Chapter 2

Layla Grows Up: Nizami's *Layla and Majnun* “in The Turkish Manner”

Mehmed Kalpaklı and Walter G. Andrews

Introduction

Sometime in the last fifteen years of the twelfth century, the Shirvanshah Akhsatan made a request of the poet Nizami:

Mīkhāham ke konūn be yād-e majnūn
rānī sokhan cho dorr-e maknūn (48)¹

I wish you now in Majnun's recollection
to speak poetic words like pearls of perfection

At the same time the ruler also made it quite clear what the language of this recollection should be:

dar zīvar-e pārsī vo tāzī īn tāza 'arūs rā ṭerāzī (49)

In jewels of Persian and Arabic too
adorn this bride so fresh and new

But he also goes on to say what language he does not want the poet to use—apparently alluding to Mahmmūd of Gazna's legendary cheapness in the matter of Ferdawsī:

torkī şefāt vafā-ye mā nīst torkāna sokhan sazā-ye mā nīst (49)

Not in the Turkish way do we keep a promise
so writing in the Turkish manner doesn't suit us

This couplet seems to indicate that the Sharvanshah could have asked Nizami to write in Turkish and that the poet could have done this. But alas—or fortunately, depending on your point of view—the ruler preferred Persian. So a vastly influential tale was born, and the first complete Turkish version of the story had to wait for almost three hundred years.

By the early fourteenth century, the Turkish rulers of Anatolia were out from under the shadow of Maḥmūd's stinginess and somewhat less inclined to demand poetry in Persian. At this point the Layla and Majnun story begins to appear in Turkish mystical romances.² A Mevlevi dervish poet from the town of Kırşehir, known only by the name Gülşehrī included a seventy nine couplet telling of the tale in his Turkish version of the *Mantıku't-tayr* completed in 1317. Another dervish from Kırşehir, Âşık Paşa, the grandson of a dervish immigrant from Khorasan, also included a thirty couplet version in his *Garipnâme* written sometime before 1333.

There does not appear to have been a complete Western Turkish version of the Layla and Majnun story on the model of Nizami until the latter part of the fifteenth century. In 1478 in Konya, the poet Şāhidī, completed his Layla and Majnun *mesnevi*, which he had begun in Istanbul under the title *Gülşen-i 'uşşāk*. It was presented to Şāhidī's patron Cem Sultan who, coincidentally, became the subject of a romantic love story of his own. Having lost the sultanate to his brother Bayezit, he fled to France as guest, hostage, and later prisoner of the Knights of St. John, and there, according to a popular legend in parts of France, was involved in a hopeless love affair with a French chatelaine.

Şāhidī links his version directly to Nizami. He says in his introduction:

Dile cün hātif-i cān itdi terğīb vücuda gelmege bu nazm-ı tertīb

When the unseen advisor made my heart wish
that this verse composition would come into being

Heves atına bindi tutdı meydān hevā ʔopına geldi urdı cevğān

desire mounted its horse, and took the field
approached the ball of passion and struck with the mallet

K'idüp tezyīn 'işkuñ gūlsitānın yaza Mecnūn u Leylī dāstānın

That it might adorn the rose-bower of love
write the legend of Majnun and Layla

Diyüp Rūmī zebān ile kelāmı Nizāmī nazmına gire nīzāmı³

That it might speak its words in the Turkish tongue
and order it after the verses of Nizami

The poet also mentions Amir-e Khosraw's version (composed in 1299) as a model but in the end goes beyond all his predecessors. His version is the longest we know of, with a total of 6,446 couplets, and contains several scenes that do not appear in his models. For example, there is even a scene in which Majnun disguises himself as a sheep and goes to visit Layla.

At about the same time, in the court of Hüseyin Baykara in Herat, the great Chagatay poet, Nevāyī was composing his own Eastern Turkic version, which was completed in 1483—a year before his companion Jāmī completed his *Layla and Majnun* in Persian. Nevāyī begins by mentioning the usual models:

'İşk icre necük ki ol yegāne bu hüsnde āfet-i zamāne

Because this one was unique in love,
and that one, in beauty, all others above

Efsāneleri cihānda nāmī nazmıylep İusrev ü nīzāmī (86)⁴

Hosraw and Nizami both gave birth
to the fame of their story on the earth

Nevāyī goes on to explain in his conclusion that although the story of Layla and Majnun is famous, Turks have been deprived of its beauties and for this reason he is taking the lead in writing a Turkish version.

Ger nükteleri cihānı tuttu gavgaları ins ü cānı tuttu

Since the world by its niceties was taken
its tumult humans and genies has taken

Çün fārisi erdi nükte şevkı azrak edi anda türkī zevkı

Since the pleasure of its fine points was Persian
for Turks its joys had a much diminished version

Ol til bile nazm boldı melfüz kim fārsī anglar oldı maḥzūz

In that tongue the poetry was writ
that Persian speakers might take joy in it

Min türkce başlaban rivāyet kıldım bu fesāneni ḥikāyet

It was I who began to tell the tale in Turkish
and made a story out of this legend

Kim şöreti cün cihānga tolğay Türk elige dağı behre bolğay

So that its fame might fill the world
and the Turks might have a share in this

Necün ki bu kün cihānda etrāk köp-tür iōş-ṭāb' u şāfi-idrāk (380-81)

Because there are today in the world many
Turks of pleasant natures and pure understanding

In the West, the name associated most closely with the Layla and Majnun story in Turkish is that of the sixteenth century Iraqi poet Fuzūlī. Fuzūlī's version is an acknowledged masterpiece. It harks back to Nizami, but in the manner of *imitatio/nazire* rather than translation. It contains its own peculiar imagery, an unusual excitement, and pathos. In addition, the ghazals and quatrains written as the voice of Layla and Majnun give it a special emotional and psychological depth and poetic richness.

Born in Kerbela, Fuzūlī was among the scholars and intellectuals of Iraq who rushed to greet the triumphant Sultan Süleyman when he entered Baghdad in the winter of 1533-44. By Fuzūlī's own account, at this time he met some of the noted Ottoman poets who had accompanied

the Sultan on campaign—most likely, Yahyā Beg and Hayālī Beg. One day while somewhat intoxicated in the *majlis*, they got around to discussing poets and Fuzūlī became vocal in giving his opinions. The Ottomans took this as an occasion to put the Azeri poet to the test. As Fuzūlī puts it in the introduction to his *Layla ve Mecnun*:

Luṭf (ile/eyle) didiler ey süīan-senc fāş eyle cihana bir nihān genc

Do us a favor, they said, oh weaver of poetry
reveal to the world a hidden treasury

Leylī Mecnūn 'acemde cohdur Etrākda ol fesāne yoıdur

In Persian *Layla and Majnuns* are many
among the Turks there are not any

Takrīre getir bu dāstānı kıl taze bu eski büstānı (46/32)⁵

So, you, this legend firm establish
this ancient orchard now refresh

But Fuzūlī is reluctant—not about writing a romance in the Ottoman style, which he likely felt he could do in the same way as he produced *divans* in Turkish, Persian and Arabic—but, in the same vein as Nizami, he says, this subject is a difficult one and not suited to lighten the heart of the listener:

Sevdāsı dirāz u bahri kūtāh mazmūnu fiğān u nāle vü āh

Its crazed passion is long and the meter short
its conceits, cries and wails of every sort

Bir bezm-i muşbet u belādır kim evveli gam soñı fanādır

A gathering of calamity and affliction
which begins in grief and ends in annihilation

Ne bādesine neşādan reng ne nağmesine feraḥdan āheng (46/33)

In its wine no coloring of pleasure
in its song no harmony of joy

And he goes on to underscore his agreement with Nizami to the extent of quoting him directly:

Billāh ki ne tōş dimiş Nizami bu bābda īatm idüp kelāmi

By God, how pleasantly Nizami said it
the final word on this subject he said it

Asbāb-e soīan naşāṭ o nāzast zīn har do soīan bahāna-sāzast

The essentials of poetry are joy and coquetry
out of these two is made the reason for poetry

Maydān-e soīan farāī bāyad tā ṭabʿ dar ū honar nomāyad

The playing-field of poetry ought to be wide
that one's nature show its talent there inside

Dar germī-ye rīg u saīlī-ye kūh tā cand soīan ravad ba-enbūh (47/33)

That in harshness of peaks and the heat of sand
poetic words in abundance may walk the land

This reluctance, although it has a conventional side, is significant and we will dwell on it further below. At this point it is enough to mention that Fuzūlī picks up on the Sufi/mystical reading of Nizami and carries it off in a general direction taken by post-Timurid Perso-Ottoman poetry. One of the features of this direction is that its mysticism maintains a consistent balance between the activities of the actual, physical world and the mystical interpretation of those activities. That is, the mystical interpretation is always in force, but there is also—or usually—an actual party, an actual beloved, real kisses, and a rose garden one can touch and smell. When Fuzūlī says “whatever (truly) exists in this world is love”

(İşk imiş her ne var âlemde) behind it is a rejection of a “real world” in which his hopes never flowered.⁶ The petty local rulers of his land would not or could not support a talented poet and the Ottomans, despite having the ability and making grand promises, never produced any such support. His feelings of loneliness, friendlessness and his identification with Majnun all seem to be informed as much by longing for the patron he never found as by his other—mystical—longing. For example, as he says in a famous ghazal:

Ne yanar kimse bana âteş-i dilden özge
ne acar kimse kapum bād-ı şabādan gayrī⁷

No one burns for me but flames of the heart
no one opens my door but the wind from the east

We emphasize this point because of the tendency of learned interpreters to discover only an abstract, spiritual message in this kind of poetry. Fuzūlī's *Leyla ve Mecnun* is certainly “mystical,” more so even than Nizami's. And this seems to be what makes it “serious” poetry to some. But, as we will see, it also carries a secular theme of impossible love/thwarted love that is consistently noted by a host of other interpreters.

There were a huge number of Layla/Majnuns on the Fuzūlī-Nizami model with a conventionally mystical tone in Ottoman Turkish. However, there were also innumerable popular versions—from poems to folk tales to shadow puppet plays—in which the themes of hopeless love, overwhelming love, lost love, the nature of “true” love are referenced with only the slightest, conventional gestures toward a transcendent reading. This is how the metaphor of Layla and Majnun comes forward in time. A very modern poet sensitive to Ottoman themes will write to Layla in the voice of Majnun:

Ben artık bulunduğum şehirden gittim
İnsan kuş misali.
Sen hâlâ
O kalabalık evde olmasın,
Gelip gidenin çok mu bari?

Uzgünüm Leylâ
Dünya hâli!⁸

I have gone from the city where I was.
A person is like a bird.
And you, still,
Must be in that teeming house.
Are they many who come and go there?
Leylâ I'm sorry.
It's the way of the world.

(Behcet Necatigil)

The founder of the popular *arabesk* music tradition in Turkey, Orhan Gencebay, has a song entitled *Leyla and Mecnun* that in translation goes like this:

This wailing for years endured with no reply
Such a wailing that the hearer could but cry
Full of longing, full of trial, love, and pain
Such a love as never could be lived again

My love's tears are my only hope now
The bloody tears I shed, loneliness and sorrow
At the resurrection I'm yours, yours Layla

Death is no ending for us
Who loves is deathless, Layla
We exist so long as the world endures and we love, Layla

We became a legend in pain and in trial
Ever they asked, "Majnun, where is your Layla"
I said, my Layla's in my daytime and in my night
In my fate, in my fate, in my wailing and my last breath⁹

A contemporary pop idol, Rafet El-Roman, was asked by a reporter if his song entitled "Leyla" was named after "another of his lovers." "No," he replied, "It is true that most of my songs are taken from bits of my

life. But not all of them. In 'Leyla' I wanted, by way of music, to bring to a new generation the story of Layla and Majnun."¹⁰

It is no surprise that Layla and Majnun live on as a metaphor in a world that has not lost its fascination with hopeless love. What we will suggest in this chapter, however, is that today's "secular" reading of the story converges in a meaningful way with a reading that is already "present" in Nizami. This is to say that Nizami's tale gives rise to a history of readings that cause us to doubt the usefulness of the common binary, either/or, secular or religious formulation. Even when the story seems overtly to focus on and foreground the mystical interpretation, the mystical and the mundane are often inseparably intertwined.

We will also suggest that the secular reading surfaces most obviously in the growth of the character of Layla. In our reading this growth begins with the "addition" to Nizami's text, the section that contains the final meeting in the desert between Majnun and Layla who has at last been freed of family obligations by the death of her husband. Both Dastgirdî and A. S. Levend consider this episode to be the work of a later and inferior poet.¹¹ Dastgirdî does not include it in his edition nor is it included in either the English and German translations by Gelpke or in A. N. Tarlan's modern Turkish translation.¹² In the light of our contention that this "addition" is the beginning of an expansion of the story's secular dimension, it is interesting that the episode *is* included in the edition of Bihruz Sarvatiyan who seems to be quite firmly in favor of a spiritual/mystical reading.

We are reluctant to comment at all about the "authenticity" or "authorship" of this addition—it makes no difference to our argument. Nor are we interested in contentions about the quality of its writing, except perhaps to point out that the "inferiority" of later participants in a text is one of the conventional tropes of scholarship descended from romantic notions about "originality." What we would like to exemplify in a brief "close reading" of a small portion of the "post-Nizami" text are the directions in which the text grows and the way in which Nizami's text seems to make that growth inevitable.

Leyla Grows Up

Despite its status as an undisputed masterpiece and model, the short "authentic" text of Nizami's *Layla and Majnun* has a terribly unsatisfactory ending. Layla's husband dies, leaving her free to do as she wishes, at which point she abruptly lies down and dies apparently of lovesickness for Majnun. As true as this sudden pining away is to the general "death by

love" theme of the tale and its 'Udhri-tainted sources, it makes little sense and gives no satisfaction. On what basis do we assert this? Well, we begin by taking seriously Nizami's own doubts about the story. He seems to indicate that there was a limited taste in his time for the very constrained 'Udhri story type that focuses on the anguish of impossible love within a time-space setting where the "catching" of love and its inevitably fatal consequences are functionally simultaneous except for episodic delays that are resolutely ahistorical and bring no growth or development in anything other than the intensity of passion. Next we take into account the centuries-long concern to "repair" the story beginning with the "added" episode, which if not Nizami's own repair is close enough that it was accepted as such without question by many of his successors—at worst, a case of story-sense triumphing over "textual criticism."

The part of the added segment that we will focus on can be summarized as follows: Instead of simply dying after the death of her husband, Layla experiences a sunrise that resembles the rebirth of her hopes and, like any sensible woman, sets out to take advantage of her dearly bought freedom. "With tears in her eyes and fire in her heart" (310) no longer fearing her parents, she returns to her father's house where she sits in her room and makes plans for a union with Majnun, a union that has unmistakable physical connotations. No longer a passive object, she calls her friend Zayd to her and says, *K'-emrüz na rüz-e enteğārast / rüz-e talab-e veşāl-e yārast*, ("Today is not the day for waiting / it is the day for seeking union with the beloved.") "*Bar khīz*" she says, "Rise up, the world is pleasant, rise up ..." (311) She then launches into a cluster of very sexually suggestive images: *ham-āba-ye sarv kon caman rā / dar dasta-ye lāla kaş saman rā*, ("Make the cypress bed-made of the meadow / bind the jasmine in a bunch with the tulip,") *ān āhū-ye nağz rā be-şast ār / v'ān nāfa-ye moşk rā be-dast ār*, ("Bring that lovely ghazal under the thumb / And bring to hand that sac of musk") (311). She then puts together an appropriate outfit for the now ill-clad Majnun and sends Zayd into the desert to tell him the good news. In time, the overjoyed Majnun wanders to her tent accompanied by an army of wild animals, both predators and less threatening beasts. When she hears the news of his arrival, she rushes from her tent oblivious to the wild beasts and falls at the feet of her beloved "like grass at the base of a tall tree." The two are so overcome by love that they both fall unconscious in the middle of the road. Their companions rush up to see if they are alive or dead, and several are immediately torn to bits by the wild beasts who continue to protect the privacy of the unconscious pair. Thus they remain for half a day and when they revive, still struck dumb by the intensity of their passion, Layla shyly takes her bewildered lover by the hand and leads him into her tent.

The animals now ring the tent in a curious scene emphasizing the power and dangerousness of these beasts, who "would tear a fly to pieces should it come into their midst." The poet/narrator also points out that it is because Majnun's love is "true/spiritual/*haqīqī*, free of lust or base desire, that the beasts are tame in his presence: *z'ān az dadagān badī barū nīst / k'ālāyeşi az dadī darū nīst*, ("The wild beasts had no enmity toward him / For there was no mixture of animality within him") (314). Majnun appears to have externalized his animal/physical self; it rings him about and protects him but is not a part of him anymore.

In the tent, Majnun is silent while Layla cradles him in her arm, her hand a collar about his neck, her hair cascading down over him like a shirt. She entices him with longing glances, and both are rendered witless by their passion. They remain in this embrace, the two as one, for a full day and night. When they recover, Majnun rushes out of the tent and Layla follows to find him sitting in the road before her dwelling. There the two lovingly confront one another, unable to speak for the intensity of their emotion. Finally, after at least a day and a half of stunned silence, Layla takes the initiative and, casting a sharp glance, speaks to Majnun:

K'ay sūsan-e dah zabān ce būdat	k'andīşa-ye man zabān robūdat
Bolbol ke sokhan segāl bāşad	bī gol hama sāla lāl bāşad
Çun bīnad rüy-e gol be bostān	gūyad na yaki hazār dastān
To bolbol-e bāğ-e rüzgārī	man bā to co gol be sāzgārī
Emrüz ke hast rüz-e payvand	bar dorz-e dahān nehādayī band

(317)

Oh iris of ten tongues what's with you
that thought of me has stolen away your tongue?
The bulbul that speaks in poetry
for a whole year stays mute without a rose
But when it sees the rose bloom in the garden
it speaks not one but a thousand tales
You are the bulbul in the garden of this world
I am attuned to you like the rose
And today, which is the day of union
you have put a clasp on the casket of your tongue

In response to this quite reasonable question, Majnun goes into a lengthy discourse on why his love has become so pure that it no longer

needs an object. When he finishes, Layla looks at him so longingly that he screams, tears his clothes, faints, and finally escapes into the desert.

In contrast to the perfect passivity of the "early" Layla who is the pawn of her parents throughout and who, in the end, simply lies down and dies, this Layla acts decisively in a way that makes sense for someone in love. She no longer fears her parents' displeasure; she makes and executes a plan to reunite with her beloved, and she does her best to bring him to his senses. What is more, in the context of this worldly good sense, Majnun's behavior begins to appear indefensible, cruel, and even ludicrous. That is to say, when he is kept from his beloved by outside forces, including the world's misinterpretation or its censure of his overwhelming passion, Majnun is a tragic figure even without any hint of mystical sublimation. But when the possibility of a legitimate (or even illegitimate) union with the object of his affection presents itself, the only way to preserve his role as the hero of this story is to raise the mystical interpretation to the surface.

This move is still not without its core of ambiguity. In the added segment, Majnun, as we have pointed out, is quite overtly "split" into a spiritual self, which remains (tenuously) in his body, and an animal self, which is exteriorized and identified with the band of wild and vicious animals. Layla, however, remains whole. She is not overtly presented here as the locus of "animalistic" passions (as Jāmī seems to do later), nor do her passion or her sensuality (which are both quite evident in the "added" segment) seem separable from her essence. She does what we would expect someone to do in her circumstances. She is like us (in our nonmystical lives, at least). In fact, she appears to foreground the discomfort many Muslims (and others) have with notions of spiritual celibacy—the supposed celibacy of Jesus, for example—that were so clearly rejected by the Prophet. The later Layla is a good, faithful, chaste woman who deserves a normal married and sexual life.

Keeping this much about the Nizami text in mind, we would like to launch ourselves on the historical trajectory of the "added text" and examine where it takes us in the case of an (or an-other) Azerī master-poet, this time, written in the Western Turkish/Ottoman mode of the high sixteenth century. As we have mentioned, Fuzūlī sees himself directly in the line of Nizami. In his poem, gestures toward his illustrious predecessor are overt and sincere. Nonetheless, his version of the tale is substantially different from Nizami's in several significant respects. Using the story-segment that corresponds to the "added text" as an example, we will go on to examine some of these differences.

One general difference having a significant bearing on issues of "voice" is the inclusion of lyric poetry in the romantic *mesnevi*. As we

know, the earliest of Persian romances, Ayyūqī's *Varqa va Golšāh* (written sometime before 1030 C.E.) contained several monorhyming ghazals. This usage was picked up by Ayyūqī's Turkish imitator, Yūsuf-i Meddāh, in his own (1342 C.E.) romance by the same title. However, the practice of including lyric poetry in the romance never caught on in Persian, while in Turkish it flourished. Nizami, for example, follows the model of Gorgānī and does not include any in his romances, even when writing about Majnun whose fame derives from his skill as a lyric poet and whose story was concocted as a setting for a collection of lyric poems. On the other hand, Fuzūlī's *Layla and Majnun* contains 22 ghazals, 2 *murabbā's*, and 2 *münacāt*. Of these poems, 9 are in the voice of Layla (although one is recited to Majnun by Zayd).¹³

Because the lyrics imply a single, emotionally involved speaker rather than a more or less omniscient narrator, they generally have the character of dialogue or monologue and impart a sense of immediacy. In Fuzūlī this lyric character seems to affect the narrative style as a whole, whereas in the Nizami addition, the majority of lines are devoted to descriptions and interpretations of the actions, motives, and feelings of the characters. In Fuzūlī, descriptive passages are relatively few and are, for the most part, limited to one or two lines of transition between large stretches of speech often capped by a lyric outburst. As a result, Layla, to whom the "added Nizami segment" granted the power of active agency, acquires, in Fuzūlī, a powerful "voice" and lyric sensibility much the equal of Majnun's.

The effect of this emphasis on speech is that the story reads more like the script of a play (wherein the descriptive passages fulfill the secondary role of stage directions) or even of a musical play in which the ghazals take the place of breaking into song at significant moments. How this works and how Fuzūlī departs from Nizami can be exemplified by a brief summary that will end by focusing on a speech of Layla's.

Upon the death of her husband Layla returns to her father's home where she outwardly mourns Ibn Salām and inwardly mourns Majnun. In the dark night of her grief she first addresses the morning, asking it for relief. Finding none, she then prays to God asking "Either give me the endurance to bear my torment / or torment in proportion to my endurance" (*Yā vir meñā miḥnetümde tâkat / yā tâkatum olduğunca miḥnet*) (249/190). She goes on to express her fear that the intensity of her passion will overwhelm her modesty and chastity: "My fear is this that (my) chastity be trampled upon / that (my) mental state not conform to commandment" (*Qorūm bu ki işmet ola pāmāl / Fırmāna muvāfık olmya hāl*) (249/190). She ends with a *münacāt* and while she is still praying the journey bells ring and the whole family sets out in a caravan.

It is interesting to note here that Fuzûlî restores to the story some features associated with its supposed origins that are obscured in Nizami: his main characters are lyric poets and their verses adorn the story. Layla is obviously a nomad; the family packs up and goes without any particular destination. As the story continues, she mounts her she-camel, which becomes “intoxicated with the wine of her love” (251/192). When she sees the camel so joyously giddy she tells it her problems, asks it to take her to the country of Majnun, and then on the way passes out from the intensity of her grief. When she awakes she has become separated from the caravan and wanders about until she runs across a grieving stranger. She asks who he is and he answers, “Majnun.” “Oh no” she says,” Majnun has a fairy’s face, an alluring body, and you are crazy and woe-begone, your face is torn, your body bent. Majnun is mighty you are wretched. Majnun is a poet; where is your poetry?” (254/195). Majnun replies that the true lovers are silent but Layla is not accepting any such mystical excuses and insists on a poem telling what has befallen him. Majnun relents. He briefly tells his tale, summarizing the story to this point, and ends with a ghazal beginning:

Alas that the heavens never once turned as I foresaw
never drove off separation’s pain with the balm of union

*Âh kim bir dem felek râyumca devrân itmedi
vaşl dermâniyle def‘-i derd-i hicrân itmedi* (257/197)

Finally recognizing him, Layla bursts into tears and begs to be forgiven, explaining how her sorrow has blinded her to the real world. She ends by addressing her soul: “Oh soul that has waited so long for him / that has ever begged to see the beloved. You have reached him, come, emerge from the flesh / go to the beloved, cut off the mingling with me” (*ey cân ki cekerdiñ intizârı / görmek dileyüp hemîşe yârı Yetdiñ aña gel çık imdi tenden / git yâra kes ütilâtı menden*) (260/200).

After she recites a ghazal, Majnun indicates that he does not recognize her. He says that her eloquence refreshes his soul, that he is gladdened by her presence, that she seems familiar. He asks where she is from, by what roads she has traveled here. “If you are a poppy, from what mountain / if an iris from what garden?” (*ger lâle iseñ ne dâğdânsın / v‘er süsen iseñ ne bāğdânsın*) (261/202). He then ends this brief section with another

ghazal, beginning:

öyle ser-mestüm ki idrāk itmezem dünyâ nedür
men kimem sâkî olan kimdür mey ü şahbâ nedür
gerci cânândan dil-i şeydâ icün kām isterem
şorsa cânân bilmezem kām-ı dil-i şeydâ nedür (262/203)

I am so drunk, I can no longer tell what this world is
who I am, who the saki, what the white and red wine is
Though I beseech the beloved for what this love-crazed heart desires
if the beloved asks, I do not know what the love-crazed heart’s desire is

Before going on to Layla’s reply, which we will examine in detail below, let us look at a few of the major divergences from the Nizami addition. It is striking that there is a change in the spatiotemporal setting—what Bakhtin called the *chronotope*. The Nizami text elides any significant historical development: there is no noticeable growth or development in the lovers between the initial “falling in love” and the final “dying of love.” The characters do not age. Most of the events that befall them do not have any special connection to a time sequence except to delay the inevitable conclusion. The spatial setting is similarly restricted. There is no deviation from a division into interior spaces (house/tent, Layla, family, friends) and exterior spaces (desert, Majnun, animals). This is very much a lyric chronotope, and as such it links the story to its legendary origins in the chronotope of the ‘Udhri ghazal. In Fuzûlî’s version, there is a restoration of a sense of time passing. The characters age and change. Not only does the mad Majnun not recognize his beloved, but his not-so-mad beloved does not recognize him. They are changed people in a way that is only hinted at in the Nizami addition by the new public assertiveness of the widowed Layla. In this kind of time, their last meeting occurs in a desert setting that has no interior space. There is no “Layla’s tent,” no retinues, no helpers, no “organizing,” or ordering of space. They are simply cast loose in each other’s presence.

It is also quite striking that the animals too have disappeared. The boundaries between animality and spirituality have been reabsorbed into the two individuals and are expressed more ambiguously in the inner conflict of Layla between her modesty and her desire. The dangerousness of the outside becomes the dangerousness of the inner, psychological struggle that is most manifest in Layla. In the same manner, the differences

between Layla and Majnun diminish. They are both poets; they both express their love in powerful voices; they are both, in a sense, maddened and "wandering" both physically and spiritually. And there is none of the extravagant "being struck dumb" by passion. The two lovers encounter each other and sort out their identities and relations themselves without being rendered unconscious and thus being made objects of description or narration.

Returning to the story, what follows is a translation of the entire segment containing Layla's response to Majnun's request that she identify herself.

Layla said, oh my spirit's near companion
 desire of the entranced and wounded heart
 Good news! Destiny has granted your desire
 filled your cup with the wine of merriment
 Good news! What you seek is divinely given
 in the end you profited from passion
 Good news! Your wish has been attained
 God has united you with what you seek

I am Layla, object of your souls' yearning
 desire of your forlorn and feeble heart
 Ever were you full of longing for beauty
 ever were you needful of union
 Now that the vision has been granted you by God
 don't be remiss and make excuses, beware!
 Consider union with me yours for the taking
 come, be near me, don't waste the chance
 My heart is a pledge to union with your body
 as for my life, it is given as a trust to you
 Now that it's in your power, don't be neglectful
 come, hold what is pledged to you, take up your trust
 If you are ill, I am your physician
 if you're a lover, I am your beloved
 Come, be a lawful guest at the feast of union
 for a moment be my close companion
 Give luster to the narcissus with a poppy
 adorn the lily with a fresh fragrant herb
 Make turquoise near companion of the ruby
 make a meal for the parrot of purest candy
 Graft the red-bud to the rose
 bring Hızır to the water of life

And if you are not an enamored lover
 if you are unwounded by grief and woe
 Don't show the signs by feigning them
 don't make a disgrace of us both
 Show me some idea, a sign or signal
 else shame us both before all people
 Oh rose, is this not shameful for me
 that you will not be my companion?
 That I present to you the sun of my cheek
 and you display no warmth in return
 That I hold a cup and say come take it
 and you don't rise forthwith to your feet
 I have experienced much and it seldom happens
 that a lover be coy with his beloved
 That a rose display its loveliness
 and the bulbul see it and pay no heed
 By some means that heart-adorning idol
 also composed a curious ghazal

(This ghazal is in the voice of Layla)

Oh you who drives me mad with love what is this disdain of me
 why is it you do not ask what is the state of this crazy heart

If you don't acknowledge me in public you are excused
 but what is it that you don't know me in the secluded places

It's easy, if you don't know how I feel and show me no compassion
 but what is it if you know my feelings and are heedless still

They call the outcries of the bulbul a salute to the rose
 but what is this outcry, when he sees the rose and feels no attraction

That fairy surely pays no respect to avoiding shame
 oh Fuzûlî, I do not know, what is the fault in avoiding shame
 (262/204-263/206)

As this passage begins, Layla is overjoyed, as is indicated by the opening cluster of three lines all beginning *müjde*, "good news!". She displays a perhaps naive faith that things will now turn out for the best. She has prayed to God, asking that she may find her beloved and her honor be preserved. And it appears as though her prayers are answered. She finds

Majnun in the desert as if by a miracle ... and now all that remains is for the two to be lawfully joined, as it seems God intended. However, from the increasing intensity of her entreaties, it becomes clear that Majnun is not responding. Finally she warns and commands him in an exasperated tone:

Now that the vision has been granted you by God
don't be remiss and make excuses, beware!
Consider union with me yours for the taking
come, be near me, don't waste the chance (263/204)

To Layla, he is in peril of rejecting that which God has offered him. And she, in her inability to move him, succumbs to the danger she foresaw and prayed to be delivered from—the danger that her passion would overwhelm her modesty and good sense.

What follows are four lines that seem to pick up on (and perhaps interpret) the suggestive garden imagery of a line from Layla's conversation with Zayd in the "added text:" *ham-ī-āba-ye sarv kon caman rā / dar dasta-ye lāla kaş saman rā*, ("Make the cypress bed-mate of the meadow / bind the jasmine in a bunch with the tulip") (311). We must remember that in the Nizami addition, Layla's sensuality and seductiveness are represented mostly through the description of her embraces, caresses, tender and longing glances. In Fuzūlī, however, her behavior is condensed into speech, and she makes a startling offer:

Come, be a lawful guest at the feast of union
for a moment be my close companion
Give luster to the narcissus with a poppy
adorn the lily with a fresh fragrant herb
Make turquoise near companion of the ruby
make a meal for the parrot of purest candy
Graft the red-bud to the rose
bring Hızır to the water of life (263/205)

What a contemporary audience would have made of this passage is no mystery. The word translated above as "close companion" is *hem-dem*,

which more literally means "sharing breath" in the sense of coming close, face to face, lip to lip. The narcissus is Layla's yellowed eye and the poppy, Majnun's bloody red one. Her hair is a fragrant lily, his a hyacinth cascading down over hers. (Remember Layla's hair covering him like a hair shirt in the Nizami addition.) The poet, Majnun, is a parrot with a blue, turquoise beak that is brought together with her ruby lips. The parrot will eat of the lip's sweet candy enabling him to speak sugared words. The judas tree or red-bud branch, turgid with small red blossoms, is obviously phallic and its "grafting" onto the delicate folds of the rose is a graphic metaphor for sexual intercourse. As Hızır—the undying phallus—wanders in the darkness, he/it is brought to the "water of life" or the semen that creates immortal generations.

Even this stark and shockingly sexual proposal quite clearly meets with no suitable response. The "tongue-tied with passion" theme of the Nizami addition is replaced by Majnun's (off-stage) inability to respond to her increasingly urgent and, in a sense, sacrificial pleas. Finally Fuzūlī's Layla comes to the same point as the Layla of the addition, but having sacrificed her modesty to a far greater degree. In the addition (as cited above), Layla chides her lover for not speaking when any reasonable poet/lover would—and thus she keeps herself contained within the world of "poetic" expectations. In Fuzūlī, she chides him for not acting, for leaving her in the position of having abandoned her modesty (and chastity) for nothing, for having shamed her by his indifference. There is nothing ethereal or transcendent or other-worldly about her offer. Unlike the addition text, which consistently overlays a mystical interpretation from the viewpoint of an omniscient poet/narrator, in this monologue Fuzūlī's Layla speaks without outside comment, interpretation, or censure. It appears that even the mysticism of the passage has matured. It is integrated almost seamlessly with the worldly tale. The physical passion and the spiritual passion are not clearly divided by symbols into the spiritual/mystical and physical/animal; they persist naturally as two sides of the same coin. In addition, Majnun, in his response to Layla, does not censure her or accuse her of improper behavior. His refusal does not suggest that her proposal is unacceptable but only that he has degenerated to the point at which physical union is no longer possible for him.

Majnun said, oh idol so like a fairy
don't set fire to this wisp of chaff
Your image is enough to set me aflame
I no longer have strength for union with you (265/207)

He has arrived at a stage at which the only possible consummation is a spiritual one. Having absorbed her essence, he no longer has any need of her.

Alas for the soul, for it is the soul
that pleasures in the cheek of the heart-stealer
As for me, long since have I lost my soul
it is a different soul that inhabits my body
Now the soul in my body, the light in my eye
the blood in my heart is all you (266/208)

As for Layla—this more mature, intelligent, and aware Layla—she does not go off defeated, frustrated, unfulfilled to die like a petulant teenager. She is fully capable of understanding what has happened to Majnun. I am aware of what has become of you, she says, and it is a good thing. “I was grief stricken and you made me glad; you set me free from love of this world” (270/212). *You made me glad*. When Fuzûlî’s Layla, in the end, dies, she dies having experienced a spiritual/mystical insight similar to Majnun’s. Physical existence is no longer meaningful to her, and she casts it off—not bitterly or overcome by disappointment but gladly.

In the “short version” of *Layla and Majnun*, Nizami inscribes his doubts about the story both at the beginning and the end. At the beginning his doubts and dissatisfactions with the story are articulated quite overtly, as we have indicated. At the end, the abrupt death of Layla, unmotivated except in so far as it is forced by the ‘Udhri chronotope, also underscores the weaknesses of the inherited tale. It is our suggestion that the growth of the story, beginning with the “added text,” is a consequence of Nizami’s doubts and follows the trajectory that he built into his telling.

This is to say, repeating what we said earlier, that Nizami leaves his tale spectacularly incomplete. The abrupt death of Layla underscores the role of the ‘Udhri “beloved” as merely an object, an object presented solely so that a hopeless and extravagant love can be constructed about it. As such an object, Layla can simply be discarded without substantial motivation if this is necessary to add another, final level of intensity to Majnun’s already hyperbolic passion. She exists only for his passion.

But Nizami finds this story-type unsatisfactory and by foregrounding the unsatisfactory development of Layla’s character in the ending of the short text, he creates an empty space for his successors to fill. Thus, by

Fuzûlî’s time the possibility exists—a possibility that we believe Fuzûlî realizes spectacularly—to create a Layla who is (at least!) as complete and real a character as Majnun, whose story is intertwined with Majnun’s in a way that thenceforth blends spiritual and physical love and makes them inseparable. From this point on, any lover, be it Rafet El-Roman or Eric Clapton or any man or woman in the world, mystic or no can identify with Layla and Majnun. This is Nizami’s gift to humankind, reluctantly granted but the kind of seed that genius often plants even unawares.

Notes

1. Nizami, *Layla va Majnun*, Bihruz Sarvatiyan, ed. (Tehran: Intisharat-i Tus, 1364 [1986]). All quotations from Nizami will be from this text unless otherwise noted and will be cited by page number only. All English translations in this chapter are by Walter G. Andrews, who is obligated to Hadi Sultan-Qurraie for help with the translation of several passages from Nizami.
2. Agah Sırrı Levend, *Arap, Fars, ve Türk Edebiyatlarında Leyla ve Mecnun Hikâyesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1959).
3. Levend, *Arap, Fars, ve Türk*, pp. 110-11.
4. All quotations from Nevâî are from the edition of Ulku Çelik, ed., *Alî-şîr Nevâî Leylî vü Mecnûn* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 1996). Citations are by page number in this edition.
5. All quotations from Fuzûlî’s *Layla and Majnun* will be taken from the texts of Hamid Araslı, *Leylâ vü Mecnûn* (Baku, 1958) and Fuzuli, *Leyla ile Mecnun*, Necmettin Halil Onan, ed. (İstanbul: Maarif Basımevi, 1956). Citations will be given by page number from both texts in the form (Onan/Araslı).
6. Kenan Akyüz, Süheyl Beken, Sedit Yüksel, Müjgan Cumbur, eds., *Fuzûlî, Divanı* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 1990), p. 306.
7. See, Ali Nihat Tarlan, *Fuzuli Divanı Şerhi III* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1985), p. 186.
8. Behcet Necatigil, “Sevda Peşinde,” (originally published in a collection called *Kapalı Çarşı Bütün Eserleri: Şiirler 1938–1958* (İstanbul, 1995), p. 42.
9. Orhan Gencebay, *Leyla ile Mecnun*, Kefvan Plak_ılık, İstanbul, n.d.
10. Rafet El-Roman, *Bah Ueşehir Magazin* No. 11 (Spring 1996), p. 25.
11. Vahid Dastgirdi, ed., *Namah-i Layli va Majnun Nizami Ganjavi* (Tehran: Muassasah-i Matbuat-i Ilmi, 1972). Levend, *Arap, Fars, ve Türk*.
12. Rudolf Gelpke, ed. and trans., *The Story of Layla and Majnun* (Oxford: Cassimer, 1966). A. N. Tarlan, ed. and trans., *Fuzuli: Leyla ile Mecnun* (İstanbul: M. E. B. Şark-İslam Klâsikleri, 1943).
13. Robert Dankoff, “The Lyric in the Romance: The Use of Ghazals in Persian and Turkish Maṣnavîs,” *JNES* 43:1 (1984), pp. 9-25.