The Body in Arabic Love Poetry

The ‘Udhrī Tradition

Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture
The Body in Arabic Love Poetry
Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture
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A particular feature of medieval Islamic civilisation was its wide horizons. The Muslims fell heir not only to the Graeco-Roman world of the Mediterranean, but also to that of the ancient Near East, to the empires of Assyria, Babylon and the Persians; and beyond that, they were in frequent contact with India and China to the east and with black Africa to the south. This intellectual openness can be sensed in many inter-related fields of Muslim thought, and it impacted powerfully on trade and on the networks that made it possible. Books in this series reflect this openness and cover a wide range of topics, periods and geographical areas.

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The Body in Arabic Love Poetry
The ‘Udhri Tradition

Jokha Alharthi
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Benedetto Croce,¹ one of the major Italian philosophers of the twentieth century, divides theoretical mental activities into aesthetic and logic. Following in the tradition of Kant and Hegel, separating the critique of pure reason from the realm of taste and artistic judgement, Croce posits intuitive knowledge against conceptual knowledge. The former he associates with vision, contemplation, imagination, figuration and even representation, as the one pertaining to creative art and literature. For art is the work of imagination and is gained with the renunciation of concrete thought.² The latter, conceptual knowledge, is solidly anchored in reality and rational analytical thinking which produces the philosophical and the scholarly methodology. Hence it is always realistic, aiming at establishing reality against unreality, or at reducing unreality by including it in reality as a subordinate moment of reality itself, making a clear distinction between fantasy and thought.

In his major work on aesthetics Croce argues that art and creative literature are the work of imagination and lyrical intuition. Hence, artistic/literary talent is geared towards uniting the intelligible with the sensible and is endowed with the ability to construct and use imagination, contemplation, fantasy and configuration. Its conceptual counterpart is often connected to factual, logical, methodical and critical deconstruction of what the former has assembled and constructed. Such a formulation of intellectual activities posits one in a binary opposition to the other, suggesting that one can only excel in one or the other of these different types of intellectual endeavours.

Jokha Alharthi, the author of this book, defies such easy categorisations. She is as at home with the emotive and lyrical language of creative literature as with the measured, analytical and critical elaborations of a scholarly topic. In addition to her highly accomplished work in the field of the Arabic
novel, which won her the prestigious International Booker Prize in 2019, she demonstrates in this book that she is also an accomplished critic and literary scholar. She first established herself in the field of Arabic narrative with two collections of short stories: *Maqati‘ min Sirat Lubna* (Extracts from Lubna’s Life, 2001) and *Sabiyy ‘ala Al-Sath* (A Boy on the Roof, 2007); three novels: *Manamat* (Dreams, 2004), *Sayidat al-Qamar* (Celestial Bodies, 2010), the first and only Arabic novel to win the Booker International Prize, and *Narinja* (A Bitter Orange Tree, 2016); and two children books: *‘Ushsh Li-l-‘Asafir* (A Nest for Birds, 2010) and *Al-Sahabah Tatamanna* (The Cloud Wishes, 2015).

Concurrently with her creative literary activities, she developed a career as an academic working for the leading university in her country: Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. Alongside her teaching she developed her research career, grounding it in one of the major biographical dictionaries of classical Arabic literature, *Kharidat al-Qasr wa Jaridat al-‘Asr* by Al-Imad Al-Isfahani (519H/1125AD–597H/1201AD), publishing a book length study on his literary approach for selection and biographical compilation. The *Kharida* (a twenty-one-volume dictionary) is a truly encyclopaedic work covering a large geographical area, extending from Iran to Morocco, and more than two centuries of Arabic literary production. Exploring such a rich resource in order to critically analyse its author’s literary methodology and articulate the implicit criteria of his selection and compilation solidly grounded her in classical Arabic literature. It provided her with a deep understanding of those questions that are considered to be of great importance to the study of classical Arabic and prepared her to embark on her present work. Her work on the *Kharida* was significantly entitled *Mulahaqat al-Shumus* (Chasing Suns), a task that she has continued in both her creative and scholarly endeavours.

Her present book, *The Body in Arabic Love Poetry: The ‘Udhri Tradition*, is an original endeavour to chase another set of suns, which emerged earlier than those covered by Isfahani. It is a distinctive and valuable contribution to the study of classical Arabic literature in general and Arabic poetry in particular. It traces patiently and methodically how the body is represented in the literary tradition of *‘udhri* love poetry in the seventh and eighth centuries. No studies, either in Arabic or in English, have been undertaken on the depiction
of the body in Arabic poetry of this period, or on the themes of sensuality and eroticism contained within it. This book, with its judicious analysis and composite orchestration of divergent material and conflicting interpretations, fills this gap through a persuasively argued thesis. It combines comprehensive close reading and insightful textual analysis of the tradition of 'udhri poetry with a socio-cultural approach that situates it in the trajectory of its society and the common beliefs of its culture.

Her creative experience may account for her predilection for multiple interpretations rather than for a single truth behind the text; and this has enabled her to challenge the commonly accepted emphasis on chastity in 'udhri poetry and, particularly, the absence of a clear concept of the body and sensuality. Faced with the ethereal nature of the beloved, it posits its new thesis that this tradition writes the body of the emaciated lover-poet and the corpulent and sumptuous beloved in the form, diction, imagery and content of its varied poetry. Contrary to the common perception of 'udhri as chaste poetry of the imagined, it suggests that it is opulent with reality, sensuality and implicit sexuality. This makes it both new and relevant to the study of the perception and role of women in classical Arabic/Muslim culture, the literary and poetic representation of the body, women and feminist studies and multi-disciplinary cultural studies.

It begins with a thoroughly researched introductory chapter which constitutes a critical appraisal of the scholarship of the 'udhri tradition in which it offers a brief history of the genre, the context and causes of its emergence, its development as a literary tradition and its authenticity as the natural product of its desert environment. Here the book situates its topic in the extensive narrative that surrounded this phenomenon, both by the seminal Kitab al-Aghani and the tradition of libertine Abbasid literature that followed.

From this very first chapter, the book demonstrates its command and comprehensive attention to the previous scholarship on the topic both in Arabic and Western languages. Most studies on classical Arabic literature are rooted in one of the two traditions. Those in English, for example, are grounded in Western/European scholarship and, in a truly ‘Orientalist’ stance, most of them pay little or no attention to the often vast works on their topic written in Arabic. Even those that may not be classified as Orientalist find it often tiresome to scrutinise a large body of work in a foreign language.
On the other hand, the ones written in Arabic pay little or no attention to the often insightful and highly valuable contribution of Western scholarship to their subject. Many of these works are written by academics with little or no access to Western languages, who are hence not aware of the importance of the literature on their topic in other languages. In this respect this book, written by a native speaker of Arabic with the ambition to contribute to Western scholarship on classical Arabic literature, by writing her contribution directly in English, is a welcome break with these practices. Unlike her creative work, which she writes in Arabic and is then translated by others into English, this book is written directly in English. Hence it is firmly and competently rooted in both traditions of scholarship, which provides it with erudition, strength and importance.

The second chapter, ‘Reconstructing the Past’, locates the emergence of ghazal (love poetry) as a monothematic poem devoted entirely to the erotic theme in the Ummayad period. This is marked by the awareness that reconstructing the past is never free from its sedimentations in the present, for her primary interest in this early period is not to promote feminist revisionism of earlier literature but to offer new reflections on status, power, morality and desire. She distinguishes the ‘udhri poetry as a sub-genre of the ghazal that was created by the mutayyamun group of ghazal poets, and roots them and their work in earlier Arabic culture and its pre-Islamic perceptions. She persuasively refutes the division between ‘udhri and sensual love poetry, al-ghazal al-sarih, posited by some scholars, and places the book of al-Isfahani, Al-Aghani and its akhbar and narratives at the centre of her reconstruction of the past and the textual analysis of ‘udhri poetry. This brings in inter-textual interactions with Persian literatures and tenets of Sufism, which are intertwined with moral and ethical issues on the one hand and physicality and sensual concerns on the other.

The tension between ‘iffa ( chastity) and sensuality is the main theme of the comprehensive and well-researched third chapter, ‘Udhri Tradition between Chastity and Sensuality’. It grounds these concepts and the importance of the body first in the Qur’an and Islamic jurisprudence before dealing with their representation in literature. Maintaining the book’s redeeming feature of critically engaging with the extensive research on the topic in Arabic and Western languages, the chapter focuses on the ‘udhri tradition and its
textual elaborations on the body and sexuality and the Islamic discourse regulating the world of sexuality and love.

With Chapter Four, ‘The Representation of the Beloved’s Body’, one arrives at the core thesis of the book and its distinctive contribution to the scholarship of Arabic ghazal. It painstakingly studies the way various ‘udhri poets wrote the body of their beloved, whether physically or allegorically, both in the anecdotes ascribed to ‘udhri poets in the culture and in the poetry itself. In doing so it carefully maintains a balance between contextual and textual aspects of their poetry. It demonstrates through close-reading and textual analysis of their diction and imagery how love as represented in their poetry and stories ascribed to ‘udhri poets is far removed from the Western concept of platonic love. Its clear grounding in reality, and literary representation of the body, is marked by detailed description of the beloved’s desirable body and enticing curves, and demonstrates its physicality and sensuality in a manner that radiates eroticism. The comprehensive coverage of the major ‘udhri poets on the one hand, and Arabic and Western scholarship on them on the other, enables the book to persuasively write the body in this literary tradition and demonstrate how the conventional Arabic model of desirable female beauty permeates its diction and imagery.

This chapter posits a new understanding of this poetry as a highly revealing expression of the poet’s creative engagement with his environment and society. The omnipresence of the beloved in nature and in the surrounding geography of the desert radiates with relevance and meaning, which the author draws out through sensitive textual analysis of selected poems. She demonstrates how the nature and geography of the Arab desert, with its fauna and flora, are entwined with the beloved’s body as a major source of its imagery. In this respect the ‘udhri is not only a natural product of its socio-cultural environment, but extends its genealogy to pre-Islamic literature.

The author’s study of the influence of the numinous Persian representation of the story of Layla and Qays, through poetry, painting and Sufism, on what might be termed the ethereal nature of the beloved, and how it led to a change of the perception of ghazal and elevated it to the realm of spirituality and mysticism complements rather than contradicts her findings. She shows how such ethereal beauty in the depiction of the beloved makes her radiate with sensuality and eroticism. Indeed it saves her from the mundane fate of
becoming a mother. Although the Islamic attitude to marriage emphasises reproduction as the result of sexual enjoyment, the ‘udhri tradition makes no mention of children, for the beloved is usually depicted in an ethereal manner, eternally youthful, with no hint of potential motherhood.

The emphasis on the ethereal nature of the beloved at the end of this chapter leads naturally to the following chapter on the dynamics of the presence and absence of the body of the beloved. This chapter demonstrates that the writing of the body in ‘udhri poetry is not confined to its depiction as a concrete corporeal body and a model of ideal beauty but is caught up with the idea of her presence and absence. It can be observed in her gestures, speech, intimate body language such as glances, gazes, sighs and smells, as well as through her absence in the form of her phantom or her being in a location inaccessible to the lover. Her presence is often depicted as being part of the natural world in some metaphorical sense, but still physically absent. The phantom of the beloved (tayf al-khayal) is a frequently used convention of amatory poetry that has been utilised by the ‘udhri poets, as well as the longing for her place of residence where her omnipresence is to be found among the natural elements of stones, wind and water. The dialectics of the beloved’s presence and absence generates a host of imagery and symbols associated with both, in a manner that enabled this poetry to take the pre-Islamic wuquf ala atlal, reminiscing on the old traces, to new realms of expression. Both the dwelling in which she resides out of the poet’s reach and the home that she has vacated and the traces she has left behind generate rich images, metaphors and symbols.

The following chapter, ‘Textuality Versus Reality’, demonstrates the centrality of the textual in ‘udhri poetry; just to remember one’s beloved while one is alone conjures her almost physically and inspires the lover to compose poetry. The paradox of the ‘udhri poet’s complaint about love, and his embracing of it, engenders a complex perception of love and the persona of the poet at the same time. This led to the discourse of cultural value that developed around poetry, the perception of the poet as a hero and the representation of poetry as the ultimate goal. It is noteworthy that ‘udhri lovers were poets, and their poetry is in fact a confessional expression of their own sentiments and views of the world around them. This is essentially what earned them a place in most Arabic collections of poetry; their deep
The consciousness of the fact that they are poets itself shapes their romances. If the beloved is the feminine ideal, or is depicted as unattainable, her lover will suffer from his ardent love forever. Whether poetry is a sort of remedy, as several ‘udhri verses have suggested, or is an object in itself, its presence in this tradition is essential — the heroic gesture of the ‘udhri lover is that of being a poet. The lover is attached to his unique beloved, to whom he devotes his poetry. He reveres his beloved, the subject and object of his poetry, as much as his pre-Islamic predecessor celebrated his tribe. In the ‘udhri romances, the lover loses everything, including his beloved, except his ability to compose poetry. Being a poet seems to be his ultimate goal and heroic achievement.

The final chapter, ‘The Representation of the Lover’s Body in the ‘Udhri Tradition’, begins by establishing the link between ‘ishq and sickness in classical times. It has been seen as a major cause of suffering, capable of subjugating, intoxicating and humiliating the lover. It often produces an enervated and depressed young man or woman suffering from lovesickness. In Arabic culture at the time, ‘ishq was seen as madness and submissiveness, as the malady of refined and sophisticated people. The book then demonstrates the effect of love on the lover’s body in ‘udhri tradition and provides an exhaustive, highly detailed account of its corporeal manifestations. In ‘udhri poets’ diwans there are numerous allusions to weeping, sickness, wasting away, paleness, malady, (kabid maqrubah) the damaged liver, even fainting and only the smell of the beloved’s veil could wake him. Among the synonyms of love in the Arabic language, about twenty relate love, in varying degrees, to insanity, to a ‘break with the commonly accepted norms of behaviour, whether on a personal or on a social level.’ Yet, the changes that occur in the lover’s body as he descends into lovesickness become signs of moral values related to the manners of love and to the literary values of its poetry.

In this final chapter the book provides a detailed close-reading and textual analysis of how the body of the poet/lover and his beloved are carefully written in ‘udhri poetry. It accomplishes its promise as a competent academic engagement with the original poetry under discussion and provides a persuasive new reading that challenges the traditionally accepted understanding of its nature and role. Its insightful textual analysis of ‘udhri poetry is matched by its rigorous appraisal of both Arabic and Western scholarship on the topic. The detailed manner in which this book demonstrates how the writing of the
body permeates this poetry provides its readers with insights into the Arab community at the time, and into issues of status, power, morality and desire in Arabic culture.

This book is highly relevant to the study of Arabic classical literature and culture in general and poetry in particular. It fills a gap in the field and opens new venues for future investigation, for it adds a new dimension to the available studies on classical Arabic poetry. Its engagement with both Arabic and Western scholarship constitute an epistemological break with previous studies that will thrive and bear fruit. I expect it to become necessary reading in this field and that it may lead to new and fresh approaches to the study of the body and its significance in other classical texts. It will inspire students of literature to gain a fresh and more topical insight into classical Arabic culture and encourage them to venture into the realm of the unsaid. It is also relevant to a number of other academic disciplines, such as the study of the perception and role of women in classical Arabic/Muslim culture, the literary and poetic representation of the body, the role of the poet/intellectual in his/her culture, women and feminist studies and multi-disciplinary cultural studies.

Notes

1. Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) was a major public intellectual whose complete works run into eighty volumes, but his main philosophy of the spirit is expounded in three major works: Aesthetic (1902), Logic (1908) and Philosophy of the Practical (1908). The ideas explicated in this paragraph are from Aesthetic.


Preface

The ‘udhri ghazal emerged as a remarkable literary genre in Arabic literature during the Umayyad period (seventh–eighth centuries CE). The leaders of this genre are famous poets who were also lovers (and whom I shall call “lover-poets”). They were known for their dramatic love stories and unique poetry, which presented such numinous figures as Majnun Layla, Qays Lubna and Jamil Buthaynah. Traditionally, scholars have assumed that there is no concept of the body in the ‘udhri ghazal. Most scholars to date have reproduced only commonly held ideas about the purity of ‘udhri love without doubting its supposed chastity. This book, however, argues that the body has a privileged position in the ‘udhri ghazal. It shows that the body’s presence is represented, realistically or allegorically, in various ways, both in anecdotes about the ‘udhri poets and in their poetry. Although some critics have discussed the theme of the depiction of the beloved’s body, it is the particular contribution of this study to illuminate what might be termed the ethereal nature of beauty in this depiction. Moreover, this book discusses the symbolic body in ‘udhri poetry. In many ways, then, it departs from the prevailing views on the ‘udhri phenomenon in studies of classical Arabic literature. In so doing, it opens the door to new discussions about the relationship between love poetry and Arab society in the classical age. It is also a contribution more generally to literary studies of representations of the body and is thus also relevant to scholars of comparative literature.

Please note that dates throughout the book are given first in the Islamic/Hijri (h) calendar, followed by the western/Gregorian (BC/AD) calendar.
To my husband Altayeb,  
my children Khuzama, Ibrahim, Yasmeen  
and my sister Zina
Introduction: A Critical Reappraisal of Scholarship of the ‘Udhri Tradition

‘Udhri, or chaste love poetry celebrates the lofty union of souls between a man and a woman that endures despite societal obstacles and legal limits, eternal beyond even death. ‘Udhri poetry turns the unattainability of physical union with the beloved into a spur to virtue, high devotion, and chivalry in the life of the lover, who ultimately dies as a martyr to love.¹

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

The significance of the present study lies in the fact that it will provide a comprehensive appraisal of the subject of the ‘udhri tradition. The term ‘‘udhri tradition’ encompasses not only ‘udhri poets and poetry but also the stories told about them. These poets lived in the seventh and eighth centuries and, about two centuries later, their poetry and love stories were collected and retold. This book aims to study and assess the various reconstructions of the ‘udhri tradition. In my reading, the human body is a vital feature of ‘udhri love and poetry. We can observe its presence, whether physically or allegorically, in a variety of ways, both in the anecdotes ascribed to ‘udhri poets and in the poetry itself. In fact, I would argue that some aspect of the body lies
at the heart of even the most ‘chaste’ ‘udhri verses. Descriptions of the actual body of the beloved, or else its representation symbolically, in its presence or conversely in its absence, along with depictions of the emaciating and suffering body of the lover-poet, are all crucial aspects of the ‘udhri tradition, as my study intends to show.

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

‘Udhri Poetry: a Brief Historical and Thematic Overview

Al-Ghazal al-‘Udhri is named after the ‘Udhrah tribe that supplied this poetical tradition with many of its leading poets. Members of this tribe were generally said to have tender hearts and to seek a true love that usually led to death. The ‘udhri poet Jamil b. ‘Abdallah b. Ma’mar, better known as Jamil Buthaynah (d. 82/701), who is considered the leading light of this genre, was from the ‘Udhrah tribe. Nevertheless, there were ‘udhri poets from other tribes, such as Majnun Layla, who belonged to the Banu ‘Amir. As one
scholar has observed, ‘the term ‘udhri was then used more broadly for a whole school of self-immolating poets of the central Arabian desert.’

‘Udhri love is a fatal love in that it leads to death. The ‘udhri loves only one woman, devoting his life and poetry to her and only rarely composing verses in another genre, such as praise (madh) or satire (hija). The beloved is portrayed in the ‘udhri ghazal as an ideal woman and her poet lover as a martyr of love. The recurring theme of suffering and torment in love is strong in the ‘udhri tradition. Another characteristic of the ‘udhri ghazal is the use of certain symbolic conventions and imagery.

The most important ‘udhri love poets are ‘Urwah b. Hizam (d. 30/650), Majnun Layla (d. c. 68/688), Qays b. Dharih (d. 68/688), Jamil Buthaynah (d. 82/701), and Kuthayyir ‘Azzah (d. 105/723). However, some scholars include other poets in the ‘udhri school such as Dhu al-Rummah (d. 117/735) and ‘Abbas b. al-Ahnaf (d. 188/804). But the question of how to categorise these poets is still under debate: for example, not all scholars accept Kuthayyir ‘Azzah as an ‘udhri poet. In addition, one may argue that Dhu al-Rummah, in spite of his body of love poetry dedicated to his beloved Mayy, is concerned with different themes from the ones usually popular with ‘udhri poets and, moreover, his love story differs from ‘udhri love stories. Going further, while ‘Abbas b. al-Ahnaf composes beautiful love poetry for his beloved Fawz, and while, in many respects, some of his themes are similar to ‘udhri themes, there is also a description of an orgy with singing girls in his poetry, which would be an unimaginable subject in ‘udhri poetry. Moreover, al-‘Abbas’s cultural environment was completely different from the ‘udhri environment and his poetry is closer to the manner of courtly love poetry. Given the controversies over whether some of these poets should be considered as part of this genre, I will focus only on those who are unambiguously and well-nigh universally considered to be ‘udhri poets.

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

The pattern of the ‘udhri love poetry and love tale was set early in pre-Islamic times. The earliest ‘udhri love poet in the Umayyad age was ‘Urwah b. Hizam, and his tragic love story sets the pattern for the numerous love stories of the Umayyad period.13

‘Urwah b. Hizam, in fact, lived before the Umayyad period and died during the caliphate of ‘Uthman b. ‘Affan. However, Jayyusi is correct about ‘the pattern of the ‘udhri love poetry and love tale’, which was set in pre-Islamic times. In pre-Islamic poetry we have the stories of ‘Abdallah b. ‘Ajlan, Hind’s lover, and al-Muraqqish al-Akbar, Asma’s lover, both of whom suffered love unto death. Nevertheless, al-Batal points out that in the ‘udhri ghazal new elements were introduced into the pre-Islamic stories to express the greater complexity of the new Islamic society, such as people’s rejection of the new social roles set by the Umayyad authorities.14 This may explain why ‘udhri love stories revolve around the same themes. The typical components of the ‘udhri poets’ sentimental tales are15: the lover meets his beloved either during their childhood when they used to tend their families’ flocks of sheep in the desert or they meet as adults in a sudden encounter. They fall deeply in love, a love that continues until death, and the lover consequently composes poetry describing his fatal love for his beloved. However, his beloved’s parents turn down his marriage proposal, due to the disgrace that his verses have brought upon both their daughter and themselves – this in spite of the fact that they are from the same tribe and sometimes from the same family. In some cases, the demand for an exorbitant dowry prevents the marriage, so the lover goes to seek wealth while the parents force their daughter to marry another man, who generally has fewer good qualities than her lover. Then the beloved goes away with her husband. Her marriage intensifies her lover’s passion, so the brokenhearted poet pursues his beloved and recites beautiful poetry that circulates far and wide, describing her beauty and his suffering. He continues in his endeavours to visit her after her marriage and they remain faithful in heart to each other until death. As a result of the poet’s insistence on seeing his beloved and composing poetry about her, her parents complain to the
The ruler, who decrees that killing him is permissible. The ruler exiles him and the exiled poet wanders in the desert. In some accounts, his passion leads him into madness, but whenever he remembers his beloved, poetic inspiration comes. Eventually, the lovers die soon after one another and – in some accounts – are buried next to each other.

These episodes are motifs that are found in a number of 'udhri romances. It is irrelevant for this study to review the minor differences between these stories. Instead, it is important to bear in mind the wider lines that constitute the essential framework of the love story, at the same time noting the way the structure is dependent upon symbolism. The legendary tropes in these stories can be observed through certain common features, namely, as al-Batal notes, the ambiguity surrounding the identity of the composers of these romances, and the repeated motifs within every single story which make all the 'udhri stories concentrate on one theme, regardless of the minor differences in details.16

As one can see, the main characteristic of the plot is the poet’s total devotion to love; this sentiment infuses all 'udhri stories and poetry. The lovers are depicted purely as ideals of love, so that the reader knows nothing of their lives beyond this passion. The sentiments of love and the accompanying agony are told in 'udhri poetry in a myriad ways. The lovers ‘did not want to get rid of their pain, because pain is the only genuine criterion of true love.’17 The beloved becomes the ideal of a timeless woman and seems to be almost immortal: ‘Time cannot touch her, nor can her beauty and perception change.’18 Her depiction in 'udhri poetry reminds us of the houri who never ages, as described in the Qur’an19. Although houris are not described as passionate or even as lovers in the Qur’an, their eternal youth and beauty inspire the 'udhri poet, who insists on drawing an out-of-time image for his beloved. The desert, being spacious and still, provides an appropriate setting for the unfolding of 'udhri love stories. This vast tranquil space implies stability, which is compatible with the concept of unchanging time in 'udhri poetry. So the desert is an ideal backdrop symbolising immutability and timelessness. The reader of 'udhri stories and poetry loses all sense of time within the events of the love stories. Time seems to stop for the lovers as their passion tends to be detached and unaffected by temporality. Jacobi notes: ‘Whereas the poet of the Djahiliyya abandons a futile love affair of the past, the 'udhri poet
perseveres in the face of hopelessness and despair. His love is preordained by fate and transcends death.\textsuperscript{20}

As their poetry shows, the \textit{’udhri} poets, Kinany notes, ‘were so possessed by their delirious passion that they came to believe that life without the beloved was meaningless.’\textsuperscript{21} Majnun, upon the loss of his beloved, felt:

As if the mountain-roads were the circle of rings
Around me, never increasing in length or breadth\textsuperscript{22} [1]

The intimate relationship between love and death is a crucial element of the \textit{’udhri} experience. Most of the lovers die because of their fatal love and so their poetry is full of references to death.\textsuperscript{23} As Bürgel states: ‘Such love is almost of necessity tragic. And its tragedy is a symbol of the incompatibility of the absolute and the concrete, of the ideal and the \textit{sic} real life.’\textsuperscript{24} As seen from the components of these tales, any love adventure needs the involvement of secondary characters to be foils for the main characters. A passionate love adventure could not be narrated without obstacles being created by others. These obstacles enliven the story and also help to make it eternal. The existence of others is the best guarantee for an everlasting and infinite love.\textsuperscript{25} In \textit{’udhri} stories the central theme is that the obstacles cannot be overcome and neither can the love itself be given up. Jacobi suggests that ‘the conflict is obviously situated between generations: the parents represent the tribal community, against which the implicit polemics of the \textit{’udhri} model are directed.’\textsuperscript{26} It is noteworthy that in \textit{’udhri} stories the lovers are rejected in one way or another by society, thus they are expelled out of society to the world of the desert, which symbolises their exclusion. Therefore, the figure of the blamer \textit{’athil} is a familiar figure in the \textit{’udhri ghazal}.\textsuperscript{28} ‘The function of the blamer is to persuade the lover-poet to be more moderate or, in other words, ‘to prevent the protagonist from making the heroic gesture’.\textsuperscript{29} But for these poets, love was their chief object, it was a way of life that, moreover, gave it purpose.\textsuperscript{30}

The \textit{’udhri} poet does not want any woman other than his beloved, as she is preferable to any other creature; and, just as the lover’s passion surpasses that of all other lovers, so too his beloved surpasses all other women. He would be pleased with very little from her\textsuperscript{31} and she is both the cause of and the only cure for the poet’s misery.\textsuperscript{32} Intensity, despair and faithfulness are central to the love stories of the \textit{’udhri} poets.\textsuperscript{33} Their poetry concerns itself
with the description of the lovers’ suffering and yearning, and it also portrays their unattainable love as well as expressing their wishes and hopes for the future.\textsuperscript{34} Although it is true that the beloved in ‘\textit{udhrì} poetry is typically portrayed as an aloof and inaccessible woman, nevertheless, I disagree with Kinany and Jayyusi who claim that ‘\textit{udhrì} love is an unreciprocated love.\textsuperscript{35} I would argue that the portrayal of the beloved as an aloof woman (\textit{bakhilah}) is, rather, a convention of classical Arabic poetry. Further chapters in this study will discuss this point in detail, and meanwhile, I will provide one example from Jamil’s poetry on Buthaynah that shows the two lovers involved in passion:

\begin{quote}
We were both on the point of crying for each other,  
And her tears were quicker than mine\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Sources of ‘\textit{Udhri} Poetry}

These stories were collected and retold about 150 years after the ‘\textit{udhrì} poets’ deaths. The stories and poetry of ‘\textit{udhrì} lovers were circulated from the end of the seventh century onwards, appearing in collections by numerous authors. The earliest extant version of the genre is to be found in an anthology of Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889), who collected the works of major Arab poets in his book \textit{al-Shi’r wa al-shu’ara}.\textsuperscript{37} Shortly after Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn Daud (d. 297/910) included in his \textit{Kitab al-zabrah} some fragments ascribed to ‘\textit{udhrì} poets. Then al-Isfahani (d. 356/976) presented, in his famous work \textit{Kitab al-Aghani} (‘The Book of Songs’), a collection of numerous anecdotes and poetic fragments, which were either ascribed to ‘\textit{udhrì} poets like Jamil and Majnun, or referred to them.\textsuperscript{38} His work is like a ‘mosaic put together out of shards of prose and fragments of poetry’.\textsuperscript{39} Al-Nuwayri (d. 733/1332), who relates various ‘\textit{udhrì} love stories in his encyclopaedia \textit{Nihayat al-arab}, states that the ‘\textit{udhrì} martyrs of love were too many to count.\textsuperscript{40} In any case, ‘\textit{udhrì} love stories, in more or less detail, appear in many classical literary works such as \textit{Masari’ al-’ushshaq} by Abu Ja’far al-Sarraj (d. 500/1106), \textit{Rawdat al-muhibbin} by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 769/1349) and \textit{Tazyin al-aswaq} by Daud al-Antaki (d. 1008/1599) where ‘\textit{udhrì} poets are transformed into the heroes of romantic stories. During the early ‘Abbasid period, ‘\textit{udhrì} romances were very popular, numerous verses having been set to music.\textsuperscript{41}
The Factors Contributing to the Rise of ‘Udhri Poetry

The ‘udhri ghazal, like any other literary phenomenon, is complex and does not exist in a vacuum, being a result of many interrelated factors: religious, political, psychological, literary and historical. In Taha Husayn’s view, this phenomenon is best explained by the sudden rise of languorous opulence in Mecca and Medina, cities that had lost their political weight in spite of having grown rich. Hence, wealthy poets in urban areas pursued profane love poetry while hopelessly poor poets in Bedouin tribes pursued ‘udhri poetry.42 Clearly, Husayn relies on a vaguely formulated sociology of rising expectations and another scholar, Labib al-Tahir, has further developed Husayn’s argument by linking the socio-economic factors of the ‘Udhrah tribe with the emergence of ‘udhri love.43 However, the examples al-Tahir uses of poets who do not belong to this tribe, like Majnun, who is from the Banu ‘Amir, make the link between this poetry and the specific economic situation of the Banu ‘Udhrah rather weak. Moreover, while social factors may have played a part in the emergence of these tales, we should be careful not to try to explain everything simply by the social environment.

To explain its emergence, Kinany associates the ‘udhri ghazal with Islamic monotheism, eschatology and ethics.44 He says, for example: ‘the Muslim religion had a bearing on all the aspects of ‘udhri love which we have studied so far, namely chastity, faithfulness, despair, resignation, the personification of love and the conception of an eternal passion.’45 Shukri Faysal also emphasises the religious factor in the emergence of the ‘udhri phenomenon, as Islam purified people’s souls.46 Faysal says:

From the chastity that was driven by religion and the love that was driven by desire emerged ‘udhri love. It was necessary for devout Muslims who were not so successful in their love to express this failure in one way or another. Subsequently, they found solace in poetry, a verbal art, with leeway to express their emotions; because ‘udhri love mirrored chaste and desirous love at the same time. So, this compensatory type of poetry was there to suppress the heat of emotions and elevate desires.47

Dayf, likewise, argues that following the ethical basis of Islam, ‘udhri poetry is characterised by chastity and perfection48. However, in spite of the popu-
larity of Faysal’s argument among contemporary scholars, his limitation of the circumstances that led to the emergence of 'udhri love to Islamic and societal factors opens the door to further discussion. There is no evidence that the Bedouin poets were more influenced by the moral teaching of Islam than other poets. In fact, to say that the Islamic influence was stronger on the Bedouin tribes than on the urban tribes is misleading for two reasons. Firstly, the Bedouin tribes are described in the Qur’an as hypocritical and unrighteous. Secondly, during the Umayyad era there were unquestionably more devout men in Mecca and Medina than among the Bedouin tribes (al-fuqaha’ al-shu’ara’); religious poets such as ‘Urwah b. Udhaynah and ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Quss lived in Medina, not in the Bedouin desert. Moreover, many anecdotes ascribed to ‘udhri poets present elements contradictory to what are predominantly considered the ethical principles of Islam. In any case, I would argue that the influence of Islam on the ‘udhri ghazal did go beyond poetic images and structures, but that this influence did not include the Islamic model of the relationship between man and woman. Thus, it may be wrong to assume that the influence of Islam helped distinguish the ‘udhri experience from other forms of Arabic poetry. Furthermore, the ‘udhri poets’ use of religious language is meant to express the extent of their devotion. Thus, for Jamil, those who die of love are martyrs, no less than those who fall in jihad. At prayer, moreover, Majnun, instead of orienting himself towards Mecca, faces the place where Layla lives.

Several scholars emphasise the poor and sad quality of life in the desert along with a feeling of helplessness and also strict Bedouin manners as factors in the emergence of the ‘udhri ghazal. Both Yusuf al-Yusuf and ‘Ali al-Batal use a stratified social explanation to account for ‘udhri poetry. Al-Yusuf’s analysis combines social and psychological readings of the ‘udhri phenomenon. On the other hand, al-Batal views the ‘udhri stories as legends and analyses them symbolically. Al-Yusuf’s interpretation considers the political subjugation practised by the Umayyads and the social oppression that resulted from the increasing dominance of particular social values as the basis for his interpretation of the ‘udhri tradition. The experience of intense oppression leads to a loss of identity that is compensated for through the writing of poetry. Al-Batal expresses a similar idea; arguing that the ‘udhri phenomenon, which circulated in the Hijaz desert, reflects the experiences of
desert dwellers in the particular period when the poems were written. It also expresses the Bedouins’ views on the political injustice practised by their leaders. Since freedom of expression was restricted, they referred to this injustice allegorically.55

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

I go amongst beggars and ask her family for hospitality,
While my own wealthy and generous relatives are within reach56  

Furthermore, we should take many other considerations into account: the poets were not contemporaries of each other and they were not without their own social and political ambitions; Kuthayyir ‘Azzah, for example, although conforming to the policy of dissimulation, eulogised the Umayyads. Therefore, the explanation that the rapid development of love poetry in the Hijaz was simply because the people of this region were not involved in politics is a fallacy.57 In the Umayyad period not only the Hijaz but the whole Arab world was interested in the theme of love. It was a major theme in the work of many famous poets such as Dhu al-Rummah and Walid b. Yazid.58 To provide an explanation for the phenomenon of love poetry in the Hijaz Jayyusi suggests that the poets in the Hijaz had more leisure time than those in the new provinces and could more happily turn their attention to that genre. In addition, the Hijaz’s loss of its former status as the centre of Arabia must have caused a reaction which might have been expressed by amatory romanticism. Also, the long urbanised society of the Hijaz spread its style of living to all regions. Finally, Jayyusi suggests the possibility of the emergence of a poetic vogue that simply caught on, arguing that it has an element of excellence that transcends environmental and historical conditions.59

The Development of the ‘Udhri Phenomenon as a Literary Tradition

During the early Abbasid period in the late ninth century ‘udhri poets were transformed into the heroes of romantic stories that became very popular. Majnun, in particular, attracted the attention of writers on the theory of
love, and his verses were eventually included in anthologies of poems by lover-poets and martyrs of love. The figure of Majnun also attracted mystics because Majnun’s rapture was analogous to their own ecstatic states. Hence, in the words of Jayyusi: ‘It is appropriate to think that the appearance of such stories as Majnun’s, though based on an existing tradition, started a fashion for a genre of love literature that proved to be enormously popular.’ The ‘udhri concept of love ‘was imbued with a courtly flavour and projected back into an idealised Bedouin past. As a consequence, the biographies of poets reckoned among the ‘udhris are embellished with legendary details.’ In modern Arabic literature Majnun’s character has been a source of inspiration for many poets and authors, including Ahmad Shawqi and his poetic play Majnun Layla, which was first published in 1933. Except for a few scenes, the Aghani version of the story is replicated in Shawqi’s play. In 1996 the Arab poet Qasim Haddad published a collection of poetry entitled Akhbar Majnun Layla in which he renders a new reading of the old legend. It is remarkable that, in Haddad’s interpretation, the lovers are explicitly described as having a physical relationship.

In Persian literature, Majnun’s love for Layla is treated as a kind of adoration similar to the one reserved for God, and the legend was adopted by Sufis. The first adaptation of the Arabic fragments of the legend into Persian can be found in Nizami’s Layli and Majnun (composed 584/118–19). Dols notes that Nizami’s adaptation has the advantage of being consistent with the earlier accounts as well as being a fuller and more detailed narrative. Indeed, Nizami’s style is characterised by an intense use of imagery. In addition, the symbolic potential in the Arabic version of Majnun’s story reaches its zenith with the Persian Sufi poet Jami (d. 1492/898). Jami’s Layli and Majnun is a representation of the Sufi quest with a creative use of convention that is remarkable. Inspired by Nizami, the Majnun legend has remained very popular with Turkish poets until modern times. The most famous adaptation of the story was by Fuzuli in 942/1535–6. Further east, the romance was embraced in Urdu literature. In the West, the Banu ‘Udhrah, who die from love, appear in European literature in Stendhal’s treatise De l’amour (1822) and Romantics such as Heinrich Heine with his poem Der Asra, which was set to music by Carl Loewe.
The Authenticity of the ‘Udhri Tradition

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

The debate about the authenticity of ‘udhri poetry in general (and Majnun’s very existence and the authorship of his poetry in particular) continues among modern scholars. I have no intention of reviewing all their points of view. Instead, I would like to briefly mention the major contributions relevant to the subject under discussion. Taha Husayn in Hadith al-arbi’a casts doubts on Majnun’s poetry and his existence, which, in conclusion, he denies completely. On the other hand, the Russian scholar Kratchkovsky has argued for the real historical existence of Majnun by relying on historical methodology. However, Ghunaymi Hilal in his book Al-hayah al-atifiyyah bayn al-‘udhrīyyah wa al-sufiyyah examines the different opinions and surmises that if we postulate that some of Majnun’s fragments are fake, that does not mean that he did not exist at all. ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Qitt, likewise, has traced various examples of the same verses sometimes ascribed to Majnun, and at other times ascribed to Tawbah, Nasib or Qays. However, as al-Jawari has observed, seeking credibility in ‘udhri stories is a difficult task, due to the fact that they were mainly circulated orally. Moreover, the comic and adventurous nature of these anecdotes made them more likely to be embellished with imaginary details. However, al-Jawari also demonstrates that modern scholars
who have criticised this literary phenomenon may have failed to view it within its own historical context.

They have criticised the ‘udhri tradition according to contemporary norms in which such anecdotes would hardly feature. Hamori also alludes to the oral tradition, arguing that:

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

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

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

Thus, I would agree with the scholars who focus on the questions of composition and structure, rather than the question of authenticity. Moreover, as has been stated in the text quoted earlier, the ‘udhri romances incline towards legend, hence it is quite natural for exaggeration to take place. The
Kitab al-aghani is the main source of such romances and I would agree with Suzanne Stetkevych that the poems and the anecdotes in this book have generally been either misused – that is, taken to be factual history in the modern sense – or else discarded because of their questionable historicity or obvious folkloric nature. But however unreliable they may be as a basis for factual literary biography, they nevertheless offer a rich vein of largely un-mined mythic/folkloric gold. For however far back the association of the *akhbar* with the poetry goes and whatever its nature, this association, I would argue, is not arbitrary but semantic. That is, the anecdotes somehow reflect, reinforce, or complement the meaning of the poems or the archetypal image of the poet. Furthermore, the explication of the structure and the symbolism of the many variant stories and anecdotes juxtaposed in the Kitab al-aghani narrative reveals that even apparently divergent or contradictory versions often yield what might be called the same mythic message.79

Moreover, al-Isfahani in al-Aghani presents many different and confused anecdotes, giving the responsibility for them to the storytellers (*al-rawah*) themselves. Contemporary scholars may then decide, according to their own criteria, which of these anecdotes are valid and which are not. Therefore, one ‘udhri story may appear in one scholar’s opinion as an authentic story that fits with Jamil’s character, while other scholars declare it to be a ridiculous fake. For example, the story that Ibn Qutaybah cites of Jamil and Kuthayyir’s meeting, which resulted in the sending of Kuthayyir as a messenger to Buthaynah to make an appointment for Jamil,80 is described by Hatum as ‘the most honest story ever told about Jamil and his love for Buthaynah’.81 Hence, he concludes from this story that their love is chaste and virtuous. On the other hand, Taha Husayn mentions the same story so as to refer to the silliness of the anecdotes told about Jamil. He even goes beyond that and ends up saying: “This story is among the jokes that people used to mock the Bedouins with”.82 This kind of contradiction supports my point of view regarding the matter of authenticity in the ‘udhri ghazal. Questioning the authenticity of these works should not concern us much here since there is no way to prove whether every single anecdote is valid or not.
A Critical Examination of Scholarship on ‘Udhri Poetry

Over the last century a considerable literature has been produced concerning the ‘udhri tradition, with several attempts to analyse this tradition from a variety of perspectives. Some of the studies focus on the tradition in general while others concentrate on one ‘udhri poet, most often Jamil or Majnun. However, since the heightened interest in the ‘udhri ghazal from the early twentieth century onwards, there have been very few studies on the literary aspects of this form, namely, its origin, its characteristics and related scholarship. It should be noted first that there are no English-language books devoted entirely to the ‘udhri tradition, though there are some studies of Majnun Layla, which will be discussed later. However, many studies have been written in Arabic, which include in their titles the phrase al-ghazal al-‘udhri, al-bubb al-‘udhri or al-shi‘r al-‘udhri. Nevertheless, few of these studies add anything new to the current level of knowledge. There are an even larger number of books that simply reproduce what is already common knowledge by expansion, stereotyping or going into verbose detail. Many of these works are based on a historical narrative approach, devoting much attention to relating stories about ‘udhri poets and including examples of their poetry without making any real effort to analyse this information. Despite their increasing number, these studies make little attempt to address the subject of how the body is presented in the ‘udhri tradition, if they admit to its presence at all, and so they bear little immediate relevance to my study. Therefore, in the following pages, I will focus on the themes of desire, ‘iffah (chastity) and sexuality in the ‘udhri tradition from a scholarly perspective. It should be noted, however, that the issues addressed here are to be reiterated and discussed at greater length in the following chapters.

In the Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature Jacobi considers chastity among the main elements of ‘udhri love, a notion that, as mentioned earlier, I intend to question. Jacobi sees ‘udhri love as an ‘elegiac counterpart to the frivolous eroticism of the Hijazi ghazal, represented by ‘Umar b. Abi Rabi‘ah’. Gibb, likewise, in his early study Arabic Literature: An Introduction, views the ‘udhri ghazal as distinct from ‘Umar and the other Makkan poets. He observes that ‘from the moment of its creation, it achieved a great and growing popularity’. Hamori, in a chapter on love poetry in the Abbasid period in Abbasid
Belles-Lettres, notes – as several scholars do – that in the Umayyad period, the love-poem became independent and the ghazal emerged as a distinct genre. He states that whether the Hijazi love-poems are chaste or licentious has less to do perhaps with the poet’s experiences than with the audience’s expectations. However, his chapter shows very little interest in the ‘udhri tradition.

In *Hadith al-arbi’a*, first published 1924, Taha Husayn distinguishes between urban erotic poetry in the Hijaz and chaste Bedouin love poetry in the desert. He also notes the exaggeration found in the ‘udhri stories and ridicules the extreme behaviour of the lovers. Clearly Husayn judges the phenomenon divorced from its legendary dimension and overlooks the aesthetics of its literary side. Making the same distinction between erotic and chaste ghazals in the Hijaz during the Umayyad period, Ihsan al-Nass, in his study *al-Ghazal fi ‘asr bani Umayyah* [*The Ghazal in the Era of the Umayyad Dynasty*], published in 1976, suggests that the difference between the closed society of the Bedouin and the open society of the cities resulted in two types of ghazal: ‘udhri and sensual. Therefore, the ‘udhri poet’s chastity is not the result of his inability to fulfill his heart’s desire but a genuine chastity firmly rooted in the strict Bedouin code of behaviour. However, one should bear in mind that al-Jahiz has another view of the issue, for he points out that men and women in Arabia would see and talk to one another freely.

In terms of the themes of physicality and sexuality (or its absence) in the ‘udhri ghazal there are two main studies that have had a decisive impact on the others. These are Musa Sulayman’s *al-Hubb al-‘udhri* [*‘Udhri Love*], first published in 1947, and Ahmad al-Jawari’s *al-Hubb al-‘udhri nash’atuhu wa tatawwurhu* [*‘Udhri Love: Its Origin and Progression*], first published in 1948. First, it should be observed that both studies are entitled *al-Hubb al-‘udhri*, not *al-Ghazal al-‘udhri* or *al-Shi’r al-‘udhri*. Does this mean, therefore, that the early studies regarded ‘udhri love as a separate phenomenon? For they give less attention to ‘udhri poetry and more to the essence of love itself. It is clear that this concern led both scholars to define ‘love’ in general and ‘udhri love in particular. However, Sulayman and al-Jawari differ over the matter that is paramount in this study: the physical presence in ‘udhri love. Al-Jawari defines ‘udhri love as an elevated aspect of love, which rises above sensual desire and physical lust. Sulayman, on the other hand, casts doubt on the
‘purified’ nature of ‘udbri love. It is interesting to note that both of these early studies – concerning the presence or absence of the physical element in ‘udbri love – have had a strong influence on later studies. Many scholars on both sides of the argument have copied their ideas, even quoting their exact words. However, it is difficult to give wholehearted support to al-Jawari’s argument in favour of the sublimation of ‘udbri love, since the ideas that he presents on the subject are extremely confused.

Sulayman’s allusions to physicality in ‘udbri love can be considered as very early hints of a detailed discussion of this topic in the corpus of the ‘udbri ghazal. According to Sulayman, ‘‘udbri poets were not angels . . . The sorrow resulting from the lack of sexual relations with their beloveds and their sensual beauty is not entirely absent from ‘udbri poetry.’ In his view, what we should understand about ‘udbri poets is their struggle for love and their making every effort for its sake rather than their rising above or disapproval of physical desires. He argues that there are many verses describing the beloved’s body and the poet’s lust for it. Although Sulayman’s contribution is useful as an early source raising the question of the body in ‘udbri love, he gives readers only a few hints without providing any serious analysis of this issue, especially concerning ‘udbri poetry. Does literary creativity spring from desire? Sadiq Jalal al-‘Azm’s book Fi al-hubb wa al-hubb al-‘udbri (1968) contains an important discussion of this idea. He puts forward many genuine and daring perspectives, maintaining that ‘udbri love is in fact a sensual love of which physical attraction is a part. However, he argues, no physical contact actually takes place because the lover chooses to keep both his love and poetic inspiration alive by creating more obstacles between him and the object of his desire. Yet al-‘Azm’s discussion is limited to the prose material and, remarkably enough, does not address the poetry accompanying these prose fragments. He is not concerned with the interpretation of ‘udbri verses, which could be considered as essential for understanding the ‘udbri tradition. Moreover, his view of the ‘udbri poets as being masochistic is open to criticism.

On the other hand, both Mustafa al-Shak‘ah in Rihlat alshi’r min al-umawiyyah ila al ‘Abbasiyyah [Poetry from the Umayyad Era to the Abbasid Era] and ‘Afif Hatum in al-Ghazal fi al-‘asr al-umawi [The Ghazal in the Umayyad Period] proclaim that Jamil celebrates the chaste love which spread across the Bedouin desert after promiscuity was forbidden by Islam. They
argue that no one can question the chastity and virtue of Jamil, Majnun and the other ʿudhri poets. Hatum tends to generalise and make judgemental comments though, rather than presenting a critical analysis. However, when Hatum addresses the question of ‘physical innuendo in Jamil’s poetry’ he explains that this type of verse is merely an effort to imitate other famous poets like ʿUmar b. Abi Rabiʿah. Therefore, he emphasises that we should not doubt Jamil’s chastity and pure saintly love for Buthaynah merely from a reading of these incidental verses. Yusuf Bakkar, likewise, observes that although ʿudhri poetry includes many physical innuendoes he stresses that we should not question the ʿudhri ghazal and the implied chastity of its poets. Close analysis, however, indicates that Jamil and the other ʿudhri poets indicate more than these scholars wish to see.

The subject of ḫifāḥ (chastity) is also approached by al-Tahir Labib Jadidi in his study Susyulujiya al-ghazal al-ʿArabi: al-shiʿr al-ʿudhri namudhajan. He presents a new view of ʿudhri poetry by relying on structuralist theories in discussing topics such as the relationship between the Arabic language and sexual life, Islamic monotheism and the adoration of a single beloved in ʿudhri poetry. The scholars discussed above have emphasised the social and political factors in the ʿudhri phenomenon, whereas Labib brings to light economic factors as well, drawing on Marxist theory. He attempts to engage with the question of the chastity of these poets: is it an aspect of poetic imagination or does it reflect reality? In Labib’s opinion, the attitude of the ʿudhri poets towards sexual life differs sharply from that of Islamic tradition. Nevertheless, in my view, the signs of physical presence in ʿudhri poetry and anecdotes should not be ignored. Idealising the beloved does not mean that desire is absent. On the contrary, it is always there, depicted by the ʿudhri poets in several ways. Is it worth distinguishing between the presence of the desire and the impossibility of satisfying it? Moreover, as Labib himself notes, there are many erotic descriptions of the beloved’s body within ʿudhri poetry. The subject of ʿudhri love is also briefly addressed by J. C. Bürgel in his article ‘Love, Lust, and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam as Reflected in Literary Sources’. He classifies ʿudhri love as one of the major types of erotic love. Although he sees Jamil as active and cunning in terms of sensuality, he then says that he intends not to question the value of ʿudhri love.
Are ‘udhri love stories ultimately about literary creativity? Al-‘Aqqad studies Jamil from the psychological angle by examining the narratives about the poet and trying to examine the balance between his love and his literary creativity. He concludes that Jamil and the other ‘udhri poets are the natural products of their era. That era itself is analysed in several chapters. Al-‘Aqqad tackles the inconsistency between the ‘udhri ideal of immortality and chastity on the one hand and the ‘udhri verses mentioning physical contact on the other. Here, the author sees a link between what people wish to be and what they are in reality as human beings. Likewise, in Love, Madness and Poetry: An Interpretation of the Majnun Legend, As’ad E. Khairallah suggests that Majnun is torn between writing poetry and keeping his love secret, and therefore, by breaking the covenant of secrecy, Majnun has lost his blessed union with Layla. Khairallah emphasises the three dimensions of Majnun’s character: love, madness and poetry. He is concerned with the link between the legend of Majnun and its mystical dimension, highlighting the significance of insanity as both a stigma and, in contrast, a sign of rebellion. This purity of vision and the courage to express it make the madman almost a poetic ideal. Khairallah discusses this significant question: are love and madness prerequisites for poetry? He concludes that Majnun seeks to satisfy his passion in a dream world – through poetry and insanity. Nevertheless, the author offers no explanation of the distinction between the omnipresence of Layla in nature and in the mind of Majnun and her physical presence in his poetry. He just mentions in passing that his insanity is another necessary means of communication with his beloved. Hence, the erotic dimension is absent from Khairallah’s study and one might question his mystical interpretations of the manifestations of insanity. However, what is particularly interesting in his analysis of Majnun’s insanity is his hint of the physical condition of Majnun, which becomes his distinguishing mark as the incarnation of the lovesick poet, in contrast with other heroes from this type of romance. A similar idea is expounded well in Michael Dols’ book Majnun: The Madman in the Medieval Islamic World, which is a thorough examination of the subject of insanity in medieval Islamic society. This study is useful particularly for its interest in the physical description of Majnun’s madness and the causes of love.

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

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

Bouhdiba’s work *Sexuality in Islam* offers a significant contribution to the subject of sexuality in medieval Islamic communities. Bouhdiba asserts that in the practice of love the Qur’an prescribes a balanced approach, but argues that this has not been translated into social practice. What was unified in revelation fell apart at the historical level. Themes such as sexual practice and prohibitions in Islam, the frontier of the sexes, the sexual and the sacral are discussed in detail in his study. Bouhdiba also addresses the subject
of variations on eroticism: misogyny, mysticism and mujun (unrestricted pleasure), maintaining that they are three ways of dealing with a single problem. Misogyny encloses Muslims in their own empire, mujun releases their inhibitions, and mysticism sublimates them. The sensuality of Paradise is also discussed in his chapter ‘The Infinite Orgasm’, where Bouhdiba argues that the sensual nature of Paradisiacal pleasures in the Qur’an indicates the wholesomeness of physical desire. The author quotes from Islamic texts that describe infinite pleasure with houris.

Joseph Massad, in his study Desiring Arabs, traces the history of the unfolding of the concepts of culture and civilisation in the contemporary Arab world. It is an intellectual history of the representation of sexual desire in and about the Arab world. He argues that it was within the context of ‘ethnopornography’ that Arab readers began to read Orientalist accounts that emphasised Arab sexual life, often in a moralising manner. Influenced by this reading, they were overcome by a sense of crisis. The ‘udhri ghazal is one of the elements that have been subjected to this kind of reconsideration by scholars in the Arab world – under the influence of colonial discourses on sexuality, Massad would argue. My study will partially make use of certain Western theories about the body and sexuality. For example, Freud’s oft-cited article ‘Creative Writers and Day Dreaming’ is particularly useful in understanding the relation between the wishes of the poets and their poetry. Georges Bataille, in Erotism: Death and Sensuality, demonstrates that eroticism assents to life to the point of death. He asks: ‘what does physical eroticism signify if not a violation of the very being of its practitioners – a violation bordering on death, bordering on murder?’ Bataille argues that only the beloved in this world can bring immortality to two mortal creatures. Hence, love spells suffering insofar as it is a quest for the impossible. We suffer from isolation in our individual separateness. He also demonstrates that the possession of the beloved object does not imply death, but rather that the idea of death is linked to the urge to possess. This work highlights the connection between individuality, sensuality and death, themes of some importance to my study.

A significant effort has already been made to analyse and understand the concept of love in the classical Arabic sources. In his study al-hubb fi al-turath al-‘Arabi, Muhammad Hasan ‘Abdallah criticises the widely held view
of separating Arab love into the ‘udhri and sensual categories. He believes that the phenomenon of love is more complex, being related to rituals, feelings, ideas and sectarian distinctions, all of which are expressed in poetry. He analyses many of the concepts that deal with love.\textsuperscript{114} Raja’ Salamah is concerned with the complex relationship between passionate love (‘ishq) and its expression through the written word. In her voluminous and informative book \textit{al-’Ishq wa’l-kitabah: qira’h fi al-mawruth}, the author makes a special effort to analyse the words for love in Arabic, of which there are, interestingly, more than a hundred, although some scholars do not consider them synonymous. Salamah draws a parallel between the image of the afflicted camel (\textit{al-ba’ir al-sadim}) and the fate of the lover (\textit{al-’ashiq}). She argues that longing is a form of energy, though a problematic one, as it cannot be easily satisfied. In that respect, it resembles fire. Indeed, many of the Arabic words used for love and longing are derived from the root word for ‘fire’.\textsuperscript{115} Khan’s study is not confined to the ‘udhri tradition, providing as it does a significant contribution to the understanding of love in Arab culture and in the Arabic language. It also contains many references to the body and to death.

In her study \textit{Theory of Profane Love Among the Arabs: The Development of the Genre} Lois Anita Giffen provides summaries of many classical Arabic works on love, thus identifying the reasoning behind the Arab theory of profane love. The information from Arabic lexicographers and philologists alongside the opinions of philosophers and physicians are another element in these works on the theory of love. Giffen also discusses the evolution of form and content in these works, concluding that they reveal certain common features, examining terms such as ‘ishq and mahabbah and their use. The concept of the martyrs of love is also analysed here: the author traces its development alongside the concept of martyrdom in Islam.\textsuperscript{116}

The Structure and Trajectory of the Present Study

The \textit{Kitab al-aghani} will be my main source for the stories told about ‘udhri poets such as Majnun, Jamil and Qays.\textsuperscript{117} I will also refer to other classical sources such as \textit{Al-shi’r wa al-shu’ara’} by Ibn Qutaybah. For the poetry, I will refer to the various poetic anthologies (diwans). The main sources of my study are the diwans of ‘Urwah b. Hizam, Majnun Layla, Qays Lubna, Jamil Buthaynah and Kuthayyir ‘Azzah. All of these works and their commentaries
have been published during the last century. For the Qur’anic verses, Yusuf Ali’s translation is used. Moreover, to achieve the objectives of this book, it has been necessary to consult the most relevant classical Arabic literature on love, particularly for the focus on the depiction of the lover’s body and how it is affected by love.118 The Kitab al-zahrah (The Book of the Flower) by Ibn Da’ud (d. 297/909), and Tawq al-hamamah (The Ring of the Dove) by Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1063) are two of the most important sources for my study and are closely related to each other. The Kitab al-zahrah is an anthology of Arabic love poetry, but is not just a collection of poetry as it also discusses the theory of love, being the first extant Arabic work on the topic. Some of the key topics in al-zahrah are: union with the loved one – being together (wasl), separation from the loved one – being apart (bayn, nawa). The main reason for writing the poem in the first place is usually the pain of separation. There are other references to ‘spurning or abandonment of the lover’ (hajr, jafa’) and ‘secret/concealment (kitman).119 In Tawq al-hamamah,120 which is widely regarded as a masterpiece, the author proceeds in a rational manner to describe the essence and nature of love, its possible causes and symptoms as well as the frustration and perils surrounding it. This book is a prose work in which the passages of poetry, some composed by the author himself, are subservient to the prose text. Ibn Hazm portrays the tragedies of love, including examples from his own life, while keeping within the Arabic tradition of literature on love.121

Outline of the Present Study

The following will pursue a textual analysis of the classical sources using classical literary texts of ‘udhri narratives and poetry. The book consists of seven chapters, including this introduction. Chapter Two focuses on the ways in which stories and narratives about the poets and events throughout the ninth and tenth centuries gave rise to certain compositions that in effect established a tradition and reconstructed a past. The chapter will raise issues such as al-ghazal al-sarih vs. al-ghazal al-‘udhri, and moral and ethical issues and their effect in reconstructing the past, with special consideration of the Kitab al-Aghani. In Chapter Three I discuss the concepts of sexuality, marriage and chastity in Islamic discourse; this touches on Islamic jurisprudence as well as Islamic culture in general. The implications of chastity as
understood in the stories about ‘udhri poets and theories of love will also be discussed, taking into consideration the context of the ninth and tenth centuries. The problematic relationship that exists between the ‘udhri tradition and Islamic discourse around sexuality and love will be the main focus of this chapter.

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

I have selected verses of poetry on the criteria of both internal evidence in the poetry itself and external evidence from the akhbar (historical anecdotes) that accompany the poems in the classical ‘udhri corpus. The goal here is not to offer a comprehensive account of the ways in which the ‘udhri ghazal refers to the body, but rather to examine in some detail a selection of texts in which the body is manifestly represented. It should be clear that the concern here is not the real historical figure of Layla or Lubna, but their literary representation. By analysing specific texts throughout all of the chapters and discussing
the issues raised, I hope that the study will offer an original contribution to the subject.

Notes

2. These studies will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.
3. Except for one study which deals with secrecy and sexuality in the romance of Majnun Layla, a poet in the 'udhri school. The author of this study is Ruqayya Khan and we shall discuss her work later in the introduction.
4. Ghazal: song, elegy of love, often also the erotic-elegiac genre. The term is Arabic, but passed into Persian, Turkish and Urdu and acquired a special sense in these languages. See Bausani, ‘Ghazal’, p. 1,028.
5. ‘A nomadic Arabian tribe of the Quda’a federation. Its pedigree is: ‘Udhra b. Sa’d al-Hudhaym b. Zayd b. Layth. The ‘Udhra were the central group among the descendants of Sa’d al-Hudhaym, and they incorporated several brother-clans such as the Harith b. Sa’d al-Hudhaym and Salman b. Sa’d al-Hudhaym. These ‘Udhra are not to be confused with the ‘Udhra of Kalb b. Wabara, i.e. ‘Udhra b. Zayd Allat b. Rufayda b. Thawr b. Kalb. One of the latter ‘Udhra was the genealogist Ibn al-Kalbi, who described the ‘Udhra b. Zayd Allat at length. The ‘Udhra lived in the area of Ashraf/Masharif al-Sham, which in this context refers to the northern Hijaz. They were particularly linked with Wadi Al-Qura.’ See Lecker, People, Tribes, and Society in Arabia around the Time of Muhammad, p. 91.
10. This pretence can be traced back to a key source, namely the Aghani, where Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani (d. 356/967) quotes anecdotes that show that Kuthayyir was not an honest lover like the other ‘udhri lovers but that he tried to imitate them. However, in my view, Kuthayyir’s love story and his poetry would indicate that he is a true ‘udhri poet.
11. This name is a pseudonym to conceal her true identity and protect her reputation.

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


14. For more details see al-Batal, al-Ghazal al-‘udhri wa idtirab al-waqi‘, p. 182.

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


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


23. As we shall examine in the last chapter of this study.


25. See Miquel’s discussion of similar ideas in Miquel, Majnun Layla wa Tristan, pp. 81–9.


27. This figure is essential to the genre. He or she is the one who blames the lover for his ardent love.

28. See, for example, Majnun, Diwan, pp. 179, 184, 190.


30. Majnun says: ‘they said that I could forget her if I wanted to; I answered them that I did not really want to’. Kinany, Development, p. 276.
31. Note, for instance, Jamil’s verses:

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

Tarad, p. 55.

32. Majnun, for instance, says: ‘I cured my suffering from missing Layla by remem-
bering her, just as a drunkard who has no other cure for his pain, but drink.’


34. Ibid., p. 278.


37. Dols observes that ‘Curiously the *rawis* seem to have done far more in this
instance than simply develop a romance’; Dols, *Majnun: the Madman in
Medieval Islamic Society*, p. 322. Also, Khairallah notes that ‘Ibn Qutaybah
presents us with the basic elements of [Majnun’s] legend. These elements were
later expanded and retold in different variations, but the figure of Majnun was
unmistakably drawn by Ibn Qutaybah’: Khairallah, *Love, Madness, and Poetry:
An Interpretation of the Majnun Legend*, p. 50.

38. This work by al-Isfahani will be the main source of the narratives about ‘udhri
poets discussed in this study. Its authenticity will be discussed later in this
chapter. The structure of *al-Aghani* will be discussed in the second chapter.


41. As observed in classic sources such as al-Isfahani, *Kitab al-Aghani*.

42. Husayn, *Hadith al-arbi’a*, p. 109. However, see al-Hufi’s arguments that
attempt to controvert Husayn’s views, pp. 153–8.
44. Kinany, *Development*, p. 262
45. Ibid.
47. Ibid., p. 287.
50. Al-Tawbah (9: 97).
51. For a detailed discussion on this matter see al-Qitt, *Fi al-shi’r al-Islami wa al-Umawi*, p. 79.
53. Al-Qitt, for instance, argues that religious chastity cannot stand as the only factor to explain the emergence of the ‘udhri phenomenon. He takes into consideration social and political factors: Al-Qitt, *Fi al-shi’r al-Islami*, pp. 109, 130. For similar ideas see also Khulayf, *al-Hubb al-mithali ‘ind al-‘Arab*, p. 7.
58. Ibid., p. 420.
59. Ibid.
63. In an interview, the poet declares: ‘When I wrote Majnun’s anecdotes I wrote my own anecdotes. The old story does not matter to me as the legend is much more beautiful than the history. Majnun is me, is “us” now. I read Majnun within my contemporary views.’ http://www.alwaqt.com/art.php?id=108245, 11 July 2008.
64. Dols, *Majnun*, p. 331.
67. Ibid.
70. Ibid., p. 333.
71. Ibid.
76. Al-Jawari, al-Hubb al-‘udbri nashatuhu wa tatawwuruhu, p. 76.
77. Hamori, ‘Love Poetry (Ghazal)’, p. 205.
80. Ibn Qutaybah, al-Shi’r wa al-shu’ara, p. 436.
81. Hatum, al-Ghazal fi al-‘asr a-lUmawi, p. 163.
82. Husayn, Hadith al-arbi’ā, p. 201.
83. Examples of these studies that tend to follow a repetitive pattern in handling the ‘udbri ghazal are: al-Mukhtar, Jamil Buthaynah wa al-hubb al-‘udbri; Sadiq, al-Ghazal al-‘udbri; Qulaymah, Jamil Buthaynah raid al-ghazal al-‘asf; Najm, Jamil Buthaynah wa al-hubb al-‘udbri; Sabrah, al-Ghazal al-‘udbri fi al-asr al-Umawi; Al-Shibi, al-Ghazal al-‘udbri wa makanatuhu al-fikriyyah wa al-diniyyah fi al-‘asr al-Umawi; Dayf, al-Hubb al-‘udbri; Al-Ramadi, Jamil b. Ma’mar sha’ir al-hubb wa ‘ashtiq Buthaynah; ‘Ayyad, Jamil Buthaynah imam al-mubhin wa al-Majanin: qiraah mughayirah. The structure of these works comprises the following: a general introduction to ‘udbri love; stories about ‘udbri poets with special reference to their descent and character; and inclusion of extracts from their poetry, usually without any commentary. In the introductions of these books, the authors discuss love in general: its roots in Arabic literature or, sometimes, world literature, and its characteristics. This is a very generalised and repetitive approach.
90. For further details, see al-Jahiz, *Kitab al-qiyān* (*Rasa’il al-Jahiz*), vol. 2, p. 149.
92. It is interesting to see that in his article about ‘*udhri* love, al-Ladhiqi quotes the exact words of Sulayman and al-‘Azam without any acknowledgement of their source: al-Ladhiqi, *al-Sharq al-awsat*, 19 September 2003.
93. Al-Jawari’s argument appears in several places in his book; see, for instance, pp.13, 64 and 74.
97. For instance, he describes Jamil as the leader of romantic poets, not just in his era, but in every era until modern times. He describes Jamil’s verse:

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

as the most romantic stanza by an Arab poet. Hatum, p. 165.
98. Ibid., pp. 161, 166 and 196.
101. Bürgel, ‘*Love*’, p. 94.
102. Al-‘Aqqad, *Jamil Buthaynah*.
103. Dols considers the early Arabic version of Majnun’s romance as well as Nizami’s version.
104. Miquel, *Majnun Layla wa Tristan*.
105. Khan, *Sexuality and Secrecy in the Medieval Arabic Romance of Majnun Layla*.
107. It was first published in French in 1975, and then translated by Alan Sheridan and published in English in London in 1985. The Arabic translation by Hala al-Ouri appeared first in Cairo in 1986 and then in Beirut in 2001.
109. The subject of sensuality in Paradise has been addressed frequently by scholars. Many of them rely heavily on Bouhdiba’s analysis. For example, in his essay ‘*Sexuality, Diversity and Ethics in the Agenda of Progressive Muslims*’ Scott A. Kugle explains the depiction of Paradise in the Qur’an: ‘[It] is not just


113. Ibid., p. 20.


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


117. A discussion about the structure of the *Kitab al-Aghani* will be provided in the second chapter.

118. Some of these titles are: the *Kitab al-zahrah* by Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Daud al-Isfahani (d. 297/910), the *Kitab al-muwashsha* by al-Washsha (d. 325/936), *Tawq al-hamamah fi al-ulafa' wa al-ulaf* by Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi (d. 456/1064), *Masari' al-'ushshaq* by Abu Ja'far al-Sarraj (d. 500/1106), *Dhamm al-hawa* by Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597/1200), *Rawdat al-muhibbin wa nuzhat al-mushtaqin* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzyiah (d. 751/135) and *Tazyin al-aswaq bi tafsil ashwaq al-'ushshaq* by Daud al-Antaki (d. 1008/1599).


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