn al-Aḥnaf:

I complain of those who made me taste their love,  
then when they awakened me to passion, they went to sleep.

Also, among his poetry is the following which is said to be falsely attributed to him:

She who claimed that your heart was weary of her  
was created for your love as you were created for hers.  
Whenever you are tempted to forget her, your conscience  
intercedes, and your heart expells the temptation.  
She is white (of skin). Early in her life, comfort came to her,  
elegantly fashioned and refined her, and made her sublime.  
In my soul I hide a rapture for her so great  
that if it passed over her, it would cover her in its shade.  
In my breast lies a passion so great  
that were it under her couch, it would carry her to me.  
She has withheld her favors, so I said to my  
companion: “What wealth she is to us and what poverty!”

And among his good poetry, is his saying:

You told me that Taymā’ is a stop  
for Laylā when summer lays anchor.  
Now that the summer months have passed,  
why does the stormy journey still toss Laylā about?  
If a slanderer’s house were in the heights of Yamāma  
and mine in Ḥaḍramawt, he would find me out.  
When I am in her pleasing company, they gather around  
and admonish us till I grow weary of my place.  
What good fortune is that to them — May God decrease  
their lot! — if Laylā cuts to shreds the cords which bind us?

And amongst his saying, is;

I feign drowsiness when I have no desire for sleep  
hoping that your image may cross my mind.  
I leave the company of men hoping to converse  
about you with myself, in secret and alone.



This is similar to the saying of Du r-Rumma:

I love deserted places, for there  
I can keep chanting her name without mumbling.

And of what was wrongly attributed to him:

Welcome be the work of Satan,  
If my love for her is Satan's work!



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