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LEONARD COHEN
THE MODERN TROUBADOUR

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Author: Mgr. Jiří Měsíc
Supervisor: Prof. PhDr. Josef Jařab, CSc.

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DIZERTAČNÍ PRÁCE

Autor práce: Mgr. Jiří Měsíc
Vedoucí práce: Prof. PhDr. Josef Jařab, CSc.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation thesis arose from thinking about literary tradition as described by the Anglo-American modernists Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. In their view, the tradition of European love-lyrics crystallised in the work of the medieval Occitan troubadours who were influenced by the cultural and political milieu of the contemporary Occitanie and whose work reflected the religious influences of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The main subject of their poetry was the worship of the divinised feminine character resembling the Christian Virgin Mary, Gnostic Sophia or the ancient Mother Goddess. In the course of his career, Leonard Cohen has revealed erudition in medieval poetry and religion and a penchant for modernist thinking. Moreover, his work shows many parallels with the work of his Occitan predecessors. The thesis deals with comparison of texts and motifs present in their works with references to religion and mysticism.

Key words: *religion, song, poem, poetry, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Cohen, feminine.*

ABSTRAKT

Tato dizertační práce vzešla z přemýšlení o literární tradici tak, jak o ní mluvili anglo-američtí modernisté Ezra Pound a T.S. Eliot. V jejich pojetí tradice evropské milostné lyriky krystalizovala v díle středověkých okcitánských trubadúrů, kteří byli ovlivněni kulturním a politickým životem tehdejší Okcitánie a v jejichž díle se harmonicky skloubí náboženské vlivy tehdejší doby, přesněji vlivy Judaismu, Křesťanství a Islámu. Hlavním předmětem jejich poezie bylo uctívání zbožštěné ženské literární postavy, která více, či méně připomíná křesťanskou panenku Marii, gnostickou Sophii nebo pradávnou Matku Bohyni. Leonard Cohen v průběhu své umělecké kariéry prokázal erudovanost ve středověké poezii a náboženství a také svoji náklonnost k modernistickému uvažování. Mimoto jeho dílo vykazuje značné příbuznosti s díly jeho okcitánských předchůdců. Dizertace se proto zaměřuje na komparaci textů a hlavních motivů v jejich dílech a odkazuje k náboženství a mystice.

Klíčová slova: *náboženství, píseň, poezie, judaismus, křesťanství, islám, Cohen, ženství.*

Prohlašuji, že jsem dizertační práci na téma *Leonard Cohen, The Modern Troubadour* vypracoval samostatně za použití v seznamu literatury uvedených zdrojů a že všechna místa čerpající z myšlenek jiných autorů jsou uvedena řádnou citací. Dále prohlašuji, že tato práce nebyla použita k získání jiného titulu.

V Olomouci dne . . . . . ……

. . . . . .

Jiří Měsíc

Words of Gratitude

I would like to express my gratitude for the never ending support of my home institution Palacký University in Olomouc and particularly to professor Josef Jařab from the Department of English and American Studies for his encouragement and professional advice. Without him and the kindness of other professors and students of our department one could never work with such a joyful spirit that has accompanied me for the last three years.

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During the course of my studies, I was able to present my work at several universities abroad (Helsinki, Montpellier, Toulouse, Albi, Toulon, London, Barcelona, Aveiro, Sevilla and Lisboa), where I met many fascinating and inspiring people of whom I have to mention Jarkko Arjatsalo, Leonard Cohen's long-time friend, and literary scholars and in many cases enthusiastic musicologists and musicians themselves: Juan Ignacio, Michael Gronow, Shara Rambarran, Antti-Ville Kärjä, Imen Berrahou, Amina Kam, Sabrina Zerar, Samuel Sánchez Sánchez, Bernat Jimenéz de Cisneros Puig, Maria De São José Côrte-Real, Mostafa Anwar and Judith Cohen. I was also lucky to meet Alberto Manzano and Christophe Lebold, two contemporary writers, authors and men of knowledge who have published books on Leonard Cohen in Spain and France, with whom I could establish a fruitful discussion.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my family who have given me just enough space and support to do my research. Special thanks are to Estrella Domínguez Macías who is at my side in this 40°C temperature at La Plaza de la Encarnación right in the heart of Sevilla.

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Poetry is the essence of history and of true human culture. Humanistic studies may not be useful for the expansion of the airplane market or in chemical laboratories, but if mankind is to be brought together on the wings of the spirit craving beauty and wisdom, they are the only ones which can achieve that goal and let us hope that a modest niche will be reserved for them in post-war educational programs.

Alois Richard Nykl (1885 – 1958)

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INTRODUCTION

Anyone who objects to the manner & form of their singing,
to canzoni or cansos is foolish as a man would be
if he objected to growing roses on a trellis.

Ezra Pound

This thesis was supposed to bear the title "The Exploration of the Feminine in the Work of Leonard Cohen" which characterizes its principal focus, the feminine character of the songs of the Canadian singer. However, in the end, I opted for the title "Leonard Cohen, The Modern Troubadour" which embraces Cohen's religious and spiritual ambitions and may accommodate the thematic analysis of his artistic output as a whole.

Leonard Cohen, a Canadian singer-songwriter, poet and novelist, was born in 1934 in Montreal. Under scrutiny, his work presents a fascinating synthesis of medieval philosophy, alchemy, gnosis, Judaism (Kabbalah), Christianity and Islam (Sufism), Zen Buddhism, *I Ching*, psychoanalysis, Scientology and other religious and spiritual schools of thought. Apart from Zen Buddhism, *I Ching* and the modern religions, his medieval predecessors were drawing on the same sources and were also welcoming to the fusion of religious, philosophic and spiritual teachings in order to form a new "religion" based on *love.* Catharism, a religious Gnostic movement, which flourished at the same time as the Occitan troubadours, roughly between the 11th and 12th centuries, exemplifies this best. Their rites, tolerance towards other religions, respect for equality, community and women were intolerable in the eyes of the Christian rulers who waged the Albingensian crusade between 1209 and 1229 at the behest of the Pope Innocent III in order to put to sleep the Occitan "heresy."

The troubadour poetry and culture has never perished though. Some troubadours fled to Spain, Germany or at the court of the Sicilian king Frederick II and continued their work there. Later, their tradition was appropriated by their Tuscan followers of *Dolce stil novo* poets whose influence reached far beyond Northern Italy. They all performed their poetry accompanied by music in the

tradition of the King David or Sappho and ingrained the European literary tradition with the sense that words and music are inseparable.

It occurred to me in the course of writing this thesis that I somehow followed upon the work commenced by Ezra Pound as described in his "Praefatio ad lectorem electum" in 1910 to his book *The Spirit of Romance*. There Pound wrote: "I have attempted to examine certain forces, elements or qualities which were potent in the medieval literature of the Latin tongues, and are, I believe, still potent in our own" (1). Due to my interest in the medieval Andalusian and Occitan literature and popular music, I knew well what he meant.

Leonard Cohen was quite an apt subject for my comparative research since I had already noticed the same, or similar "qualities" that he shares with the medieval poets "of the Latin tongues," which were so crucial for the Anglo-American modernists. During his formative years, Cohen inclined to modernist authors whom he met at McGill University in Montreal, especially to Luis Dudek, A.M. Klein and F.R. Scott, who seem to have opened doors to his understanding of the literary tradition and his position among his predecessors. It was at this university that Cohen could have met Omar Pound who graduated there in 1958 and who to a certain extent followed the work of his father Ezra Pound.

Ezra Pound said that what "we need is a literary scholarship, which will weigh Theocritus and Yeats with one balance, and which will judge dull dead men as inexorably as dull writers of today, and will, with equity, give praise to beauty before referring to an almanack" (Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* 2). T.S. Eliot instructed us in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that we must set contemporary authors for "contrast and comparison" to see their qualities:

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead (*Sacred Wood* 41).

I am aware of the elitism which this approach carries and of the outrage it provokes in contemporary academia and among contemporary poets and authors who are often deprived of the knowledge of the past, or, in the worst cases, use the knowledge of their immediate environment and employ it to judge the literary tradition as a whole. Translations used for such judgements may prove to be the worst material since their ideological colouring or naïveté has the potential to deprive the original works of their meaning and context.

In this thesis I worked with original texts and complemented them with the translations of leading modernists and contemporary translators and, in special cases, with my own ones. It was

not only Pound and Eliot who have been an inspiring force when I conducted my research. It was also the Czech scholar Alois Richard Nykl who became the major authority on the Occitan troubadours and Andalusian Muslim poets worldwide.

The work on this thesis commenced at Palacký University, Olomouc in 2013 under the supervision of professor Josef Jařab and is a continuation of my research that begun at the University in Ostrava in 2008. With the support of our university and the French Embassy and the French Institute in Prague, I could make frequent visits and long study stays at Paul-Valéry University in Montpellier in 2014 and 2015 to study troubadour literature. It was professor Claude Chastagner, a specialist on modern pop culture and music who brought me in contact with the Occitan literature specialists Gilda Caiti Russo and Philippe Martel with whom I could discuss my work and translations in detail. It was in Montpellier that I first presented my research in 2014 at the departments of English and Occitan language and literature at once and it was due to their encouragement that I conducted my research in various places in Southern France.

As an Anglicist, I have been always aware of the influence of the troubadour poetry upon the Anglo-American modernists but I did not have any knowledge of the medieval troubadour literature apart from English and Czech translations when I started my research in 2008. The continuous study of the medieval poetry enabled me to deepen my knowledge of French and Spanish languages and literatures and embark on the study of the medieval Occitan language. My research was then extended to the medieval Andalusian poetry which is also included in this thesis. The meetings with other specialists such as Alberto Manzano and Christopher Lebold who devoted great deal of their lives to writing about Leonard Cohen further fuelled my interest. My research was concluded at the University of Sevilla with the friendly advice of professor María Luisa Venegas Lagüéns.

Reasons

The reasons for undertaking my research are numerous. The following list contains the most important ones which inspired me to study the troubadour poetry and its influence upon the contemporary popular culture, particularly upon the work of Leonard Cohen:

1. If the troubadours are considered to be the cornerstone in the development of European poetry, a contemporary-singer songwriter writing on the theme of love must be put into contrast with them first. For their ideas were (mis)used by the subsequent literary schools and are still being

exploited by the contemporary pop-culture (even if the pop-culture is often not aware of their heritage).

2. The medieval Andalusian and Occitan poetry has qualities that can be found in today's musical and literary output. Thinking about the seminal motifs, such as the veneration and idealisation of love, desire for money and the celebrity life, wanderings, failed marriages, spirituality or religion as a way to solve unsolvable problems, all these motifs may lead a curious reader to realize that today's popular culture works with the same material as the medieval poets.

3. Books analysing the manifestation of the troubadour poetry in the work of contemporary singer-songwriters and authors are almost non-existent.

4. We must understand that the English literary tradition is not isolated and has been shaped by other literary traditions.

5. The departments of Occitan Literature and English and American Literature do not maintaint any debate on the influence of the troubadour poetry on the Anglo-American modernists. At the same time, they fail to notice the manifestation of the medieval literature in today's popular culture worldwide.

6. Leonard Cohen is the most prominent contemporary author whose work contains strong reflections of his Occitan predecessors. He is also aware of his position within the literary tradition.

7. Literary criticism on Cohen does not consider the mythological, religious and spiritual qualities of his work, (except for one or two essays) and does not put him into relation with the medieval poets whom he resemble. All his biographers keep repeating sources of inspiration but avoid describing these sources and their relation to Cohen.

Goals

The purpose of my research is to put the contemporary singer-songwriter into contrast with his predecessors and discover to which extent he draws on the literary tradition of Europe, particularly on the medieval troubadour poetry and song. This drawing on the ancient traditions means, at least from the point of the thematic, the worship of the feminine character that bears close resemblance to a goddess. The poet of the medieval Occitan poetry often accepted the role of the Son who

worships the Virgin, his mother and lover, but not the Virgin in a Christian sense since their poetry is permeated by pagan, Jewish, Christian and Muslim symbolism at once.

Methodology

The thesis fits into the term of comparative literature and cultural religious studies. Its crucial parts are based on comparisons of texts. The research commences by the investigation of the troubadour poetry and its significance for the Anglo-American modernists since, as I said above, modernism is an important facet of Cohen's poetry and, finally, Cohen's work was shaped by his teachers and mentors who were leading modernists in Canada at that time.

I avoid giving a definition of modernism and its precepts, since the reader may find them in any textbook available. Rather, I probed the material of the modernist poetry and writings, more specifically works by Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. At the same time, I realised that their study of the Greek and Latin poetry or Vedic and Ancient Chinese texts did not extend to the study of Persian and Arabic poetry, which is at the core of the troubadour literature and has shaped the culture of Europe to the extent that is now completely marginalised. At least, I could not find any references to Arabic or Persian literature in their works apart from Omar Khayyam's *Rubáiyát.*

Among my primary sources are the most representative anthologies of the medieval literature often containing the original works with their English, French or Spanish translations. Whenever, I was not satisfied with the translations I took the liberty to present my own ones. The literary and cultural critics and historians who shaped my work are Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Robert Kehew, W.D. Snodgrass, Paul Fabre, Northrop Frye, René Nelli, Hoa Hoï Vuong, Alois Richard Nykl, Elizabeth Aubrey, J.H. Chaytor, Alexander J. Denomy, Peter Dronke, Julius Evola, Simon Gaunt, Frederick Goldin, Hans Jonas, C.G. Jung, Patrick Laude, James T. Monroe, Josef Prokop, Martín Riquer, Idrîs Vos, Eliot R. Wolfson and others.

Individual Sections

The thesis is structured into the several chapters. As I said above, the first chapter "The Tradition," speaks of the literary tradition as understood by Ezra Pound and Thomas S. Eliot and puts Cohen into contrast with his medieval predecessors and contemporaries. The second chapter "Features of the Troubadour Poetry" presents the key concepts of the troubadour poetry, such as *fin'amor* and the thematic, song structure and instruments they used. The third chapter "The Virgin as the Main Subject of the Troubadour Poetry" focuses on the religious qualities of the feminine character of their poetry and its relation to the Son as we know Him from the religions of antiquity. The poet

is presented as a man who directs his life in such a way as to satisfy his spiritual thirst. This chapter introduces the literary character of the Virgin which is the main subject of the medieval troubadour poetry and of the poetry of Leonard Cohen. The fourth chapter "Leonard Cohen, The Modern Troubadour" deals with the Virgin as a mind-construct and presents its relation to the women who gave "the seed" to Cohen's songs. It also presents crucial similarities and differences between their poetries. The fifth chapter "Medieval Andalusian Muslim Poetry and Song" maps the common features of the Andalusian and Occitan medieval poetry. It introduces this less analysed field of literature and provides comments by the Czech Scholar Alois Richard Nykl who investigated the Occitan and Andalusian poetry seven decades ago. The following chapter "The Nature of Love in the Work of Leonard Cohen" changes the focus from the tradition of the troubadour poetry to the religious qualities in Cohen's work. Concretely, it focuses on the theme of love and its similarities with *fin'amor* through the religious perspective of Christian mysticism and Kabbalah, which are the main influence upon Cohen. The last chapter "Leonard Cohen, the Priest of a Catacomb Religion" focuses on Cohen's Judaic origins and on his vacillation between accepting the role of the singer as the speaker of the Jewish community and the prophet who warns the community against the wrath of the Lord. Each chapter is introduced by a short abstract and ends with a conclusion.

NOTE: The reader is invited to listen to, or read the lyrics of individual songs described in the course of this thesis to facilitate his understanding. The lyrics in print accompany Cohen's albums, or are to be found in the collection of songs *Stranger Music: Selected Poems and Songs* (1994), I intentionally leave them unquoted. I would also like to make known that the thesis focuses on the lyrical self or persona of Leonard Cohen. Therefore, whenever the name "Cohen" appears, it stands for the singer with the guitar, not the man without it. My aim is to provoke discussion of the troubadour influence and reflection of their poetry in the work of contemporary authors. The thesis deals primarily with the content of Cohen's lyrical output and attempts to present a coherent description of the motifs with which he works. Some of its parts have been sent to various academic journals in an essay format and are expected to be published in 2016 / 2017.

I. THE TRADITION

The following chapter focuses on the importance of the medieval Occitan literature for the Anglo-American modernists and the importance of literary tradition in general. Leonard Cohen is portrayed as a representative of the tradition of the European love poetry in the sense understood by Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. The chapter describes his literary background among the Canadian modernists surrounding him during his studies at McGill University in Montréal. Moreover, it gives an outline of some basic concepts of the troubadour poetry and describes the cultural milieu of the medieval Occitania. The unifying character of their poetry is revealed to be a divine lady resembling the Virgin Mary whom the poets worship and with whom they strive to experience a divine union.

The word *tradition* has a slightly different meaning when seen through the eyes of the Anglo-American modernist poets and literary critics such as Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888 – 1965) and Ezra Pound (1885 – 1972). Literary tradition, according to Eliot, does not mean a repetition of older works but a work of art that builds up on the works of our predecessors and modifies them. This idea is well summarised in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in which Eliot says:

> What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted (*Sacred Wood* 41).

The "real" work of art comes from a constant struggle that artists wage in order to liberate themselves from the hegemony of their predecessors. In the words of T.S. Eliot, the serious author does not exist on his own but is always related to his predecessors with whom he should be measured. The task of the critic is to compare him and highlight points in which he is closest to the greatest geniuses of the past and most distant when demonstrating his talent.

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead (Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* 44).

The artist should not be limited by his predecessors but encouraged to find his freedom among them. According to Pound, "the tradition is a beauty which we preserve and not a set of fetters to bind us" (Pound, *Selected Essays* 91). This tradition does not make anyone to imitate but to use new means of expression for the material shared by all cultures. This material comes, of course, from sensory perceptions but it is also knowledge attained in revelatory moments which are of spiritual or highly emotional character. The artist tailors his poems through a diligent use of language and structure of thoughts.

As we know from his work, Pound studied Ancient Greek and Latin poetry, Japanese Haiku and Chinese poetry, Old and Modern English poetry and used their knowledge for his literary production. However, the most extensive study he made was that of the medieval Occitan troubadours who influenced his earliest work.

Ezra Pound is the most known of the Anglo-American Modernists who studied and translated their poetry. He learned the Occitan with William P. Shepard between 1904 and 1905 and specialized in Romance philology at first at Hamilton College and then at the University of Pennsylvania (Sieburth x). In 1910, Pound published a collection of lectures-turned-essays *The Spirit of Romance* (1910) which contains seminal pieces on the development of the Greek and Latin poetry and its reappearance in the medieval Occitan poetry. The book is also permeated by Pound's translations of Arnaut Daniel and mostly linguistic and thematic analysis of his works. In the chapter "Proença" he presents a short commentary to the first troubadour Guilhèm de Peitieus (1071 – 1127), Jaufre Rudel (1113 – 1170), Bernart de Ventadorn (1130/1140 – 1190/1200), Peire d'Auvergne (1130 – 1190), Bertran de Born (1140 – 1215), Marcabru (c. 1110 – 1150), Peire Cardenal (c. 1180 – 1278), Pierre de Vic (Monge de Montaudon (c. 1143 – 1210) and others. However, the most seminal writing comes from the chapter called "Psychology and Troubadours" in which he analyses the origins of the troubadour poetry and the feminine character which they portrayed.

Pound could not find any author who would embody the subtleties of the troubadour literature in his own time. Therefore, if we were looking for someone who epitomized the medieval poetry in the most recent times, it would be Pound himself who played with the forms of troubadour poetry and thematic in his first collection of poetry *Lume Spento* (1908) and his subsequent collections *Personae* (1909), *Exultations* (1909), *Provença* (1910) and *Canzoni* (1911).

Pound spent the year 1912 in South-Eastern France and walked the area of the troubadour land on foot as described in his book *A Walking Tour in Southern France* which was published as late as in 1992 out of the notes he made at that time. His notes contain the observations on the influence of the Greek and Orient culture upon Occitanie and references to the various birthplaces of the poets; the nature and appearance of their villages, towns and cities. The book is accompanied by three poems re-printed in Appendix 2: "Provencia Deserta," "The Gypsy" and "Near Perigord" in which Pound imitates the sound, rhythm and thematic of troubadour poetry.

Cohen's mentor Louis Dudek (1918 – 2001), the Canadian modernist poet and scholar, had corresponded with Pound since 1949 and spread his ideas over the English Department at McGill University where Leonard Cohen studied. Although Cohen has never mentioned Pound or Eliot as his influence, everything suggests that he had a deep respect for their work, which may be seen even in his first collection of poetry verging between dark romanticism and modernism.

Cohen's book *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956) was published as a first piece of the McGill Poetry Series directed by Dudek and referred to literary tradition, world mythologies and Cohen's Jewish origins. The book suggests that one's identity may be grasped only through the tradition of the people representing a particular community and their religion—Judaism (in this case)—and their attitude towards other communities and other religions. The community thus provides a space in which a member may cultivate his sense of history and time. This supposition was corroborated by Cohen himself in an interview with Michael C. Ford in the *Los Angeles Free Press* in 1975 in which he said:

> If you happen to be born Jewish and have been formed by Jewish sensibilities, then it's wholly appropriate that you look to the past through your own tradition, which is often very hospitable to your own kind of vision. So, in that sense, I could describe myself as a traditionalist (rpt. in Kubernik 14).

The above piece of information puts Cohen's work in the Jewish historical and literary context; however, his output is not limited by it. In 1993, in an interview with Jim O'Brien from *B-Side Magazine* (UK), Cohen described his literary formation and put himself in relation to his literary predecessors from world literatures:

> The kind of training I had as a young writer, a young composer, made me very much aware of where I stood in a long line of singers or poets: musicians from the Troubadours; even before that, from Homer; and even before that, from Isaiah and King David; coming all the way down through

> the various strains into English literature; into poetry; into folk poetry like Robbie Burns; into folksingers like Pete Seeger, Alan Lomax, and Woody Guthrie; and down to my own generation. I've always been aware of that tradition, and to be one of the figures that allows the tradition to continue is very gratifying (rpt. in Burger 361).

What is to be understood from the above passage follows the same maxim that T.S. Eliot set in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1921). The artist strives to embrace the literary tradition and put himself on a par with his predecessors. We should not be surprised to see Isaiah and King David in the same context as Pete Seeger or Woody Guthrie since Cohen is concerned with the origins of the song and its transformation in the course of time. For an artist to acquire the knowledge of the whole tradition of writing, he must, according to Eliot, do a great labour to "obtain" it.

> [The tradition] cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional (Eliot, *Sacred Wood* 40-41).

The "historical sense" of which Eliot spoke is present in the songs of Leonard Cohen. His oeuvre is not limited to the Jewish literature, nor modern poetry, or folk song. It is not limited by the troubadour poetry either. It takes the most important features of all the concerned literatures and artistic productions and makes a syncretic mélange out of them. His work may be, therefore, analysed on the background of all tradition although Cohen draws his inspiration most often from the medieval philosophy, poetry and religion.

It was Cohen's Canadian teacher and friend from McGill University, Irving Layton (1912 – 2006) who put Cohen's poetry, after listening to his newly released album *Recent Songs* (1979), on par with old English and Scottish medieval ballads. The following quote comes from the transcript reprinted in the book *The Song of Leonard Cohen* (2010):

> There are to me many similarities between Leonard's ballads; Leonard's songs and ballads written in twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Their quality of mystery; of doom; of menace; of sadness; the dramatic quality that you will find in the Scottish ballads; in the English ballads of the thirteenth century. I find the same quality in Leonard Cohen's work (Rasky 39).

Layton may have lacked the knowledge of the Occitan literature when he made his analogy with the ballads of 12th and 13th century England and Scotland of which Cohen has never revealed a single influence nor made any references to in his work. However, the above features are characteristic of the French and Spanish medieval ballads and certainly of other ballads in various European literatures. Layton also described the suffering of the poet "working himself up" from his predicament in the course of writing his poem, which is to be seen in Cohen's work:

> What I like particularly in Leonard's songs is what I call their manic-depressive or rather the depressive-manic quality to be quite accurate. If you notice in some of his most telling and most moving songs, they always begin on a note of pain, of anguish, of sadness and then somehow or other he works himself up into a state of exaltation, of euphoria as if he had released himself from the devils of melancholy and of pain. These for me are Leonard's most typical and most powerful songs. […] Suddenly you know, after groaning and moaning and pain and anguish, all very moving, all very telling, suddenly there is an upbeat, a very euphoric, outburst of joy and it is a joy that is earned, because he has paid the price of suffering in pain and insight. So for me, Leonard is a very significant **troubadour** of our time because we all pay the price of anguish and frustration and unhappiness. And Leonard pays the price. But he has the insistence on not allowing to be trapped forever or crippled in that mood. In other words, for me he is a heroic **troubadour**. For me he is a tragic, heroic **troubadour** and this is what I find most appealing in Leonard's work. It always moves me. It never fails to move me very deeply because it is the heroism of our time where we cannot recall on God, or destiny or communism or socialism or nationalism to help us. It is the man alone, alienated, by himself. He has to work out his own salvation. Leonard works out a salvation musically (Rasky 40).

The reader is now cautioned to remember these words of Layton when reading further on since the troubadour song often commences on the same note of despair and sadness and the poet works himself up in its course to experience a state of joy and surging hope.

Other modernists sharing Pound's enthusiasm for the troubadour poetry were, for instance, Marianne Moore (1887 – 1972) who used strophic arrangement of the troubadour *canso* and, especially, referred to the world of romance that Pound began with his exploration of the

troubadours in his *Spirit of Romance* (1910). In several of her writings, she plays with the code of chivalry and refers to the artificiality of the world of Romance and of the romanticizing tendencies of the 19th century as epitomised by the British poet Robert Browning (1812 – 1889) in his poem "Sordello." In the following poem, she makes some historic observations on the characters of the Grail legends that became topical in the work of the medieval French author Chrétien de Troyes (12th century). Particularly, she focuses on the "illusion" which we entertain when reading his works:

> What is more precise than precision? Illusion.
> Knights we've known,
> like those familiar
> now unfamiliar knights who sought the Grail, were
> *ducs* in old Roman fashion
> without the addition
> of wreaths and silver rods, and Armour gilded or inlaid.
> (Moore 149–50)

Ford Madox Ford (1873 – 1939), who wrote the book *Provence: From Minstrels to the Machine* (1935), was concerned with the literature, geography and the climate of the Occitanie and his preferred towns Tarascon and Beaucaire. He presented several crucial points such as a discussion of the Muslim culture and its influence upon the medieval Occitanie (118 – 124) and the sorts and conditions of the Cathars in the Midi. However, his book does not suggest any influence of the troubadours upon Ford or other modernists.

Leonard Cohen has read the modern poets such as Bertold Brecht (1898 – 1956) or Federico García Lorca (1898 – 1936), who influenced him the most out of all the authors. In an interview for *Melody Maker* in 1975, Cohen said: "In the early years I was trained as a poet by reading poets like Lorca and Brecht" (rpt. in Kubernik 19). The influence of Lorca upon Cohen is most apparent in the songs "Gypsy Wife" (*Recent Songs*, 1979) and "Take This Waltz" (*I'm Your Man,* 1988). While the first song refers to Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre* (1931), "Take This Waltz" is an adaptation of Lorca's poem translated by Cohen himself. This version differs in some seminal aspects and symbolism from the original version contained in *Poeta en Nueva York* (1930). We may certainly see the appeal of the ballad form which appeared in his *Poema del cante jondo* (1921) and *Romancero gitano* (1928) which played with the forms of the folkloric poetry of Andalusia and

see modernist undertones of Lorca's book *Poeta en Nueva York* (1930) and *Diván del Tamarit* (1936).

The Troubadours and Leonard Cohen

The Anglo-American modernists regarded the poets of the Provença, particularly of the area stretching roughly from the Atlantic coast on the border with Spain to Poitiers in the North and to the Valadas Occitanas within Italy, as the founders of the European love poetry as we know it nowadays. After a long period of Latin dominance, the troubadours commenced writing in a language accessible to the ordinary people in verses full of innuendos and verse and strophic inventions. Their songs present a myth of chivalrous poet and *courtly love* which may have never existed but it may also portray a deep spiritual experience.[1]

The word *trobador* came either from the Arabic word *ṭaraba* ("to sing") or from the Occitan word *trobar* ("to find"), as any etymological dictionary will prove. If we combine the words to "sing" and "find" together, we may get an idea of a *singing wanderer,* which is a faithful description of the medieval poet.

Both the medieval Andalusian and the Occitan poetry drew heavily on the oral tradition of the East and especially on the character of King David who was described in the books of the Old Testament and Qur'an as an outstanding poet accompanying his words with the harp.[2] He became the model of all the medieval wandering poets as several of the illuminated manuscripts suggest, and not only in the Mediterranean but also in England![3]

Leonard Cohen has not been spared of his influence either. In an interview with Michael Krugman in 2001, he said: "I studied and was formed in this tradition that honoured the ancient idea of music being declaimed or chanted, of lyrics being declaimed or chanted to a rhythmic background" (rpt. in Burger 479). The troubadours often used the appellation "motz e son" ("words and sounds") to describe their work, which was, in fact, the poetic expression known since

[1] This conjecture comes to the fore when we analyse a book published on the theme of *courtly love* by Andreas Capelanus, a 12th century scholar, who wrote a treatise on the topic called *De amore*. This satirical work portrays the court of Marie de Champagne and Aliénor d'Aquitaine who judged the matters concerning *courtly love* in "La salle des pas perdus" in Palais de justice de Poitiers. See Capellanus, Andreas, and John Jay Parry. *The Art of Courtly Love*.

[2] See the 1st Book of Samuel 16:23, which says that David played to king Saul in order to soothe his nerves. The Muslims regard King David as an outstanding musician and call the Book of Psalms *Zabur*, which means the book of songs. The medieval and Renaissance iconography often portrays King David as playing the lute, or harp.

[3] See, for instance, the Westminster Psalter (c. 1200) or the accompanying illustrations to *Cantigas de Santa Maria* which were written during the life of Alfonso X, El Sabio (1221-1284).

antiquity. Pound claimed in his essay "The Tradition" that the best melodies and patterns of the Ancient Greeks reappeared in the medieval troubadour poetry:

> It is not intelligent to ignore the fact that both in Greece and in Provence the poetry attained its highest rhythmic and metrical brilliance at times when the arts of verse and music were most closely knit together, when each thing done by the poet had some definite musical urge or necessity bound up with it. The Romans writing upon tablets did not match the cadences of those earlier makers who had composed to and for the Cÿthera and the Barbitos (*Literary Essays* 91).

The cultural milieu of medieval Andalusia and Occitania could be characterised as overtly liberal. Various religious, spiritual or mystical streams coming from the Orient were meeting at the court and shaped the poetry sprouting from the Celtic background, the Latin tradition of Ovid and Catullus, [4] the folkloric tradition of the May song, Christian medieval liturgy and perhaps even Neoplatonism. We should not forget that the medieval Andalusia and Occitanie were places in which three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam were meeting and at certain times coexisting in harmony with one another, which also influenced the thematic and characters of the troubadour poetry.

Leonard Cohen's work does not only contain strong echoes of the ancient Jewish religious literature but also of the Christian theme of the dying G-d, who became personified by the suffering poet in the medieval literature in general. Moreover, Cohen often draws on the Sufi melodies and rituals[5] and quite naturally has a deep knowledge of the Abrahamic religions including their mystical streams like many of the Occitan and Andalusian poets.

[4] Pound says that "The first fragment of Provençal poetry [found] is Latin with a Provençal refrain" (*Literary Essays* 92). However, he did not provide any proof to support his claim. In the essay "The Phantom Dawn," published in 1910, he said: "Romance literature beings with a Provençal 'Alba,' supposedly of the Tenth Century. The stanzas of the song have been written down in Latin, but the refrain remains in the tongue of the people" (*The Spirit of Romance* 11). In another essay from the same book he writes: "the earliest known Alba is in Latin, with five classical names in nine lines of verse" ("Proença" 40).

[5] See the songs: "Lover, Lover, Lover" (*New Skin for the Old Ceremony*, 1974) or "The Guests" (*Recent Songs*, 1979).

Thematic

Altogether with the Arabic poets of Al-Andalus, the Occitan troubadours often used strong descriptions of carnal and spiritual love. In their poetry, the feminine character became a quasi-religious and sometimes wholly religious object. Their lyrics often describe a divine union with this character, which reminds us of the myth of the ancient Mother Goddess and her dying Son.

The major Canadian critic, Northrop Frye noticed the above facts in Cohen's poetry too when he wrote a review on his first collection of poems *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956). He described Cohen's writing as follows:

> [H]is chief interest, as indicated in his title, is mythopoeic. The mythologies are Jewish, Christian, and Hellenistic. The Christian myth is seen as an extension of the Jewish one, its central hanged god in the tradition of the martyred Jew (Frye, "Review" 250).

Frye also noted that the central character of Cohen's poetry is the "femme fatale" (Frye, "Review" 250), the Mother Goddess having two supplemental attributes—black / white—with the connotations of good and evil that it carries. Other critics such as Michael Ondaatje, a Canadian poet and scholar, wrote that "Cohen himself is the twentieth-century troubadour lover who in separation transforms his losses into ethereal images" (21-22). Moreover, he also described Cohen as "the wandering saintly minstrel" (60).

Conclusion

The above chapter presented the framework into which the work of Leonard Cohen is set. It did not want to prove that the singer has been be directly influenced by any concrete author or school of thought since this would not enable to see his work in a broader literary context. The medieval troubadours are regarded to be the cornerstone in the history the European love poetry and any serious singer-songwriter singing / writing about love will be always related to them. The critic's task is to decipher similarities and differences between traditions and put artists into contrast with traditions of other countries and their literatures. This exposure of differences and similarities in their style and thematic will thus shape our knowledge and present a different perspective on the universal human drama that we know from our experience within culture.

Cohen's erudition and awareness of the literary tradition throws him among the authors of various literary canons. As a universal author, Cohen crosses the border and works with the themes of human passion, faith and suffering in a manner traversing the literary tradition of his country.

Apart from being a part of the Canadian literary canon and Anglo-American literature in general, his works could be a part of the French and Spanish literary traditions due to their influence upon his thematic and form. His Jewish origins make him, naturally, to be a part the Jewish literary canon as well. However, in none of these literatures does he stand as a symbol personifying a particular tradition. This universality was the prerogative of the troubadour poetry which tried to address the human drama with the use of a literary technique that synthetised literary motifs, philosophy and religion of other literatures, which so much resemble the work of the modernists themselves who endeavoured to “restore” the “universal human myth” and put its “ruins” together through the use of the same means.

II. FEATURES OF THE TROUBADOUR POETRY

The following chapter describes the main features of the troubadour poetry in detail. It presents definitions of key concepts such as joi *and* cortezia *and the behavioural rules connected with courtly love. Moreover, it describes the song structure, canso, and the use of the medieval musical instruments. The poet is seen as a persistent martyr of love whose suffering has a refining potential upon his personality.*

L'amour courtois

Love described in the troubadour poetry is known as *courtly love* or *fin'amor*. It is a type of *love* distinguished for the fact that it ennobles or refines the male lover. The *feminine* character of the troubadour lyrics is elevated and worshipped like a religious ideal. The relationship between the poet and his lady qualifies both to experience *joi*, the state of completeness which follows when opposing forces of our beings come into harmony with one another. According to Jean Markale:

> Joy, which when all is said and done is the ultimate objective, is the metamorphosis of individuals into another, amalgamated entity that has nothing more in common with what people willingly say about procreation (*Courtly Love* 100).

Love means the union of opposites, the *coniunctio oppositorum* of alchemic masters. The complete recovery of the self as suggested by Josef Prokop (249). Etymologically speaking, the term "joi" seems to have come from the Latin word *gaudium* meaning joy and happiness. Southern variations of the Occitan language used it in a form *gaug* (read as gautsch) with the meaning of *pleasure* (Prokop 249). Alexander Denomy suggests that it comes from Christian teachings of grace: "I am fairly sure that the troubadours built their idea of *Jois* as a habit and virtue resultant upon love from the Christian teaching of grace" (45-46). What we may know for sure is that *courtly love* is a spiritual love in its purest form and culminates in the union of souls rather than of bodies.

Fin'amor also makes the poet to experience profound stabs of pain within himself. Some troubadours pushed their suffering to the extreme, such as Jaufre de Rudel, Prince de Blaia (12th century), who is known for his longing for the Countess of Tripoli whom he never saw and to whom he devoted all his works. His lyrics speak of *joi* which comes as a result of pain: "Colps de joi me fer, que m'ausi, / Et ponha d'amor que·m sostra / La carn, don lo cos magrira; / Et anc mais tan greu no·m feri," (Lhérisson 55). In my translation: "I am overwhelmed with *joi* which also, /

altogether with love, kills me / dries my flesh and makes my body thin / never before was I overwhelmed so completely." In an earlier lyric, he anticipated this *joi*: "Tost veirai ieu si per sufrir / N'atendrai mon bon jauzimen" (Lhérisson 48). "Soon will I know if through my suffering / I reach joi."

The relationship between the poet and this often aristocratic woman was characterised by *cortezia*, which is a set of rules for proper behaviour. This included *jovens*, which is according to Josef Prokop, a metaphor for the coexistence in mutual generosity and love towards one another (249). Other means of *cortezia* were *mezura,* the absolute self-control that would prove that a suitor merits reward, and *assag,* a trial showing if the poet was able to restrain himself from touching a naked lady with whom he was sharing a bed.

According to Alexander J. Denomy, *courtly love* has the potential to make the poet virtuous, depending if he is moderate in his actions or not:

> [C]*ortezia* is a quality that arises from love and which has its origin in love. He who does not love cannot be courtly. It is a virtue closely allied to the moral principle *jovens*. The downfall of *jovens* with its component virtues of liberality and fidelity in love transforms *cortezia* into *vilanatge*. *Cortezia* consists in observing moderation between the extremes of excess and deficiency, in cultivating humility and avoiding pride and vainglory, in promoting excellence of speech and act and in avoiding what is odious and vile (Denomy 62).

A troubadour was rewarded from time to time for his *cortezia* by the permission to touch the lady's hand, or he was given a ring or other token of love.

Persistence

One of the requirements to prove the lover's worth was to test his persistence. The overcoming of hardships was regarded as a means leading to "lover's progress and growth in natural goodness, merit and worth" (Denomy 44), which is corroborated, for instance, by Peire d'Alvernhe (c. 1130 – c. 1180), who regarded suffering for love as a refining exercise:

Meilluratz	He is improved
Et amatz	Who knows love
Es cui jois s' aura.	And feels its joi suffusing.[6]

[6] Translated by Robert Kehew, see Kehew 109.

In the following poem by Bernart de Ventadorn (1130/1140 – 1190/1200), we find that the poet is on the verge of leaving the lady since he cannot endure his pain:

Pus ab midons no·m pot valer	Since she, my Lady, shows no care
Precs ni merces ni·l dreihz qu'eu ai,	To earn my thanks, nor pays Love's rights
Ni a leis no ven a plazer	Since she'll not hear my constant prayer
Qu'eu l'am, ja mais no·lh o dirai.	And my love yields her no delights,
Aissi·m part de leis e·m recre ;	I say no more; I silent go;
Mort m'a, e per mort li respon.	She gives me death; let death reply.[7]

One had to deserve the love of the Lady by withstanding pain, some even found a masochistic pleasure in it, such as Guillem de Cabestanh (1162–1212) who wrote, "Lo jorn qu'ie·us vi, dompna, primeiramen" ("That Day, My Lady, When I First Discovered That You Exist"):

Anz li maltrag mi son joy e plazer	Rather these pains to me are joy and pleasure:
Sol per aisso quar sai qu'Amors autreya	I know that he who truly seeks love's treasure
Que fis amans deu tot tort perdonar	Must, with courtesy, prepare to withstand
E gen sufrir maltrait per gazaignar.	Pain, forgive mistakes; so Love commands.
Ai! si er ja l'ora, dompna, qu'ieu veya	I live for the day when it will be your pleasure
Que per merce me vulhatz tant honrar	To show mercy, Lady, and condescend
Que sol amic me denhetz apelhar!	To honor me by calling me your friend.[8]

The troubadour lyrics are permeated by hope for the end of pain which comes from the lady's acceptance of the wooing lover. The lady is an arbiter in the love game and it depends upon her will if she acquiesces to be the subject of *courtly love* or not.

Cohen portrayed a similar lesson of patience in the song "Teachers" appearing in his first album *Songs of Leonard Cohen* (1967). There, he describes a patient entering hospital after being refused by various women. The hospital itself resembles a church, a place of spiritual healing. However, there "none was sick and none was well," which suggests that he has entered into a limbo through

[7] Translated by W. D. Snodgrass, see Kehew 77.

[8] Translated by Robert Kehew, see Kehew 261.

which he has to pass in order to qualify himself / prepare himself to receive love. The singer does not even know to whom he is singing:

> Who is it whom I address,
> who takes down what I confess?

In the end of the song, he asks if his lessons are done, but he gets the following reply, as if saying that the pain experienced is nothing in comparison with what may come:

> They laughed and laughed and said, Well child,
> are your lessons done?
> are your lessons done?
> are your lessons done?

Canso

The above motifs of persistence and the mystical state of *joi,* or completeness, appeared in the troubadour song called *canso* towards the end of the 11th century. *Canso* consisted, especially in the first stages of development, of three stanzas.[9] Later on, we can meet five, six, seven stanzas (*coblas*) ending with the shorter stanza called *tornada* or *envois,* which presents a conclusion, or dedication, or an order to someone who will carry the lyrics in a letterform to an addressee. Professor Henry J. Chaytor says that: "Here, as in the last couplet of the Arabic *gazul*, were placed the personal allusions, and when these were unintelligible to the audience the *joglar* usually explained the poem before singing it" (Chaytor 26).

Canso tells a love story in which there usually are a troubadour lover, a beloved lady and a third party, such as a husband or king. Love between the poet and his lady is always threatened by so called *lauzengiers*, who spy on the lovers and tell on them to the rightful husband or the authorities:

> [L]ove is always endangered by the scandalmonger and the spy, those caricatures (in Provençal the *lauzenjador* and *gardador,* in Arabic the *nammam* and *raquib*) so often alluded to in both Eastern and Western medieval love-lyric (Dronke 103).

[9] Leonard Cohen follows this threesome structure in some of his songs, such as "The Master Song" (*Songs of Leonard Cohen,* 1967) or "Famous Blue Raincoat" (*Songs of Love and Hate*, 1971).

Another interesting fact about those poems is that the first stanza usually contains a spring motif, which may reflect the poet's virility in its sensual description. The first so-called troubadour and most modern one according to Pound,[10] Guilhèm de Peitieus, Duke of Aquitaine (1071 – 1126) began one of his poems as follows:

Pòs vezem de novel florir	Since we see meadows newly blossoming
Prats, e vergièrs reverdesir,	And orchards growing green once more,
Rius e fontanas esclarzir,	Springs and streams turning clear,
Auras e vents,	Breezes and winds,
Ben deu chascuns lo jòi jausir	Each man ought to delight in the joy
Don es jausents.	That gives him pleasure.[11]

Jaufre Rudel (died c. 1150) also started his texts in a similar fashion: "Lanquam li jorn son Jonc en mai, / M'es belhs dous chans d'auzelhs de lonh" (rpt. in Lhérisson 11), which could be translated as: "When days grow long and warm in May / How sweet is the song of birds from afar." Another poems reads:

Quan lo rius de la fontana	When the stream of the fountain
S'esclarzis, si cum far sol,	Is clear during the Spring
E par la fors aiglentina,	And when eglantine blossoms
E·l rossinholetz el ram	And the nightingale on the branch
Volf e refranh ez aplana	Repeats and modulates to softness
Son dous chanter et afina	Sweat sound
Dreitz es qu'ieu lo mieu refranha	It is appropriate that I work on mine.[12]

The critics looking for the origins of the troubadour poetry may find this "spring motif" in the first stanza in the poetry of Catullus, for instance, in canso XLVI which says: "Now spring brings back

[10] "Guillaume de Poitiers is the most 'modern' of the troubadours" ("Proença," *The Spirit of Romance* 39).

[11] Translated by Simon Gaunt. See Gaunt 29. Anonymous internet enthusiasts came with an unofficial translation which mirrors the original most perfectly: "Since we see, again, blossoming / meadows and greening gardens / and clearing rills and fountains, / and breezes and winds, / everybody should enjoy the joy / which makes him joyous" ("Guilhen De Peiteu: Vers 7." *TROBAR.ORG*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Dec. 2014. <http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/coms_de_peiteu/guilhen_de_peiteu_07.php>.)

[12] The text is reprinted in Lhérisson 44.

unfrozen warmth, / now the sky's equinoctial fury / is hushed by Zephyr's welcome airs. / Take leave of Phrygian plains, Catullus, / And sweltering Nicaea's lush fields. / Let's fly to Asia's famous cities" (Catullus 47). The poetry commencing with the description of spring time encourages the poet to leave for "lush fields," which is a reference to love-making and may be understood as the invitation to consummate his longing.

Style and Form

The troubadour lyrics were not characterised by frenzy or lax control. When Arnaut Daniel says in his "En cest sonnet coind'e leri" ("Canzon: Of the Trades of Love") that he chips and planes words that are subsequently glossed and gilded by love, he confirms that the poet is a skilled artisan in absolute control of his work. Moreover, Daniel described his words as impregnated by *love* which may be, figuratively speaking, divinely inspired:

En cest sonet coind'e e leri,	Though this measure quaint confine me,
Fauc motz, e capuig e doli,	And I chip out words and plane them,
Que serant verai e cert	They shall yet be true and clear,
Qan n'aurai passat la lima,	When I finally have filed them.
Qu'Amors marves plan'e daura	Love glosses and gilds them knowing
Mon chantar, que de liei mou	That my song has for its start
Que Pretz manten e governa.	One who is worth's hold and warrant.[13]

Music and Instruments

The troubadours were skilful musicians who sang unaccompanied or accompanied themselves on the harp, lute, psaltery, viol, rebec or some kind of portative organ (Dronke 23). Sometimes they hired so-called *joglars* to perform their songs. Peter Dronke mentions the troubadour Guirant Calanson (13th ct.) who demanded that his *joglar* would play "no fewer than nine instruments" (23).

[13] Translated by Ezra Pound, see Kehew 219.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the basic motifs of the medieval troubadour poetry appearing in the most representative texts of the given period and the form of their songs. Of course, not all the Occitan poets were following the precepts of *courtly love* throughout their lives and work, some of them were doing so only at times, or perhaps only in their literary works. The reader will realize that many of the troubadour motifs are still in force in popular culture. They have been either mocked, idealized, or left in their original shape. The following chapter will present the main subject of the troubadour poetry and that is the divine feminine, which I call the Virgin, which has the dual nature of the fierce and gentle Mother Goddess. The reader should be aware that She embodies the loving aspect of the Christian Virgin but represents the feminine divinity in its completeness, which is far more than that for the medieval poets and Leonard Cohen.

III. THE VIRGIN AS THE MAIN SUBJECT OF SONG

The following chapter analyses the feminine character of the troubadour poetry and the poetry of Leonard Cohen. The main subject of worship in their works is seen as having the dual nature of the Virgin Mary and the fierce Mother Goddess of the antiquity. The poet is presented as her lover and sacrificed Son whose symbolic death stands for the rebirth of his self. Some of the poets refuted human love in general and preferred suffering for the unattainable feminine ideal. Some became misogynists and criticised love for women, while others became frustrated and began writing pastorelas, *a poetic genre revealing lust for the female body. The chapter suggests that the feminine ideal of the troubadour poetry represents the feminine part of the poet's psyche, which is a theory advanced by C.G. Jung who was an early influence upon Leonard Cohen.*

The most important theme of the troubadour poetry is addressing of the feminine character, which is often anonymous, and, based on its qualities, seen as a divine, or semi-divine being. This character was generally known as *midon*, which is the composite of "the feminine version of 'my' (*mia*) and the masculine noun for 'lord' (*domnus*)" (Kehew 5). This invention aimed to protect its identity and its gender. Another figure of speech, *senhal*, described this character in abstract terms, such as "Bon Vezi" ("Good Neighbour'), "Bels Vezers" ("Lovely View"), "Miels de Domna" ("Better than Woman") or "Belhs Deportz" ("Lovely Pleasure").[14] These appellations were used in order to hide the real addressee of the song, which was, in some cases, a married aristocratic woman. If the troubadour was of a higher social rank and there was no need to protect a lady, her *senhal* was generally known (Chaytor 16).

The *senhal* was required to have the same number of syllables as the original name. According to Josef Prokop, its origins can be traced to the real names of Roman mistresses married to important personalities of the State used in the work of Latin Neoteric poets such as

[14] Other known *senhals* were, for instance: "Esteve" which appears in the work by Guillem de Peiteus, "L'esparviers del Pueg" ("Sparrow-hawk from Pueg") used by Bernart Martí, "Tort n'avez" ("You Do Me Wrong") invented by Peire Rogier, "Meillz de Domna" ("Better than Lady") by Rigaut de Berbezilh; "Bel Joglar" ("Beautiful Joglar") used by Raimabut d'Aurenga; "Bels Cembelis" ("Beautiful Cembelis"), "Mielhs-de-Be" ("Better-than-good"), "Bels Miralhs" ("Beautiful Mirror"), "Bels Senher" ("Handsome Lord") by Bertran de Born; "Bels Cavaliers" ("Beautiful Knight") used by Raimbaut de Vaqueiras; or "Mos Azimans" ("My Magnet") by Bernart de Ventadorn and "Mielhs de Domna" ("Better than Lady") by Rigaut de Barbezieux.

Catullus (254). However, it was also frequently used in the medieval Andalusian poetry to which the troubadours, quite naturally, looked up.

In Arabic literature, *senhal* was called *kināya* and the addressee of the poem was called *sayydī* and *mawlāya* (Nykl 271). Magdaléna Vitásková, a Czech Arabic scholar, confirms in our personal correspondence that *sayyīdī* (سَيِّدِي) and *mawlāya* (مَوْلاَيَ) mean "My Lord" and "My Master" respectively. While the first term was being used mainly among the ancient Arab-Bedouin peoples, the use of the second one appears in the context of the Sufi literature in which the One was often addressed with feminine epithets. To summarise: *sayydī*; or *mawlāya*; or *midon* is a general term describing the addressee without specifying its gender. *Senhal, or kināya*, on the other hand, appears in the masculine as well as in the feminine form.

In the course of his career, Leonard Cohen has been using feminine *senhals* such as "Winter Lady," "Lady Midnight," "Our Lady of Solitude," and the masculine ones, such as "The Butcher" or "The Captain" (among many others) to address the Divinity.

The following section focuses on the dual nature of the feminine character appearing in the medieval troubadour literature as well as in the work of Leonard Cohen. The poet or the speaker of the poem stands as its lover and sacrificed Son.

Two Sides of the Feminine

The feminine could be divided into two varying principles. The first, ruled by the Aphrodite principle, is characterised, according to Julius Evola, by "the dissolving, overwhelming, ecstatic, and immeasurable force of sex," while the second one, the Demeterian principle, is characterised by fertility and loving motherhood (*The Metaphysics of Sex* 128). In antiquity, we find goddesses who bore both aspects. Ishtar, for instance, a Babylonian goddess was the symbol of "sexuality and reproduction" as well as a lethal character annually sacrificing her son / lover Tammuz (Husain 114-115). Moreover, according to Leeming, she "was central to the ubiquitous Mesopotamian ritual of the sacred marriage. In hymns for these occasions she longs for and achieves intercourse with a king in order to bring fertility to the land" (40-41). Other ancient myths describe the same phenomenon, such as the myth of Inanna and Dumuzi, Atargatis and Mithra, Fatima and Husain, Aphrodite and Adonis or Cybele and Attis.

An ancient poem describing the union of the Inanna and Dumuzi (Mother Goddess and Her Son) goes as follows: "'My vulva, the horn, / The Boat of Heaven,/ Is full of eagerness like the young moon./ My untilled land lies fallow.[…] As for me, Inanna, / Who will plow my vulva?/

Who will plow my high field? / Who will plow my wet ground?' […] I, Dumuzi, the King, will plow your vulva.[15]"

The above poem speaks of the Mother Goddess revealing to be the Earth Mother and the Heavenly King who will impregnate her. This cosmic drama taking place in spring is portrayed as a human sexual act. The only remnant of this ancient myth that still survives in our culture is preserved in the characters of the Virgin Mary and her Son to die, which does, in contrast, presents only a platonic relationship.

Vasiliki Limberis traces the development of the character of the Virgin Mary to ancient goddesses "Kotys, Cybele, or Rhea, [who] spread to Thrace from Asia Minor from the fifth century BCE onwards" (133). Shahrukh Husain elaborates that "Mary, like many mother goddesses before her, such as Demeter, Isis, Astarte, Cybele and Atargatis, gave birth to a god incarnate who died for the salvation of humankind and returned, resurrected, on the third day" (Husain 122). As in the ancient myths, the Son dies in spring and his death brings fertility to the land. However, the Christian myth disposes of the Mother killing her Son, the feat which is left upon the crowd.

The Virgin Mary surrendered some of her fierce / primordial qualities in the course of development of her image. Her contemporary representation came to exist as late as in 5th century AD (Husain 122-123) with the advent of Christianity which tended to obliterate her double aspect of which some depictions still remind us.[16]

The cult of the Mother Goddess seems to have been revived in the Middle Ages, especially in many pagan motifs appearing in literature, such as fountains ruled by *feminine* spirits, manifestation of the Virgin and such (Husain 122). The Virgin seems to be the subject of many troubadour poems. Ezra Pound noticed that many of the troubadours received their education in monasteries which made them, quite naturally, use the religious description of the feminine character of their poetry. The following excerpt comes from Pound's book *The Spirit of Romance* (1910):

[15] For the whole text see Wolkstein 30.

[16] The statues of Black Madonnas in Spain, Italy, France or Germany, where they are comparatively frequent, are the proof of the dark character of Mother Goddess abiding in the innocent representation of the Virgin. See the Madonna of La Cathédrale du Puy-en-Velay, the Abbey of Saint-Victor de Marseille or Notre-Dame de la Daurade in Toulouse. In the Czech Republic, we may meet a baroque statue of the black Virgin at "Dům U černé matky boží" in Celetná street in Prague, or the painting of "Madona svatotomášská" in Brno. There is an annual festival taking place in Mikulov the first Sunday in September during which the pilgrims make a procession with a replica of "Loretánská Černá Madona" which rests in the church of saint Václav.

> Many of the troubadours, in fact nearly all who knew letters or music, had been taught in the monasteries (St. Martial, St. Leonard and the other abbeys of Limoges). Visions and the doctrines of the early Fathers could not have been utterly strange to them. The rise of Mariolatry, its pagan lineage, the romance of it, find modes of expression which verge over-easily into the speech and casuistry of Our Lady of Cyprus, as we may see in Arnaut, as we see so splendidly in Guido's 'Una figura della donna miae.' And there is the consummation of it all in Dante's glorification of Beatrice. There is the inexplicable address to the lady in the masculine. There is the final evolution of Amor by Guido and Dante, a new and paganish god, neither Erôs nor an angel of the Talmud" ("Psychology and Troubadours" 91-92).

The Virgin of the Troubadour Poetry

The medieval Occitan poetry is permeated by the character of the lady resembling the Virgin Mary, especially in the poetry of Jaufre Rudel, Peire de Corbiac, Peire Cardenal and Guiraut Riquier in whose works her worship culminates in the ecstatic state of *joi*.

Jaufre Rudel (died c. 1147) is known for his work dedicated to the Countess of Tripoli whom he never saw although he undertook a voyage to meet her in person towards the end of his life. However, the unfortunate poet got sick during his travels and died in her embrace. That is what his pathetic *vida* says (rpt. in Kehew 60-61). In a *canso* that begins with words "Lanquam li jorn son Jonc en mai," ("When day is long in May"), Rudel begs G-d to give him strength to reach his love. The woman of the legend could be identified as the Virgin Mary:

> Dieu que fetz tot quant ve ni vai,
> E formet sest'amor de lonh,
> Mi don poder, que cor leu n'ai,
> Ou'leu veya s'est amor de long,
> Verayamen, en tais aizis,
> Si que la cambra et jardis
> Mi resembles tos temps palatz.[17]

> **In my translation:** If G-d, who directs all / that is going to happen and all that is happening, / could only give strength to me, / because I don't decide over it, / to see this distant love, / with these eyes, / in a room or in a garden, / either of them would be always a palace to me.

[17] Reprinted in Lhérisson 12.

However, when Rudel describes his lady, he says "Quar anc genser creastiana / Non fo, ni Dieus non la vol, / Juzeva ni Sarrazina" (Lhérisson 44), which could be translated as "There has never been / nor has the Lord ever seen / Such a gentle Lady among Christians, Jews nor Saracens," which says that the ideal is above the divine lady of Abrahamic religions and may represent the universal feminine divinity of them all.

It would be naïve to think that the subject of worship of the troubadour poetry is always the female divinity. The troubadour poetry may be divided into types, such as *pastorela*, whose subject matter usually deals with a knight trying to seduce a young shepherdess. Therefore, we should make a distinction between the love poems addressed to the Mother Goddess and other types of poetry of the given period.

Henry John Chaytor claimed in 1912 in his book *The Troubadours* that the poems addressing the Virgin Mary appeared later around the time of the Albigensian crusades which commenced in 1209. He says that "These, however, have little in common with classical troubadour poetry except language," which is not so much true, given the fact that Jaufre Rudel was already addressing the Virgin in the mid-12th century.

Peire de Corbiac (active around 1225), described the Virgin both in the pagan and Christian sense. The following stanza describes Her as "the star, mother of the sun" and presents an interesting image of the goddess who nurses her own Father, perhaps Lover or Son:

estela, del solelh maire,	star, mother of the sun,
noirissa del vostre paire,	nurse of thine own Father,
el mon nulha no·us semelha	in the world no woman is like to thee,
ni londana ni vezina.	neither far nor near.[18]

Peire Cardenal (c. 1180 - c. 1278) wrote about the Christian Virgin in his "Chanson à la Vierge." His poetry would support Chaytor's claim that Mariolatry appeared after the first years of the crusade. Cardenal's song does not contain any allusions or elaborated verse structures. He beseeches the Virgin Mary to grant him mercy.

Vera vergena, María,	Marie, véritable vierge,
Vera vida, vera fés,	Véritable vie et foi,

[18] Translated by Henry John Chaytor. See Chaytor 93-94.

Vera vertatz, vera vía,	Vérité vraie et vraie voi,
Vera vertutz, vera rés,	Vraie vertu et Être vrai,
Vera maire, ver' amía,	Vraie mère, amie véritable,
Ver' amors, vera mercés:	Vrai amour et vraie merci:
Per ta vera merce sía	Par ta merci vraie, ton Fils
Qu'eret en me tos herés	Me prenne en son héritage!
De patz, si-t plai, dona, traita,	Avec ton fils, s'il te plaît,
Qu'ab to filh me sía faita	Dame, fais-moi avoir paix![19]

In my translation: Mary, true Virgin, / True life and faith / Divine truth and way, / True virtue and Existence, / True mother and friend, / True love and mercy / Grant me your mercy, / that your Son / Includes me in his lineage. / Lady, let me be in peace, / With your Son, please.

Guiraut Riquier (c. 1230 – 1292), regarded as the last medieval troubadour, wrote in the vein of his predecessors, although the last of his poems written in 1289 somehow modifies his previous works because he confesses that the love he had experienced was of a lower stature than the love he felt for the divine lady:

Ieu cujava soven d`amor chantar	Souvent j'ai cru que je chantais l'amour
El temps passat e non la conoissia.	Au temps passé, sans vraiment le connaître ;
Qu'ieu nomnava per amor ma folhia.	Du nom d'amour j'appelais ma folie,
Mas era·m fai amors tal don'amar,	Mais ore il faut que j'aime telle Dame
Que non la puesc honrar pro ni temer	Que ne puis assez honorer ni craindre,
Ni tener car endreg del sieu dever,	Ni chérir autant qu'elle le mérite.
Ans ai dezir, que s'amors me destrenha	Pourtant je veux que son amour m'étreigne
Tant, que l'esper, qu'ieu ai en lieis, n'atenha.	Au point d'atteindre à mon Espoir en Elle.[20]

In my translation: I often believed that I sung about love, / In the past but I was not acquainted with it then, / for I called folly my love / but now I have to love such a Lady / whom I can't

[19] Translated into French by René Nelli and René Lavaud. See Nelli, *Les Troubadours: L'œuvre poétique* 874-875.

[20] Translated into French by René Nelli and René Lavaud. See Nelli, *Les Troubadours: L'œuvre poétique* 880-881.

> honour nor fear, / nor love less than she deserves, / I desire that her love embraces me / Such is my hope of her.

Then, in the same poem, he says: "Pus ylh me vol, si-m vuelh" ("Because she loves me, I love her"), which proves that he himself is the Son and lover of such a character. Her beauty is so great that she shines night and day: "Tan ran beautat a que non pot mermar, / Ni res no y falh, ans resplan nuch e día" (rpt. in Nelli, Lavaud 882). Then the poet prays that She heals him: "Per que la prec, per merce, que-m revenha" (rpt. in Nelli, Lavaud 884).

The character of the Mother Goddess is apparent in the Occitan pagan song "Ballade de la reine d'Avril" from the 12th century. The song tells a story of the Queen of Spring who is enamoured of a new lover and pursued by her old husband. The singers of the song encourage "jelos," or the old one to let her to dance with her entourage. Its melody and words provoke ecstatic dance and it may be guessed that the spring festival during which people sang this song served as a prelude to sowing and mating. The Queen / Virgin is described as "La regína joiosa" and "La domna savorosa" (Nelly, Lavaud 30), a seductive woman.

The old King of the song may represent the old agrarian year. The Queen, or the Earth Mother renew herself with a new year / lover, therefore we may understand that the sacrifice of the Old lover is necessary for the renewal of life and of the agrarian cycle.

The most important work on the Virgin Mary of the 13th century are *Cantigas de Santa Maria* supposedly written by the Spanish king Alfonso X (1221–1284), called "el Sabio."

The Virgin in the Work of Leonard Cohen

Cohen's clearest depiction of the Virgin comes in the novel *Beautiful Losers* (1966), in which she is portrayed as Kateri Tekakwitha (1656 – 1680), a Mohawk saint who was beatified in 1980 and canonized by the Christian Church in 2012. Cohen proposes other names for her such as "the Shy One" or "the One Who Hobbled" (60). He even compares her to Jill, from a nursery rhyme "Jack and Jill[21]": "She swooned, collapsed beside the upturned bucket, weeping like Jill" (94). Her character collides with the character of the goddess Isis, who is powerful, purely sensual and obsessed with sex. Cohen answers to this duality in an interview that took place 1967 with Sandra Djwa for the UBC's student newspaper *Ubyssey*. There he said:

[21] "Jack and Jill went up the hill / To fetch a pail of water. / Jack fell down and broke his crown, / And Jill came tumbling after."

> I've always honoured both the wrathful deities and the blessed deities and I'm in this completely. […] There's a poem about this. I just wrote it yesterday and can't quote it exactly: 'I have come to this green mountain / I am thirty-three / a child of the double trinity.' One is dark and one light and the third that come from it like a braid that takes its colour from both, like a salamander. That seems to represent me to myself (rpt. in Burger 12).

This double Trinitarian relationship speaks of the wrathful Lord, fierce Mother Goddess, and sacrificed Son and at the same time of G-d, the Virgin and her Son as we know them from the Christian myth. Cohen says that he is the "child" of both "Trinities." Therefore, he identifies himself as the Son of the Virgin as well as the Son of the Mother Goddess.

In an interview from 1990 with Winfried Siemerling, Cohen said that he had the statue the Kateri Tekakwitha on his table:

> I have a statue of her on my stove in my house in Montreal. She is one of my household spirits. I think she embodied in her own life, in her own choices, many of the complex things that face us always. She spoke to me. She still speaks to me. There's a very beautiful bronze statue of her in front of the St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. I used to put some flowers there (rpt. in Fournier 161).

Like Cohen, the male character of the novel, "I," plays the role of her Son / lover. In the song "Our Lady of Solitude" from the album *Recent Songs* (1979), Cohen described Her as a weaver, which was the characteristics of ancient Mother Goddesses, such as the Egyptian Goddess Neith who was the patron of weaving (Remler 131). "Her fingers, like a weaver's / Quick and cool." Weaving occupies important position in the troubadour poetry and the *Chanson de toile* is one of the possible sources of influence upon their works. In the Christian tradition, the Virgin as a seamstress is the subject of many legends, such as the 16th century Spanish legend from Seville popularly known as "Señora, ¿quieres coser? Señora, ¿quieres cortar?," which speaks of the Virgin who sewed a wedding dress to the pious daughter of a baker.[22] Weaving is also an important theme in Arabic literature in which it stands for a creation of the world and union with the One. [23]

[22] For the whole story see Mena 246-49.

[23]See, for instance, Kabir and his *Weaver's Songs*.

Cohen' song then speaks about "the light [coming] from her body / And the night [going] through her grace" and describes her as "the vessel of the whole wide world / Mistress, oh mistress, of us all." In one interview given to Harry Rasky in 1979, Cohen explained that the Virgin is an important part of his psyche:

> It's my pleasure to write to the virgin. I have my own understanding of what *Our Lady of Solitude* is, you know, I can develop a construction of that idea so that I could say what is the most intimate part of the psyche—that we have to stay in contact with. That it does have a female quality. That you have to open a certain passive… you have to affirm your own passivity at certain points in your life to be regenerated or to be renewed in moments of pain or alienation. And that is an approach, an address to that part of the psyche which is silent and which is receptive, and which can only be affirmed by silence and passivity (Rasky 103).

The other manifestations of the Virgin are apparent in the songs such as "Suzanne," in which She is introduced as a mind concept; "So Long, Marianne" where She is described as a "pretty one" who provides her "hidden love" and who once held to the singer as "[he] was a crucifix;" in the song "Sisters of Mercy" the Virgin is all-encompassing loving female power represented by two women; while in the song "The Gypsy Wife," She is dancing with a head "on the threshing floor," which reminds of the biblical story from Matt. 14 in which Salome danced with the head of John the Baptist. There the singer portrays her dark aspect, the aspect of the Mother Goddess in the song "The Darkness," where her dark power is described as "contagious."

Harry Rasky published in his book *The Song of Leonard Cohen* (2001) a poem which was revealed to him during a concert tour in 1979. There, Cohen's daughter is presented as the Virgin, which suggest that he saw her as representing the feminine as a whole:

> My twelve year old daughter on the balcony
> is singing a song concerning these matters
> It is She whom our grand-parents meant
> when they invoked the Virgin
> It has nothing to do with that Place of Hers
> which will be filled, naturally, with men's tears
> We fight with Her strength, The Virgin's strength
> and we hope with The Virgin's hope (80)

Cohen sees the Virgin as an always present power in the world. The poem also contains a verse in which he says that the Virgin is "in every one of our houses" and she encourages people not to live "in the world," which suggest that the singer regards the Virgin as an illuminating power. Then he gives encouragement to devote his life to the Virgin and abandon the world. By abandoning the world, Cohen probably means the world of material existence, which he exchanges for the spiritual world of his psyche:

> But in every one of our houses there is A Virgin
> And we don't care
> whom She pleasures
> behind the chicken coop
> We have The Virgin
> and she tells us:
> Do not live in the world
> So we dig in and we arm ourselves
> with the smile of The Virgin
> and the scorn of The Virgin
> and the muscled hope of The Virgin
> and because we do not live in the world
> we can see it and we can reach for it
> and we can pluck it out of the sky (81)

In the same poem, Cohen also speaks of the sexual nature of the Virgin when a young boy is "astounded by Her new breasts," which speaks about the dual nature of the Virgin:

> This is what she sings about
> Our Seamstress of the Torn
> as She draws the neighbor's son
> away from the repairing
> of his broken bicycle
> to be astounded by Her new breasts (81)

The song "Night Comes On" from the album *Various Positions* (1984) speaks about the Mother (Goddess) whom the singer encounters in a cemetery "Under the marble and the snow." She offers him her protection and he wants to stay with her as long as possible. However, the

Mother encourages him to "go back to the World." Considering the poem above, we may understand that Cohen describes an experience during which he was able to abandon the physical world and reunite with the Virgin in his psyche, which bears close resemblance to Jung's Animus-Anima theory.

Jung claimed that the convergence of the feminine and masculine divisions of the archetypal Self, or psyche is tremendously important for the inner development of an individual. Man should, for this reason, come to terms with the feminine quality of his unconscious mind called *anima* while the woman has as her goal to attain the union with her *animus* (Jung, *Osobnost a přenos* 114). Jung compares this to the marriage of the consciousness with unconsciousness (228) which results in a hermaphrodite, an extinct archetypal figure that existed in the beginning of all creation (253). When a man comes to terms with his *anima,* his self normally dominated by the masculine forces becomes united or whole. This unity of the Self seems to be behind all the troubadour poetry and perhaps behind all the poetry worshipping the sacred feminine character, here described as the Virgin.

However, the union with the feminine part of the psyche is not eternal. Cohen portrays the split as a human drama, an ordinary relationship between two people that is going to break up: "We were locked in this kitchen / I took to religion / And I wondered how long she would stay / I needed so much / To have nothing to touch / I've always been greedy that way" ("Night Comes On", *Various Positions*, 1984). The breaking is the moment when the poet regresses to solitude and laments the lost union. It is also the point in which he begins to worship the union with the feminine power and anthropomorphises the Virgin and perhaps try to find her image in various women:

> I look for her always
> I'm lost in this calling
> I'm tied to the threads of some prayer
> Saying, When will she summon me
> When will she come to me
> What must I do to prepare
> When she bends to my longing
> Like a willow, like a fountain
> She stands in the luminous air

Cohen's whole output is about finding and losing the connection with the Virgin. Often, she has the attributes of living women, sometimes she is constructed as a religious ideal. The singer does not avoid making sexual references to the Virgin as it was highlighted in the poem further above. In the song "Humbled in Love" from the album *Recent Songs* (1979), he sings about the Virgin welcoming a lover into Her gown:

> And look dear heart, look at the virgin
> Look how she welcomes him into her gown

Dying Son

Many ancient myths testify to the inherent love between the Goddess and her Son, which is exceptional for the fact that the Son is usually also a lover of his Mother, of which the Judeo-Christian myth fully disposes:

> Uniquely, the sexual interaction that is found between mother and son in the ancient prototypes is missing because, in order to meet Jewish criteria of womanly goodness, Mary had to be innocent of sexual experience. She also had to be docile and completely guiltless, which meant the eradication of her chthonic, or darker, side (Husain 122).

The union of a goddess and her son was known already in antiquity. From Greece comes the myth of Aphrodite and her lover Adonis whose name is "related to *Adonai* ('my Lord')" (Leeming 93). Other relationships in which the male consort of the goddess dies in order to be resurrected include Dumuzi, as we have pointed out earlier, Dionysus and last, but not least, Jesus. Their fate might be further linked with the grain and vegetation myths and figuratively speaking, may represents the union of conscious and unconscious minds. The son's death would then represent the death of the masculine part of the self in the process of transformation due to the contact with the feminine power *anima*.

The troubadours and Leonard Cohen seem to set up such a union with the feminine part of their psyche with the help of their female partners. Even the story of the Christ who was accompanied by Mary Magdalene suggests his dependence upon the feminine power. Gnostic texts, such as *the Gospel of Philip* (63:30-36), which is a part of *Nag Hammadi Library*, portray

Jesus and Mary Magdalene as lovers. She was not a sinful woman as described by Luke 7:36-50[24] but rather a source of illumination to Him:

> [Jesus] loved her more than all the disciples, and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples [...]. They said to him "Why do you love her more than all of us?" The Saviour answered and said to them, "Why do I not love you like her? When a blind man and one who sees are both together in darkness, they are no different from one another. When the light comes, then he who sees will see the light, and he who is blind will remain in darkness (Robinson 148).

The above text suggests that Mary Magdalene initiated Christ into the mysteries of the feminine power. The symbolic lamenting of three women at the cross on the top of Calvary is a revelation of the importance of the feminine power in His life. His death reminds of the Egyptian god Osiris for whom his consort/sister Isis wept; also Adonis who was torn to pieces by a wild boar and mourned by heartbroken Aphrodite, or Dumuzi / Tammuz whose sacrifice and descent to the underworld was lamented by Innana (Leeming 41).

The Book of Ezekiel contains a description of women weeping for the Son's death. The story goes that Ezekiel had a vision of G-d in which He lets him see the abominations committed against Him. Ezekiel says: "He brought me to the north gate of the Lord's Temple, and some women were sitting there, weeping for the god Tammuz. 'Have you seem this?' he asked. 'But I will show you even more detestable sins than these!'" (KJV, Ezek. 8:14-15). Even if G-d disagrees with lamenting for the Son (Tammuz) in the Old Testament and tries to dispose with it, the myth reappears much later in the New Testament and becomes central to the medieval literature in general.

Cohen's first collection of poetry *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956) already portrays the Virgin weeping for the death of her Son. She is touching his "bronze name" and Her tears wash Her fingers. Their union with her is described as dissolving in Her "fragile skies," which gives cosmic qualities to the Virgin:

[24] "[37] And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, [38] And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. [39] Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner" (KJV).

And may my bronze name touch always her thousand fingers
grow brighter with her weeping
until I am fixed like a galaxy
and memorized
in her secret and fragile skies (35).

The female partner seems to be the mediator between the man and the Virgin in Cohen's work and undertakes frequent changes. The troubadours, like Cohen, were often described as womanisers. However, we cannot really know to which extent this is a pure fantasy on the part of some too enthusiastic readers, or if the number of women in poets' lives differs from the number of women in the life of an ordinary man.

Rather we should notice that Cohen, as a literary character, abandons the woman at the peak of their relationship, in the climax of their sexual union since it brings him to a temporal contact with the Virgin, or the feminine part of his psyche and then leaves him empty. Take into consideration the song "Dance Me to the End of Love" (*Various Positions,* 1984) which speaks of the climax of the sexual union and describes it as "the end of love."

Frustrated Worshippers of the Virgin

Frequently, the troubadours employed their works as a means of seduction, possibly under the pretext that the woman described in their lyrics was comparable to the woman whom they wanted to seduce. Often, they were using flattery and made false promises of marriage in order to win girls over and somehow mitigate their longing for the Goddess. *Pastorela,* the Occitan genre of poetry, portrays such encounters.[25] The poem, usually in a dialogue form, presents a knight who wants to seduce a young girl, usually a shepherdess. The poet Marcabru (fl. 1130-1150) presents a shining example of the genre in his poem beginning with the verse: "L'autrier jost' una sebissa" ("The Peasant Lassie"):

'Toza,' fi·me ieu, 'gentils fada,	'Young girl,' said I, 'a noble fairy
Vos adastret, quam fos nada,	Endowed you at birth
D'una beautat esmerada	With an exceptional beauty, which

[25] *Pastorelas* were written by Marcabru, Gui d'Ussel, Giraut de Bornelh, Cadenet, Cerveri de Girona, Johan Esteve, Guillem d'Autpolh, Gavaudan, Joyos de Tolosa o Guiraut d'Espanha, to name the most important authors of the genre.

Sobre tot'autre vilana;	Placed you above that of other peasants;
E seria·us ben doblada,	And you would be twice as beautiful,
Si·m vezi' una vegada,	It seems to me, if but once you were
Sobira e vos sostrana.'	Below and I above.[26]

The female characters appearing in these *pastorelas* are supposed to fulfil the fantasies of the frustrated knights who search for the Virgin. Their lust offers the possibility to appease their unbearable longing. Guilhèm de Peitieus (1071 – 1126) might have had this in mind when he wrote the following the poem starting with the words "Ab la doçor del temps novèl" ("In the sweetness of new days"); there he says:

Enquer me lais Dieus viure tan	God grant me only that I live
C'aia mas manz soz so mantel.	To get my hands beneath her clothes.[27]

Or Cercamon (fl. c. 1135-1145) who in his poem beginning with the verse "Quant l'aura doussa s'amarzis" ("When the sweet air goes bitter"), reveals his desire:

Dieu prejarai qu'ancar l'ades	God let me live long enough to have her,
O que la vej'anar jazer.	Or see her going to bed.[28]

Raimbaut d'Aurenga (c. 1147 – 1173) was not so much different in his wish to conquer a woman as his poem "Entre gel e vent e fanc" ("Among frost and wind and mud") suggests:

Qu'ie·n pert la color e·l sanc	For I lose my colour and blood,
Tal talent ai que·m desvesta	Such a desire I have to undress
C'ab vos fos ses vestimenta	For to be with you naked
Aissi com etz la plus genta;	– the guise in which you look best.
Que tan grans voluntatz m'en nais	Such great a craving for it springs in me
Qu'en un jorn – tan ben c'om no·m pais –	That in a day – however well they feed me –
En pert so que d'un mes engrais.	I lose the fat I put on in a month.[29]

[26] Translated by Rouben Cholakian. See Cholakian 68-69.

[27] Translated by W. D. Snodgrass. See Kehew 23.

[28] Translated by Golding. See Goldin 26.

[29] Translated by an anonymous author. See "Raimbaut D'Aurenga: Vers 15." TROBAR.ORG. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Dec. 2015. <http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/aurenga/aa15.php>.

Cohen's desire is most apparent after he has reached the Virgin and remembers their union. Then the abandoned singer finds recluse in prayer and solitude. However, his work portrays a tendency to appeal to "peasant lassies" and, if they are not available, to G-d. He acknowledges in one interview given in 1970 that he started writing poetry in order to seduce women and if it did not work with them, he appealed to God:

> I wanted them and couldn't have them. That's really how I started writing poetry. I wrote notes to women so as to have them. They began to show them around and soon people started calling it poetry. When it didn't work with women, I appealed to God (Lumsden 25).

The above statement should not pass as a joke. When G-d does not respond to the poet's call, to which we are generally used, it is the female beauty that appeases him. Such as described in the poem "Song," which speaks of a priest refusing his holy books for the sight of naked girls:

> And casting down the holy tomes
> I lead my eyes to where
> The naked girls with silver combs
> Are combing out their hair
>
> Then each pain my hermits sing
> Flies upward like a spark
> I live with the mortal ring
> Of flesh on flesh in dark
>
> (*The Spice-Box of Earth* 70)

We can see a strong desire for the union with the Virgin / *anima* and a woman in Cohen's work. Cohen gives sacred qualities to a woman and humanises / anthropomorphises the Virgin. His song "Light as the Breeze" (*Ten New Songs,* 2001), is a classic example from Cohen's repertoire. It contains biblical references and images and leaves the reader or listener confused about its addressee:

> So I knelt there at the delta,
> at the alpha and the omega,
> at the cradle of the river and the seas.

The first line contains the letter "delta" (uppercase Δ in the Greek script), which may stand for the womb, while the second line seems to be referring to G-d who in the "Book of Revelation" 22:1, says about Himself: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the

last" (KJV). An over-imaginative reader or listener, may imagine the singer kneeling at the female genitalia. The song continues by saying that the union requires blood, which speaks for the symbolic death of the Son during the sexual act. The singer makes us aware that it is not the Virgin but any woman or the feminine in general that has the potential to "cure" by inducing orgasm:

There's blood on every bracelet
you can see it, you can taste it,
and it's Please baby
please baby please.
And she says, Drink deeply, pilgrim
but don't forget there's still a woman
beneath this
resplendent chemise.

So I knelt there at the delta,
at the alpha and the omega,
I knelt there like one who believes.
And the blessings come from heaven
and for something like a second
I'm cured and my heart
is at ease.

Sex in Cohen's work is a means to reach the Virgin and unite one's self. The union is the state of *joi* described earlier. Deprivation and asceticism, incessant worship and creation of an ideal, subsequent sexual intercourse with the woman who had become the impersonation of the ideal, leads to the unity of the poet's psyche. However, after the union has taken place, we see that the poets are unable to repeat the cycle. Some get married, some end up in cloister since the revelation coming from the union has very spiritual qualities, and some poets become outright misogynists.

Troubadour Misogynists

After such an encounter, some of the troubadours regarded the union with women as obstruction to their newly attained spiritual consciousness or unity and did not want to repeat hardships of the courtly lover. For instance, Marcabru (c. 1110-1150) became very hostile to women in his later works. In the poem beginning with the words "Dirai vos senes duptansa" ("I'll tell you without fear") he says that everyone who is ruled by a woman deserves to suffer:

Qui per sen de femna reigna
Dreitz es que mals li·n aveigna,

If you allow yourself to be ruled
By the judgement of a woman,

Si cum la letra·ns enseigna	You deserve to suffer [30]

While being attracted to women, Marcabru feared that they would deprive him of his sanity. He continues the above poem by saying that he had never loved anyone and no one had ever loved him in his life. However, this brave confession should not be taken at face value. Rather, he seems to be trying to say that he has never loved anyone in an ordinary sense of the word: meaning that he has never been bound by sexual desire:

Marcabrus, fills Marcabruna,	Marcabru, son of Marcabruna,
Fo engenratz en tal luna	Was born on such a moon that he knows about
Qu'el sap d'Amor cum degruna,	Love, how it drops off the stalk.
– Escoutatz! –	– Listen! –
Quez anc non amet neguna,	For he never loved anyone,
Ni d'autra non fo amatz.	And no one ever loved him.[31]

Marcabru was a defender of pure love, love in a sense of Christian *agape*, rather than of human passion, which is love for the whole universe and humanity in general. This seems to be the consequence of the union with the Goddess. In the poem beginning with the words: "Pus mos coratges s'es clarzitz" ("Since my heart has brightened") he says:

Aicel cui fin' Amors causitz	He whom pure Love has chosen
Viu letz, cortes e sapiens,	Lives easily, courteous and wise
E selh cui refuda delis	And he whom it refused, it vanquishes
E met a totz destruzemens!	And drives completely to ruin;
Car qui fin' Amor vol blasmar	Because whoever wants to blame pure love,
Elha·l fai si en folh muzar	It makes him loiter like a fool
Que per art cuid' esser peritz.	Until he thinks he's died by [its] guile.[32]

Some of the great lovers such as Bernart de Ventadorn (c. 1130/1140 – c. 1190/1200), can be characterised as misogynists in their later poems, especially when they vent their anger towards

[30] Translated by Rouben Cholakian. See Cholakian 42.

[31] Translated by Rouben Cholakian. See Cholakian 49.

[32] Translated by an anonymous author. See "Marcabru: Sirventes 40." TROBAR.ORG. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Dec. 2015. <http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/marcabru/mcbr40.php>.

women who did not reciprocate their love, or were unable to fulfil their longing for the Goddess. A stanza from the text "La dousa votz ai auzida" ("I heard the sweet voice") presents his anger towards a female who betrayed him:

Una fausa deschauzida	A false, degraded woman,
Träiritz de mal linhatge	Traitress from an evil stock,
M'a träit (et es träida,	Has betrayed me, and is betrayed—
E colh lo ram ab que·s fer);	Strikes herself with the switch she cuts—
E can autre l'arazona,	And when a man addresses her,
E'eus lo seu tort m'ochaizona;	Accuses him of her own fault,
Et an ne mais li derrer	And vilest men get more from her
Qu'eu, qui n'ai faih lonc badatge.	Than I, who have waited for her long.[33]

Another piece illustrates despair resulting from unfulfilled expectations. "Can vei la lauzeta mover" ("When I see the lark flying") speaks about losing trust in women:

De las domnas me dezesper ;	Deep in despair, I'll place no trust
Ja mais en lor no·m fiarai ;	In women though I did before;
C'aissi com las solh chaptener,	I've been their champion so it's just
Enaissi las deschaptenrai.	That I renounce them evermore;
Pois vei c'una pro no m'en te	When none will lift me from my fall
Vas leis que·m destrui e·m cofon,	When she has cast me down in shame,
Totas las dopt' e las mescre,	Now I distrust them, one and all,
Car be sai c'atretals se son.	I've learned too well they're all the same.[34]

Cohen has never written such an antagonistic poem. He finds a solution to his predicament by renouncing desire for the Virgin and for the woman, such as in the song "Leaving Green Sleeves," a parody of the original 16th century version "Greensleeves" popularly believed to be written by Henry VIII, which Cohen recorded for the album *New Skin for the Old Ceremony* (1974). Renouncing being the slave of his own needs, he overcomes the suffering praised by

[33] Translated by Peter Dronke. See Dronke 124.

[34] Translated by W.D. Snodgrass. See Kehew 75.

the *courtly lovers* and betrays the tradition of *courtly love* in literature and ceases being a troubadour. However, everything suggests that his refusal is only temporary:

> And ain't it fine, ain't it wild
> to finally end our exercise
> Then I saw you naked in the early dawn,
> oh, I hoped you would be someone new.
> I reached for you but you were gone,
> so lady I'm going too.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen the feminine character of the troubadour poetry represented by the Virgin which has the attributes of the divine lady of the Abrahamic religions. Her qualities reveal that she is an aspect of the ancient Mother Goddess, or Earth Mother character whose relationship with her annually sacrificed Son is necessary for the renewal of nature and fertility of the land. The poet is her worshipper, lover and Son.

The Virgin in the work of the Occitan troubadours and Leonard Cohen represents the feminine part of their psyche. Cohen even described his young daughter Lorca as the Virgin and exhorted his readers to devote their lives to Her. It was interesting to notice that in that poem, he describes Her as "it" so she does not have a defined gender and resembles the character of *midon* described earlier. Her worship has a very sexual nature since the connection with the Virgin seems to be possible at the climax of sexual union, which according to the given description unites the opposing forces of the psyche. Therefore, poets' female partners seem to have been the instruments of reaching *joi*. Some authors wrote so called *pastorelas*, a genre of medieval poetry which speaks of the seduction of a woman, usually a peasant girl in order to appease their longing. A question arises whether a casual encounter like this may have brought the poet to the Virgin, to the unity of his psyche, or whether it only satisfied their immediate needs.

The poets often renounced *courtly love* after they attained the union with the Virgin and become whole. So did Leonard Cohen, although only temporarily. He has taken residence in a Zen Buddhist Monastery at Mt. Baldy in California many times in his life and when he returned

he always found another woman, another harbour which he worshipped as his Virgin and then he abandoned Her, or perhaps She abandoned him, again and again.

IV. LEONARD COHEN, THE MODERN TROUBADOUR

The following chapter portrays parallels between the work of Leonard Cohen and the medieval Occitan poets in detail. It focuses on the mental image of the Virgin represented by a beautiful woman whom the poets worship, such as Cohen who pursued the unattainable beauty from Andy Warhol's entourage, Nico. The poet of such a stature seems to suffer for a double cause: the woman pursued hardly ever accepts being in the position of an idol and, moreover, she cannot represent the mental image faithfully. The hardships through which they go teach them to appreciate beauty without the need to take hold of it. Of this speaks Cohen's most enigmatic song "Suzanne." The chapter also focuses on minor differences in thematic between the work of the Occitan troubadours and Leonard Cohen.

Many contemporary singer-songwriters are often described as "troubadours," however, hardly any critic realises what this title implies. And Leonard Cohen has not been spared. Several of the latest newspaper headlines found on Google read: "Leonard Cohen - The 78-year-old troubadour enjoys a mournful waltz;" "A troubadour's journey;" "Leonard Cohen: The troubles of a troubadour;" "Leonard Cohen, a Troubadour for Our Times;" "Leonard Cohen, Troubadour of Love" and many others.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the troubadour suffers from the unrequited love of the feminine ideal that is, in most cases, a mental image of the Virgin. This suffering seems to be provoked by the sight of a beautiful woman who, if she obeys the rules of courtly love, makes the poet suffer, because she does not allow him the physical union. This vital experience seems to be behind the best examples of courtly poetry since it sharpens the poet's perceptions and prepares him for the union of his Self.

Leonard Cohen in the beginning of his music career experienced an unrequited longing for Christa Päffgen (1938 – 1988), also known as "Nico." Nico was idealised by Cohen and made a subject of his worship. A few poems in the last section of Cohen's *Selected Poems 1956-1968,* speak of Nico whom he ardently pursued during her performances at that time. He says that Nico represented all the women he had ever wanted and the more she was refusing him, the more the poet suffered for the image of the Virgin / divine ideal: "You do not have to love me / just because / you are all the women / I have ever wanted / I was born to follow you /

every night" (223). In other poems related to her, Cohen describes himself as a god in need to use the goddess's body.[35]

Nico is the subject of other song lyrics such as: "Winter Lady" (*Songs of Leonard Cohen,* 1967); "One of Us Cannot Be Wrong" (*Songs of Leonard Cohen,* 1967); "Last Year's Man" (*Songs of Love and Hate,* 1972); "Joan of Arc" (*Songs of Love and Hate,* 1972) and "Take This Longing" (*New Skin for the Old Ceremony*, 1974). Possibly she appears also in the song "Memories" (*Death of a Ladies' Man,* 1977) in which she is described "as the tallest and the blondest girl."

© Photo by Paul Morrissey, 1966

[35] See for instance other works from the collection *Selected Poems*: "I Met You" (227); "You Live Like a God" (229-230); "Aren't You Tired" (230); "It Has Been Some Time" (229-230); "She Sings So Nice" (231); "Who Will Finally Say" (234); "Waiting to Tell the Doctor" (234).

In his longing for Nico, Cohen could be described as a troubadour. However, he did not follow the rules of *cortezia* for long since he went on to conquer women who consented to satisfy his longing for the Virgin. We could make a list of songs in which he describes his female partners and the Virgin at once. Marianne Ihlen became the representation of the Virgin in the song "So Long, Marianne" (*Songs of Leonard Cohen,* 1967). Before, Cohen had already dedicated his book *Flowers for Hitler* (1964) to her and several poems deal with his infatuation, such as "For Marianne" (60) and "Waiting for Marianne" (68). The poems speak about an idyllic relationship between him and the woman and we may notice that she bears the characteristics of the Virgin. Her hair is always described as "shining," she has white skin. Moreover, they are always surrounded by angels and their relationship seems to be blessed by G-d Himself. However, the Virgin, after the consummation of their love, often turns to the fallen Virgin represented by the woman who is divested of her divine qualities. In a poem dedicated to Marianne that was printed in *Parasites of Heaven* (1966), he looks for signs that would tell him whether to continue their relationship or not:

> I guess it's time to say goodbye to all the secret clubs I wanted to command, it's time to end the signature I stretched from line to line. Come here, darling, I want to read your little hand. If it's alright to love you still I'd really like to see the sign (50).

It is useless to go to biographical details, however, the second to the last line of the text says "I didn't think when I tiptoed up those stairs that you'd treat me like a piece of meat on your barbecue" (50), which suggest that Cohen was not comfortable in the relationship later on. The song "So Long, Marianne" *(Songs of Leonard Cohen,* 1967) is a farewell to Marianne whom Cohen had to abandon because their relationship did not allow him to practice religion. He explains that it is important to leave because they "forget to pray for the angels / and then the angels forget to pray for [them]." The last stanza portrays the loss of Marianne / Virgin who has disappeared and changed her name: "I see you've gone and changed your name again. / And just when I climbed this whole mountainside, / to wash my eyelids in the rain!" Her disappearance might have been the result of the consummation of their love, here described as a climbing of the mountain.

The mental representation of the Virgin has been likened to many women in the course of Cohen's career. In the song "Seems So Long Ago, Nancy" *(Songs from a Room* 1969), Cohen recounts a story of a woman who had "slept with everyone" and then committed suicide. The

song portrays her as the Virgin although he focuses on her promiscuity, which speaks of the sexual nature of the Goddess. In an interview with Jack Hafferkamp in 1970, Cohen said:

> They knew one another in Canada, long years ago in 1961. Before there was Woodstock Nation or hip newspapers. When to be strange was to be on your own. Nancy's father was an important judge, but she lived near the street. Her friends told her she was free. 'She slept with everyone. Everyone. She had a child, but it was taken away. So she shot herself in the bathroom' (rpt in Burger 25).

The song lyrics suggest that Nancy represented the Virgin but men could not recognize the divine in Her: "none of us would meet her in / the House of Mystery." Not perhaps Cohen himself who reveals in the last stanza of the song that she was the Goddess: "And now you look around you, / see her everywhere, / many use her body, / many comb her hair." The Virgin of this song has sexual attributes, and she is seen as a prostitute, rather than as an example of purity as we know it from the Christian mythology. This brings into focus another notion, the division of psyche, not into animus / anima polarities, but into the part nourishing sexual desire and other part standing for love attachment.

Harry Rasky spoke with Cohen about the "seed" of the song "Nancy," which was planted when he encountered the woman in Nashville, which intensified his desire for the Virgin. According to Cohen, Nancy appeared when he was throwing coins into the jukebox and looking for a song, which makes a great parallel to the creative process:

> … the song *Nancy.* I remember its genesis very, very clearly. It was someone I met in an all night diner in Nashville. And I was working on the song and I couldn't break it. And I remember just standing at the jukebox looking at the selection of songs and a young woman came up and stood beside me and said, 'You ought to play R7.' And I spoke to her for a moment and I realized that some kind of transfer was being made, that the heart was being softened in some way by the presence of this other person. And in a sense the seed of the song was being handed over (Rasky 84).

The song "Chelsea Hotel #2" (*New Skin for the Old Ceremony*, 1974) had a similar genesis when the woman provoked desire for the Virgin. It speaks about an encounter with a woman who gave "her head on an unmade bed / while the limousines waited in the street." Throughout his career Cohen has revealed many times that the song was about Janis Joplin but the fact is not so important as the supposition that he was looking for the Virgin in the lap of a woman

could not satisfy his spiritual desire. When he sings that she was only another "fallen robin," he makes an indirect confession that their encounter did not make the union with the Virgin possible.

Joplin, like "Nancy," provoked desire for the Virgin, perhaps gave a false hope to conclude the period of ageless waiting for the Virgin, but failed to lead the singer to the union with his Self. Cohen describes the genesis of the song as follows:

> I began that song, I would say ah, the very late sixties. I'm not quite sure when I began the song. There is a version of it that I made in 1972, that I never released. It went through a lot of changes I don't think it was ready to record until 1974. My meeting Janis Joplin at the Chelsea Hotel was the genesis or the seed of the song. It went through a lot of changes. That's about it (Rasky 84)

It was as late as in 1992 in an interview with Paul Zollo when he made a public apology for revealing the fact that the woman of the song was Janis Joplin:

> It was very indiscreet of me to let that news out. I don't know when I did. Looking back, I'm sorry I did because there are some lines in it that are extremely intimate. And since I let the cat out of the bag, yes, it was written for her (rpt. in Burger 283).

However, he did not say that Janis Joplin was the woman who "gave her head" and perhaps the sexual act described has nothing in common with Joplin herself. As always, the song presents a mélange of personal reminiscences, perhaps encounters with other women and, certainly, a great deal of poetic invention. In 1969, when she was making a series of photographs with Richard Avedon (1923-2004), Janis Joplin confessed that she did not sleep with Leonard Cohen although she would like to. The following reprint comes from the book *The Sixties* (1999) by Avedon and Doon Arbus.

JANIS JOPLIN, blues/rock singer
Port Arthur, Texas
September 3, 1969

I live pretty loose. You know, balling with strangers and stuff.... A lot of people live loose, don't you think? Everyone I know lives incredibly loose.

Sometimes, you know, you're with someone and you're convinced that they have something to...to tell you. Or, you know... you want to be with them. So maybe nothing's happening, but you keep telling yourself something's happening. You know, innate communication. He's just not saying anything. He's moody or something. So you keep being there, pulling, giving, rapping, you know. And then, all of a sudden about four o'clock in the morning you realize that, flat ass, this motherfucker's just lying there. He's not balling me.

I mean, that really happened to me. Really heavy, like slam-in-the-face it happened. Twice. Jim Morrison and Leonard Cohen. And it's strange 'cause they were the only two that I can think of, like prominent people, that I tried to...without really liking them up front, just because I knew who they were and wanted to know them.... And they both gave me nothing.... But I don't know what that means. Maybe it just means they were on a bummer.

Meeting somebody and balling them...means something, but it doesn't mean near as much as it used to. It doesn't mean, like, this is it forever. It means, Wow, I really dig you, let's get together. It just...takes it a step farther than, you know, talking on dates. Know what I mean? Really getting together. It just means you dig somebody and want to be with them. And that happens a lot, you know? You meet someone, you like them, and you...be with them, maybe for a while, maybe for a couple of days, maybe for a couple of hours, maybe for a couple of years.

© Richard Avedon. See Avedon 37.

In the same year when Joplin said these words to Avedon, Cohen dated Joni Mitchell who just recorded the song "Chelsea Morning" which could be speaking about Cohen and her waking up in the Chelsea Hotel. Her verses go: "Oh, won't you stay / We'll put on the day / And we'll wear it 'till the night comes." In the late sixties, Cohen seems to have influenced Mitchel's lyrical output in more than is generally known. In an interview made in1968, she acknowledged:

> My lyrics are influenced by Leonard. After we met at Newport last year we saw a lot of each other. Some of Leonard's religious imagery, which comes from being a Jew in a predominantly Catholic part of Canada, seems to have rubbed off on me, too. Leonard didn't really explore

> music. He's a word man first. Leonard's economical, he never wastes a word. I can go through Leonard's work and it's like silk (rpt. in Kubernik 55).

In her song "Rainy Night House" (*Ladies of the Canyon*, 1970), she sings about Cohen taking her to his home in Montreal and putting her into the bed of his mother and closely observing her.

> It was a rainy night
> We took a taxi to your mother's home
> She went to Florida and left you
> With your father's gun alone
> Upon her small white bed
> I fell into a dream
> You sat up all the night and watched me
> To see who in the world I might be[36]

The "father's gun," when taken metaphorically, links Cohen with his dead father. We know that he died at the age of fifty-two and that Cohen was obsessed with his weapon (Nadel 17). If we take into account the sexual symbolism of the gun, we are very close to the myth of Oedipus. But the symbolism of Mitchell's falling asleep on the mother's bed is more significant as she, in reality, supplants Cohen's parent and both of them re-enact their union. Cohen is further on portrayed as being unable to sustain their relationship and escapes from the parental bond:

> You called me beautiful
> You called your mother, she was very tanned
> So you packed your tent and you went
> To live out in the Arizona sand
> You are a refugee
> From a wealthy family
> You gave up all the golden factories
> To see who in the world you might be

[36] The lyrics were taken from the official website of Joni Mitchell.
Mitchell, Joni. "Rainy Night House." Web. 29 Mar. 2016. <http://jonimitchell.com/music/song.cfm?id=4>.

In other songs written about Leonard Cohen such as: "A Case of You" (*Blue*, 1971), "That Song About the Midway" (*Clouds*, 1969) and "The Gallery" (*Clouds*, 1969), the male partner is portrayed as a holy wine or a saint, which links him to the persona of Jesus Christ who was a similar wanderer as in the song "Rainy Night House." The last song from the list "The Gallery" speaks of him saying: "Lady, don't love me now I am dead / I am a saint, turn down your bed." All of her songs present a striking fact that Cohen preferred not to consummate their love and, like a courtly lover, suffer for the unattainable ideal of his psyche, the Virgin.

The longing for an unspecified feminine character has lasted throughout all of Cohen's career. For instance, the song based on Constantine P. Cavafy's poem "Alexandra Leaving" (*Ten New Songs* 2001), which originally spoke of Marcus Aurelius' loss of Alexandria, was adapted by Cohen to portray the mourning for Alexandra. Cohen encourages her lover to cope bravely with this occasion:

> And you who had the honor of her evening,
> And by the honor had your own restored –
> Say goodbye to Alexandra leaving;
> Alexandra leaving with her lord.[37]

We see here, as in many Cohen's songs, that the Virgin is leaving together with "her lord," which suggest that the Virgin provides the connection with the Lord. The medieval troubadour poetry describes this quite clearly since there is always an obstruction between the poet and his lady since she happens to be married to some noble knight or duke, or even a king. On a higher level of interpretation, we could see this as the Holy Trinity in which there's a Son / lover, the Virgin / lady and G-d / lord.

Arthurian legends deal with this in their Trinitarian plot: Launcelot ―Guinevere―Arthur and the same triangle can be found in the stories of Celtic origin, which may have inspired them: Troilus—Cresseid―King Mark. This motif appears also in the stories of Greek provenance with the characters: Paris—Helen―Menelaus and is partly reflected in the Jewish faith with the "characters" of Israel―Shekhinah―G-d and also in Christian teachings: Man―Son―G-d and, finally, in the "depraved" Cohenian world of sexual

[37] The phrase "leaving with her lord" may be speaking about Shekhinah, the feminine quality of G-d who is believed to descend upon the believers on the Sabbath evening and stays with the faithful until the end of the feast.

spiritualisation: man—woman—G-d. In all of these, it is the middle feminine element or the literary feminine character which serves as in intermediate to reach the union with G-d / lord.

Already in his first collection of poetry, *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956), Cohen described the Virgin as exerting such a power that She could convert her lovers into animals by her will:

My lover Peterson
He named me Goldenmouth
I changed him to a bird
And he migrated south

My lover Frederick
Wrote sonnets to my breast
I changed him to a horse
And he galloped west

My lover Levite
He named me Bitterfeast
I changed him to a serpent
And he wriggled east

My lover I forget
He named me Death
I changed him to a catfish
And he swam north

My lover I imagine
He cannot form a name
I'll nestle in his fur
And never be to blame

("Song" 41).

The last stanza speaks about the lover of Her own choice; the lover who is imagined. The *midon* seems to await someone who cannot form Her name. When a man tries to form Her/its name, he necessarily humanises such an entity (which is very unwise if one wants to live a sane life). Another example comes from the lyrics of another poetry collection, *Parasites of Heaven* (1966), in which Cohen wrote that he tried to give various names to the Virgin, but all the "names [went] the do-do way:"

Ah, what were the names I gave you
before I learned all names go the do-do way?
Darlin, Golden, Meadowheart

I've been walking in the far green
I've lost what all the leaves are called

Elm, Chestnut, Silver

O come here you, thou
Bring all thy, bring all thine
Far into the splinter let's sing for nothing.

1958 (17)

The Lady as a Mind Construct

Everything suggests that the Virgin was the mental image representing the feminine part of the psyche that we described earlier. Of course, this image is totally in the service of the poet who makes it according to his standards of beauty. Therefore, the image of the Virgin has nothing in common with the physical description and I deem that she cannot be seen by eyes. The earliest troubadour, Guilhèm de Peitieus (c. 1071 – 1126) tells us that he does not know her appearance, nor her whereabouts, as illustrated in the poem beginning with words "Ferai un vers de dreyt nien" ("I'll make my verse from nothing"):

Anc non la vi et am la fort,	Though I've not seen her, my love's strong;
Anc no n'aic dreyt no no·m fes tort;	Not seeing her, I'm scarce undone;
Quan non la vey, be m'en deport	She never did me right or wrong
…	…
No sai lo luec ves en s'esta,	As for her homeland, I don't know
Si es en pueg ho es en pla	Whether she's from the hill or plain[38]

Another troubadour, Bertran de Born (1159-1215) composed the Virgin out of various women from whom he borrows a quality or a specific trait. Therefore, he composes Her mental image and anthropomorphised the Virgin:

Irai per tot achaptan	I will go out a-searching,
De chascuna un bel semblan	Culling from each a fair trait
Per far domna soisseubuda,	To make me a borrowed lady
Tro vos mi siatz renduda.	Till I again find you ready.[39]

[38] Translated by W.D. Snodgrass. See Kehew 25-27.

[39] Translated by Ezra Pound. See Kehew 151.

This approach resembles Cohen's quoted above with regard to Nico when he described her as: "all the women / [he has] ever wanted" by which he revealed that he combined features of the most beautiful women he had seen so that he could make an exquisite feminine character.

Another poet Gui d'Ussel (fl. 1195–1209) wrote about the feminine Ideal: "vos passatz sobre tot pensamen" which could be translated as "you are better than all the ideal images,[40]" which shows his respect for the Virgin, and goes against the prevalent Christian ideology in which the Divine has human features.

Bernard de Ventadour (c. 1125 – c.1200), on the other hand, claims that the Virgin was made by G-d Himself. In the following poem, he describes mainly Her body:

Ai, bon'amors encobida,	Ah, good and desirable love,
Cors be faihz. delgatz e plas,	Well made body, slender and smooth,
Frescha chara colorida,	Fresh skin and high colour,
Cui Deus formet ab sas mas !	Which God formed with his hands,
Totz tems vos ai dezirada,	Always I have desired you
Que res autra no m'agrada.	For no other pleases me;
Autr'amor no volh nien !	No other love do I want at all!
Dousa res ben ensenhada,	Sweet and learned creature,
Cel que-us a tan gen formada,	May the one who formed you so graciously
Me'n do cel joi qu'eu aten!	Give me the joy I anticipate![41]

Suzanne

The greatest portrayal of the Virgin by Leonard Cohen comes from the first song in his first album *Songs of Leonard Cohen* (1964). Suzanne, according to its Hebrew etymology, means *lily* (*shoshana*), which suggests whiteness, beauty and purity. In the song, she also evokes an enchantress who is leading a resisting man to her place near the river: the source of the feminine power. Cohen does not sing only about Suzanne Vaillancourt, the wife of his friend who invited him for a cup of tea, but also about the statue of the Virgin Mary on the Chapelle Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours which observes the harbour on St. Lawrence River in Montreal.

[40] The whole poem can be read in Nelli, René, and René Lavaud. *Les Troubadours: L'œuvre poétique*. 120-121.

[41] Translated by Samuel Rosenberg. See Rosenberg 63-64.

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In spite of his initial hesitation, he yields to her power: “And you want to travel with her / you want to travel blind / and you know that she will trust you / for you’ve touched her perfect body / with your mind.”

The second stanza of the song portrays a lonely figure of Christ who is looking from his “lonely” wooden tower, perhaps also on the St. Lawrence River. The chorus is almost the same, although with one difference and it is that it is Christ who touches the singer’s perfect body with his mind: “And you want to travel with him / And you want to travel blind / And you think maybe you’ll trust him / For he’s touched your perfect body / with his mind.”

To summarise, the first stanza speaks about the man touching Suzanne’s perfect body with his mind, while the second stanza speaks about Christ who touches the singer’s “perfect” body with his mind. This mental “seizure” of Suzanne had therefore prepared the singer to receive the love of Christ.

After such a cross-encounter, the seeker is again led by Suzanne to the river and she shows him little things "among garbage and the flowers" while "the Sun pours down like honey / on our Lady of the Harbour" – the statue. Finally, it is Her who touches his perfect body with her mind, which suggests the union between the singer, the Virgin and Christ.

The Difference Between the Troubadours and Leonard Cohen

The difference between the troubadours and Leonard Cohen may lay in the fact that they often attributed physical qualities to their divine ideal while Cohen attributes divine qualities to the real woman (as we could have seen). Therefore, the troubadours often humanised the objects of their desire, while Cohen has been divinising it. The following stanza from the text by Jaufre Rudel (d. c. 1147) "Quan lo rius de la fontana" ("When the rill of the source") attests to the supposition that the poet has constructed the Virgin as a mental image, which was later on applied to the real woman (Countess of Tripoli):

> Quan pensar m'en fai aizina
> Adonc la bays e la col,
> Mas pueys torn en revolina
> Perqu'em n'espert e n'aflam,
> Quar so que floris non grana.
> Lo joi que mi n'ataina
> Tot mos cujatz afaitanha.[42]

In my translation: When I have time to think of her / Then I kiss and embrace her / But then I shift and turn over / Since I'm frustrated and burn / That it doesn't bloom, the flower / The *joi* doesn't come to me / And all this takes my power. [43]

[42] Reprinted in Beltrami, Pietro G.., and Sergio Vatteroni, eds. *Rimario trobadorico provenzale*. Pisa: Pacini, 1988.

[43] There is an ongoing dispute about this strophe among the troubadour experts. Some regard it as Rudel's legitimate work, others intentionally omit it like, for instance, Alfred Jeanroy in his collection of Rudel's songs: Rudel, Jaufre. *Les chansons de Jaufré Rudel*. Ed. Alfred Jeanroy. Paris: Libraire Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1915. Paul Fabre also ignores this composition in his large anthology of the troubadour poetry: *Anthologie des troubadours: XIIe-XIVe siècle*. Orléans: Paradigme, 2010. I dare to quote this wonderful stanza and provoke the rage of the "hard-core" specialists.

The real woman ostensibly described by the poet is a work of legend which appeared later after the poet's death. The poet seems to have fallen in love with an image he has constructed in his thoughts. I take the liberty to suggest that this image preceded seeing a real woman.

With regard to Leonard Cohen, it is almost certain that it is the real woman who nourishes desire for the Virgin. The genesis of the songs "Suzanne" or "So Long, Marianne" (*Songs of Leonard Cohen,* 1967); "Seems So Long Ago, Nancy" (*The Songs from the Room* 1969) and Chelsea Hotel #2 (*New Skin for the Old Ceremony,* 1974) describes this quite clearly as I pointed out above.

Cohen, unlike the majority of the troubadours, is able to make the Virgin the subject of hatred too. Like in the poem from the collection of poetry *Death of a Lady's Man* (1978):

> She is beautiful half the time. She is a description. She has black hair. She has bad skin. She is a description. You wrestle with an angel. She surprises you with her buttocks. I made her for you out of everything you hate (133).

While the medieval poets are often fearful of being refused and are not courageous enough to conquer the Virgin,[44] Cohen boasts of his conquests, such as in his song "Lady Midnight" (*Songs from a Room,* 1969) where his courage is so immense that he is even reproached by Her:

> … she scorned me and she told me
> I was dead and I could never return.

Although he perseveres in his seducing activity, and we can hear the Goddess crying at the end of the song: "You've won me, you've won me, my lord," it is impossible to prove that the singer took advantage of her consent. Rather we feel that he is leaving the place without taking his share.

Unlike Cohen in the abovementioned song, the troubadours are often fearful of their *midon's* refusal when courting it. For example, Arnaut Daniel (fl. 1180–1200) says: "Tan l'am de cor e la queri / c'ab trop vole cuig la·m toil" ("Round her my desires twine me / Till I fear lest she

[44] See especially the work of the Occitan poet Cercamon.

disdain them[45]") and many feel downcast about being refused, such as Bernart de Ventadorn (c. 1152 – 1195) in his poem beginning with words "Can vei la lauzeta mover" ("When I See the Lark Beat His Wings"):

[...] cilh que plus en degr' aver,	[…] she who should yield mercy most
No·n a ges ; et on la querrai ?	Shows me the least of anyone.[46]

Another troubadour poet, Cercamon (fl. c. 1135-1145), presents a touching mixture of hope a frustration in his poem beginning with the words "Quant l'aura doussa s'amarzis" ("When the sweet air turns bitter"):

Tots tressalh e brand e fremís	I start, I burn, I tremble all over,
Per s'Amor, dorment o velhan.	Sleeping and waking for love of her.
Tal paor ai qu'ieu mesfalhís	I'm so afraid of dying,
Non aus pensar com la demand,	I dare not think of asking her;
Mas servir l'ai dos ans o tres,	However, I shall serve her two years or three,
E puèis ben lèu sabrà·n lo ver.	And then, maybe, she will learn the truth.[47]

Leonard Cohen, on the other hand, is braver and goes straightforwardly to the conquest of the subject of his desire, a noble young woman. The last verse of the following stanza printed in the *Book of Longing* (2006) is the proof of Cohen's subversion of courtly lover's modesty:

> I go on and on / about a noble young woman / who unfastened her jeans / in the front seat of my jeep / and let me touch / the source of life / because I was so far from it. / I've got to tell you, friends, / I prefer my stuff to theirs (15).

Cohen has revealed to be the worshipper of the "noble young woman" who represents the Virgin. His songs are paeans to her beauty and power. However, the consummation of his longing seems to be leading to insatiable desire for the Virgin whom he has been losing and finding again and again. When he released his *Greatest Hits* album in 1975, the back cover contained Cohen's drawing of a worshipper and the Virgin. Apart from the drawing itself, there

[45] Translated by Ezra Pound. See Kehew 219.

[46] Translated by W. D. Snodgrass. See Kehew 77.

[47] Translated by Frederick Goldin. See Goldin 25-26.

is a script in a language resembling the *Celestial Alphabet or Malachim* invented by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa in the 16th century. It is a language close to Ancient Hebrew generally believed to be the language of angels. Cohen seems to have tried to express his innermost thoughts and present them in a dignified way to Her.

Conclusion

The above chapter could be well summarised by Cohen's friend and producer of the film *The Song of Leonard Cohen* (1980), Harry Rasky, who said the following about women: "For a man they stand for the thing that you are not and that is what you always reach for, in a song" (Rasky 82). In other words, they stand for the Virgin which poets nourish in their psyche. Leonard Cohen and the Occitan troubadours have been portrayed as the worshippers of the Virgin. However, with regard to Cohen's infatuation with Nico, *courtly love* seems to be possible to experience only once in life before the attainment of *joi*, or the completeness of the

self since this completeness deprives poets of the mental image of the Virgin and the spiritual connection they make with Her in their longing.

The Virgin is a universal symbol of any poetry speaking about love or women. For this reason, the worship of the feminine character resembling the Virgin is the most frequent and apparent heritage shared by all cultures. In the following chapter, I am bringing into focus the inspiration of the medieval Al-Andalus whose poets were the shining examples of the genre of love poetry. By this, I wish to bring another perspective to the Eurocentric studies of the troubadour poetry and to the study of European love song since it has been always modified by the cultural and religious practices of the Muslim culture. The Andalusian love poetry written during the Muslim rule over the medieval Spain contained attributes of all the Abrahamic religions and their thoughts presented a universal picture of the Divinity, which has been the source of inspiration to the European authors such as Dante and exerted a great influence upon them.

V. MEDIEVAL ANDALUSIAN MUSLIM POETRY AND SONG

This piece elaborates on the previous chapter called "Lenard Cohen, The Modern Troubadour" in which I wanted to introduce common features between the Occitan troubadours and the contemporary singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen, such as the worship of the Virgin, which is, in reality, an indelible part of poet's psyche. This Virgin as a literary character, praised in Christianity and almost forgotten in Islam nowadays, is present in both types of literary traditions and ultimately brings them together since the worship of the anthropomorphised divine character is a part of almost every literary tradition of the world. This chapter focuses on the themes presented in the troubadour literature introduced in the previous chapters but from the point of view of the Andalusian poetry of the 9th to the 13th centuries, which embraced ideas coming from the East (the Persian Empire) and Arab world (Maghreb). It presents comparisons between medieval Andalusian Muslim poetry and the poetry of the Occitan troubadours made by the Czech scholar Alois Richard Nykl (1885 - 1958). In addition, it describes the song structure prevalent in the given period of muwashshah and zajal and the music instruments used. The texts selected for comparison come from Arabic and Persian translations into English, French and Spanish. This chapter puts the troubadour poetry and the poetry of Leonard Cohen into another context.

The melange of Western and Eastern cultures resulted in the unique cultural milieu of Al-Andalus (711-1492) which represented four major ruling dynasties: Umayyads, Almoravids, Almohads, and Naṣrids. The main poets of Muslim Spain were undoubtedly Ibn Hâni (936-972), Ibn Hazm (994-1063), Ibn Zaydún (1003-1071), Al-Mu'tamid Ibn 'Abbâd (1042-1095), Ibn Khafâja (1058-1138/9), Ibn Quzmman (c. 1080-1160) and Ibn Al-'Arabi (1165-1241). These poets, and often philosophers, were influenced by their Eastern counterparts, Sufis, among whom were Mansur al-Hallaj (c. 858 – 922), Avicenna (c. 980 – 1037), Omar Khayyám (1048 – 1131), Attar (c. 1110 – c. 1221), Nizami Ganjavi (1141 - 1209), Rumi (1207 – 1273), and Saadi (1210 – 1292).

It was Alois Richard Nykl (1885 – 1958) a Czech scholar, linguist, translator, traveller and polyglot, who analysed the poetry of the Andalusian Muslim poets and their influence upon the Occitan troubadours. In his book *Hispano-Arabic Poetry, and Its Relations with the Old*

Provençal Troubadours (1946), he came with the sweeping statement, which provoked a great debate that has not reached a definite conclusion yet:

> If we compare Guillaume's, Marcabru's and Rudel's forms of poetry with the forms current in contemporary Muslim Spain, as well as in the East, we cannot fail to find considerable analogies which can only be explained by imitation or adaptation not by independent invention (Nykl 379).

Much later after the publication of Nykl's book, there appeared strong reactions from Arabic scholars such as Jareer Abu Haidar from the University of London who strongly opposed the work of Nykl in his book *Hispano-Arabic Literature and the Early Provençal Lyrics* (2001). Another Spanish scholar of Arabic literature Federico Corriente Córdoba also refuted the influence of the Arabic poetry upon the Occitan poetry, especially its relation to the Andalusian song structure of *muwashshah* (Latry 123). To make things worse for Nykl, other scholars directly refuse the influence of Al-Andalus upon the medieval Occitanie; however, they admit the influence of Arabic poetry, such as Lois Anita Giffen in *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs* (1972). Other world-renowned scholars opposing Nykl were Roger Boase with his book *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love: A Critical Study of European Scholarship* (1977) and Álvaro Galmés de Fuentes, a Spanish Arabist writing on the similarities and differences between Arabic and Spanish medieval poetry. Henri Irénée Marrou, a French scholar, remembers one of his disputes on the origin of the troubadour poetry with Nykl and describes it as follows:

> L'un des défenseurs les plus ardents de la thèse a été le regretté A.R. Nykl, un arabisant de Chicago d'origine slovaque, [sic] avec qui j'ai soutenu une ardente polémique : nous échangions des invectives, tour à tour en français, en anglais, en occitan du XIIe siècle, pour finir en sanscrit (Marrou 118).

> **In my translation:** One of the most fervent defenders of this hypothesis was the late A.R. Nykl, an Arabist from Chicago of Slovak origin, [sic.] with whom I had an ardent polemic: we had an exchange of arguments by turns in French, English, Occitan of the 12th century, ending up in Sanscrit.

The Troubadours and Medieval Andalusian Poets According to Alois Richard Nykl

Nykl focused on the similarities between the poetry of Guilhèm de Peitieus (1071-1126) and other Occitan troubadours and the poetry of Al-Andalus. His hypotheses have been always contentious since he based them on his ability to sense out the spirit of the period rather than on direct proofs. The following excerpt, in which he prepares his ground to delve into comparative studies, comes from his book *Hispano-Arabic Poetry and Its Relations with Old Provencal Troubadours* (1946):

> The subject is so elusive and so much dependent on intuitive feeling and familiarity with both the Muslim and the Provençal point of view that necessarily only very few investigators will be able to judge all the details competently (380).

Fortunately, Nykl let us some tangible material to follow and that was his investigation of melody that led him to believe that the first troubadour songs were inspired by the Arabic poets. At first, he focused on Guilhèm's song no. V, which must have been composed after his return from the Crusade to Antioch in 1103 and may contain Eastern influences:

> The change of rhythm, the alternate rhyme between longer and shorter lines, and the completely different spirit of Guillaume's remaining poems cannot be ascribed to any other significant event in his life but the Crusade adventure (383).

He then analysed the structure of Guilhèm's later works which resemble Andalusian *muwashshah* and *zajal* songs (383). Nykl also assumed that his poems written between 1114 and 1118 for his mistress Dangereuse are similar in theme to love poems of Ibn Hazm (994-1064), a Cordobean philosopher and poet (383). Furthermore, Nykl noticed that the troubadour Marcabru (fl. 1130-1150) shows in his works influence of Andalusian song, particularly his two *Estornels* ("Starling poems") could have been made upon "an Andalusian-Arabic melody" (385).

Perhaps, it would not be too clever to suppose that all the troubadours had access to the Andalusian medieval art, and, since the art of imitating and copying was as common as it is nowadays, we may suppose that many troubadours imitated the works of their fellow poets who may have used Andalusian melodies and song structure.

Nykl came with a list of comparable features in his book and according to him, the troubadours and Andalusian Arabic poets used the seven strophes in general; used alternate rhymes; applied the term "verse to the whole strophe" and used refrains (since the appearance of Marcabru's poetry) (390). Further considering Guilhèm's work, Nykl comes to conclusion that his songs from

> IV. to VIII. show the greatest similarity to the Arabic rhythm. Songs IX and X indicate the power of making original combinations of rhyme, a power which the subsequent Troubadours show in an elaborate way. Songs VIII to XI are the only ones which Cercamon might have heard; their echo appears in his work, which, briefly analysed, shows a nearly complete absence of short-lines, together with Guillaume's post-Crusade rhythm (391).

A French scholar Hoa Hoï Vuong pointed out that some pieces in the work of Guilhèm d'Aquitaine contain the same strophic form as the Andalusian *muwashshah* (the scheme aaa bab, ccc bcb, ddd bdb). This fact, altogether with the presence of Arabic words in his poetry, make us believe that Provencal poetry was influenced by Arabic poetry. Moreover, poetic genres such as *romancero,* rondeau, ballad, lais, virelais and triolets, remind us of the Andalusian poetry in certain formal details and thematic, according to Vuong (25-26).

Nykl found many similarities with Andalusian poetry in the music of Jaufre Rudel (1113-1170) of whom he says that "his melodies, which his biographer highly praises, remind us strongly of Arabic music" (393). However, he did not analyse the thematic of their poetry and the song structure in detail. Therefore, I bring into focus the two poetic forms that were prevalent in the medieval Andalusia and bear close resemblance to the poetic structure used by the Occitan troubadours.

Muwashshah and Kharja

The Andalusian medieval poetry was represented by the song called *muwashshah* believed to be invented by the blind poet Muccadam ben Muafa[48] writing at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries in Cordoba. Its verses were written in a formal language, in most cases Arabic but its

[48] In the English speaking world,we can often find his name transcribed as Muqaddan ubn Mu'āfā al-Qabrī. Muqaddan is believed to have adapted the strophic patterns of Abū Nuwās (Monroe 7), an Iranian poet born in the 8th century.

last stanza called *kharja*[49] ("exit") was usually written in the informal Hispano-Arabic dialect (Monroe vii). Thus the poem presented a mélange of two languages—formal and informal ones—as well as the mélange of two voices: the masculine and the feminine since *kharjas* were often sung by women of the lower class, usually slave girls (Monroe 31, Lama 22). Thematically, they often expressed the lament of a mourning woman over her lost lover, but, sometimes, they spoke about the refusal of the lover, or spoke about sex in a very obscene way (Monroe 29).

Kharjas often preceded the verses of *muwashshah* by the date of their composition. They were often quotations taken from the sacred texts or from an older song (Vuong 23). The poets often borrowed an already existing *kharja* and built their *muwashshah* upon it. There are around 60 original *kharjas* still extant and some of them are considered to be the oldest lyrics written in a romance language, precisely in a vernacular of Andalusia which mixed medieval Spanish, Hebrew and Arabic languages.[50] This refutes the theory that the troubadours were the first poets of the European tradition of love poetry who wrote in a language of the common folk.

This genre of the sung poetry accompanied by music applies exclusively to the region of Al-Andalus. It is called Andalusī nūbah (نوبة أندلسيّة), and has always exerted a strong influence over the music of the North Africa and later over the whole East.

This Andalusian poetry does not rely on the strict Arabian meter but uses a free meter (Touma 83). Therefore, the poems sung use the meter invented by the poet himself and the singing of the poem depends exclusively on the will of the poet, like the poetry of the Occitan poets. Monroe says they used "unusual meters" and a refrain composed of one, two, three or four lines (*markaz*). They also used internal rhyme at "every pause" and assonance. Frequently they rhymed in *ū* and *ī* according to the Arabic style of poetry writing (Monroe 28).

The poet and philosopher Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406 in Cairo) classifies the structure of *muwashshah* as follows:

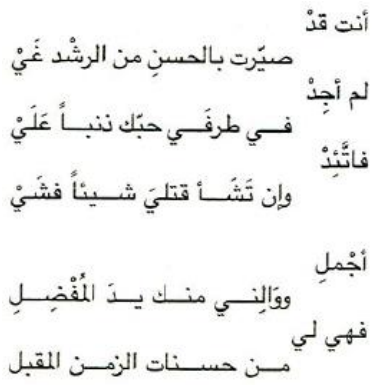
> The *muwashshahāt* consist of 'branches' [*ghuṣn*] and 'strings [*simṭ*] in great number and different meters. A certain number [of 'branches' and 'strings'] is called a single verse [stanza]. There must be the same number of rhymes in the 'branches' [of each stanza] and the same meter [for the 'branches' of the whole poem] throughout the whole poem. The largest number of stanzas employed is seven (rpt. in Monroe 29 - 30).

[49] خرجة *jarcha, envoi* or "salida" in Spanish.

[50] The oldest extant *kharjas* altogether with their translations into various languages can be found on the website of Maricela Gámez Elizondo: *Jarchas Zaguán*. N.p., 5 Nov. 1997. Web. 31 Oct. 2015. <http://www.jarchas.net/>.

Muwashshah was essentially poetry of the court composed by the learned Arab poets; at the same time, *kharjas* were often mocked since they were expressing thoughts of the lower class. They gradually became the part of the folk Arabic poetry (Monroe 31-32). The oldest *muwashshah* were recovered only recently in 1948 by Samuel S. Stern and by Emilio García Goméz (Lama 33).

The oldest extant *muwashshah* is of Ibn Mâ'al-Samâ (d. 1031). In this song, we can see the *mawlāya* who has complete control over the suffering poet. *Mawlāya* (*midon* in the Occitan poetry) is described as a charmer whose spells control the poet. The poet even begs to be killed:

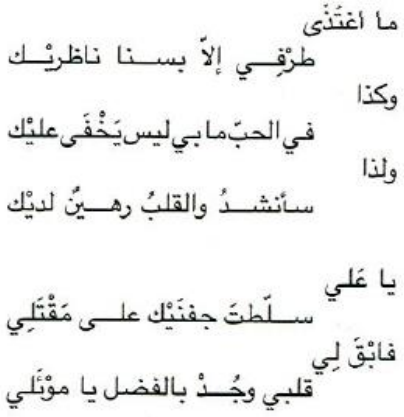


Ô charmeur
dont les sortilèges ont égaré ma raison.
J'ai bien peur
De n'avoir rien à reprocher à cette passion.
Va, tueur,
Si tu veux m'achever, prends ton temps, fais attention.
Sois mon allié,
prête-moi ton appui secourable, ô aimé,
Et tes bienfaits
se feront ressentir à travers les années[51]

> **In my translation from French:** Oh charmer / whose spells made me lose my reason / I have fear that there's nothing against this passion. / Go, killer, / if you want to bring me to my end, take your time, be careful. / Be my ally, give me your solid support, oh beloved, / And your kindness / will be felt throughout the years.

However, in the *kharja* of the poem, we discover that the beloved person and the subject of the poem is Ali, brother of the prophet Muhammad. The fantasizing poet describes his beaming eyes which have complete control over him. The last verses express the devotion and love of the poet for Ali, his *mawlāya*:

[51] Translated by Hoa Hoï Vuong. See Vuong 63.



Tu le vois,
mon regard se nourrit du seul éclat de tes yeux.
Et l'émoi
Que je dissimulais ne t'est plus mystérieux.
C'est pourquoi
j'adresse ces vers à qui retient mon cœur anxieux :
« Ali, c'est fait :
ta paupière a soumis mes regards à jamais.
Pourtant, aimé,
sois mon refuge, épargne un cœur soucieux de paix[52]»

In my translation: You see it, my visage is nourished from the brightness of your eyes. / And the excitement / Which I hide doesn't make you more mysterious. / That is why / I address these verses to him who keeps my heart anxious: 'Ali, it is done, your eyelid is the subject of my looking forever. / Yet, beloved, be my refuge, save my heart longing for peace.'

There are a few examples of the oldest and most beautiful *kharjas* extant. Probably, the greatest medieval Andalusian writers of *kharjas* were the Sephardic Jews such as Yehuda Halevi (c. 1075-c.1141) who wrote in Arabic and Hebrew. One of his *kharjas* speaks about an enamoured woman asking her female friend how to lessen her pain since she cannot live without her lover. Moreover, she asks for directions where to find him.

Garid vos, ¡ay yermaniellas!,
¿cóm' contenir el mio male?
Sin el *habib* non vivreyo:
¿ad ob l'irey demandare?[53]

In my translation: Tell me, ah little sisters! / How to ease my misery? / Without my lover, I won't live / Where should I go to find him?

[52] Translated by Hoa Hoï Vuong. See Vuong 65.

[53] Reprinted in Lama 33. All the transcritptions quoted from the book by Víctor de Lama are reprints from Stern, Miklos Samuel. *Les vers finaux en espagnol dans les muwassahs hispano-hébraïques. Une contribution à l'histoire du muwassah et à l'étude du vieux dialecte espagnol 'mozarab'', in: Al-Andalus.* Revista de las escuelas de estudios árabes de Madrid y Granada, XII (1948), p. 299-346.

Yosef al-Katib (d. 1042) known as “el Escriba” devotes his panegyric *muwashshah* to Abu Ibrahim Samuel and his son Isaac and concludes his poem by the verses in which he proclaims his eyes cannot bear the beauty of G-d and hurt him.

> ¡Tanto amare, tanto amare,
> habib, tanto amare!
> Enfermeron olios nidios
> e dolen tan male.[54]
>
> **In my translation:** I will love, I will love you so / Beloved, I will love you so! My eyes got hurt from your splendour and hurt me so!

The other prominent writer of *muwashshah* Abraham ben ‘Ezra, born in 1092 in Tudela, presents in the following *kharja* a female lover asking what she shall do without her lover. She will wait for his return:

> Gar, ¿qué fareyo?,
> ¿cómo vivreyo?
> Est’ *al-habib* espero,
> por él murreyo.[55]
>
> **In my translation:** Tell me what I shall do / How can I live? / I am waiting for this lover. / For him I will die.

Another Hebrew writer from Andalusia, Yosef ben Saddiq (Córdoba, c. 1080 - Córdoba, 1149), a prominent poet, philosopher and theologian, presents his *kharja* in which a young woman is asking her mother for advice when her lover waits at the door.

> ¿Qué faré mamma?
> Meu *al-habib* est ad yana.[56]

[54] Reprinted in in Lama 34.

[55] Reprinted in Lama 34.

[56] Reprinted in Lama 34.

In my translation: What shall I do mother? / My beloved is at the door.

Zajal

The form of poetry closely linked with *muwashshah* is *zajal* whose words were written in the colloquial Arabic of Cordoba (Touma 71). James T. Monroe supposes that it was invented by Ibn Bājja at the "beginning of the twelfth century" (40). Its most known proponent was Ibn Quazman (b. 1078–d. 1160) who came with "anti-courtly aesthetics." His beloved to whom he directs his songs comes from a lower class and she is described as a girl of the darker skin.[57] The love portrayed in his poetry is of carnal nature and his poetry contains descriptions in which he is "plying his beloved with alcohol" (Monroe 44).

Zajal has a similar strophic structure as *muwashshah* and may be divided into two types. The first type of *zajal* is similar in its structure as *muwashshah* with one difference and that is that it is written in a colloquial language altogether with *kharja.* The second type disposes of *kharja* (Monroe 40). *Zajal* does not have a strict number of strophes like *muwashshah* (Monroe 41) but it has usually between five and nine strophes.

Ibn Quazman was known for singing his songs to the cheerful audience at the court. Alois Richard Nykl says that "his audiences [were] invariably the gatherings of highly cultured, licentious lovers of poetry, wine, pleasure and joy, at times including liberal minded *alfaqīhs* and men whose conduct could not be termed as immoral" (Nykl 269), which means that their audience was the same like in the Occitanie.

Nykl describes the perfect form of *zajal* in relation with the poetry of Ibn Quazman as follows: "The *zajal* should begin with amatory compliments called *taġazzul*, and then pass smoothly into the praise (*madīḥ*)" (Nykl 270). In *zajal*, we frequently meet inventions similar to those used by the Occitan troubadours. For instance, fictitious names or nicknames for one's lover, such as "*amalī, munyatī, buġyatī, ğārī, sayydī, mawlāye*" (Nykl 271). Some *zajals* resemble the troubadour *pastorelas.*

Nykl further mentions the thematic of *zajal* that links it with the poetry of the Occitan troubadours:

> the bewitching look of the beloved as the origin of love; the tyranny, cruelty, disdain, unfounded suspicion, reproaches of the beloved, which cause weeping, insomnia, feeling of lonesomeness,

[57] Compare with the poetry of at-Talīq, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Zaidūn who spoke about white or golden princesses.

> mental confusion, emaciation, weakness of the body, suffering similar to the burning of infernal flames, illness, and death (Nykl 271).

Furthermore, Arabic poetry in general often uses settings similar to the troubadour poetry, such as castles and their gardens, often referred to in Andalusia as patios decorated with fragrant flowers. The poetry of Ibn Quazman (1078–1160) contains all the motifs present in the poetry of the Occitan troubadours. For instance, his *zajal* no. 10 compares the Virgin to a "little star:" "Now I love you, dear little star!" (274). Like in the troubadour poetry, Quazman speaks about the fragility of the union with the Her: "What a close union it would be, if it lasted!" (Nykl 276).

He speaks of his *mawlāya* and his suffering when he became estranged from Him: "My friend became estranged [originally *habibi*] … And since he became estranged I am suffering" (rpt in. Nykl 280). Like the troubadours, he is aware of the fact that the suffering for his *mawlāya* "means great trials" (Nykl 280). At times, he seems to be describing, at least in translation, a masculine character that provokes his ardent desire and love, such as in the *zajal* no. 57. "What captivated me and made me prisoner—was (his) beautiful appearance. […] my heart is at war with his eyelids" (Nykl 280-281). He also says that his beloved is whimsical, like many of the feminine characters of the troubadour poetry. The following verses come from the *zajal* no. 59.

> I have a beloved, graceful and faithful,
> —only it would be a good thing,
> If he had no whims!
> He is always both intimate and aloof,
> Though his character be friendly and joyful:
> If he is just one night, he is tyrannical a whole week;
> My heart is not certain as to his close union,
> For in a whim he may cut it short, while he is in the best of humour.[58]

Then, the poet spends his nights sleepless, "I do not know what sleep tastes like" (Nykl 290) and in another *zajal* describes how his body becomes thin on account of being ignored by his lover: "and my body became lean, and thin, and it melted;—and I became thinner than a thread in a cloak;—there is nothing in my body that a physician could cure!" (Nykl 291).

[58] Translated by Alois Richard Nykl. See Nykl 281.

At times, his poems are devoted to a male lover, sometimes they are devoted to the Virgin, sometimes they are devoted to both of them. In one text, Quzman says that he is not going to mention the name of the beloved, nor reveal anything of their love.

> I am not going to mention the name of that beloved;
> And the bitterest of things is love that cannot be mentioned (to others)![59]

In his poetry, he also mentions a feature that often appears in the troubadour poetry and later in the poetry of *Dolce stil novo*, especially that of Cavalcanti and Dante and later in all the poetical traditions, that is the importance of a beautiful sight which provokes love laying dormant in the poet's heart:

> The origin of love comes from the glance:
> You see two beautiful eyes, created of charm:
> They will snatch your reason from you and will deprive you of patience,
> And you will see your heart in the (beloved's) hands like a captive
> Fettered by him![60]

The Importance of Eyesight and Heart as Defined by Avicenna and Ibn Hazm and their Echoes in the Medieval Andalusian and Troubadour Poetry

The most important author describing eyesight in the medieval Andalusian poetry was the poet and philosopher Ibn Ḥazm (994-1063) from Cordoba who influenced almost all the poets of the medieval Andalusia and some of the Occitan troubadours. In his treatise "Ring of the Dove," Hazm claims that we can regard the innermost depths of one's soul through eyes and that the eye is a channel through which beauty enters the heart (140).

The Persian philosopher Avicenna (c. 980 – 1037) seems to have influenced Ibn Hazm and other poets-philosophers in several respects. He devoted several chapters of his "Treatise on Love" ("Risalah fi'l- 'ishq") to the importance of eyesight and beauty entering through the eyes. There, he claimed that human nature covets a beautiful sight, which leads to refinement and nobility (Avicenna 220). According to Avicenna, "[t]hree things follow from the love of a

[59] Translated by Alois Richard Nykl. See Nykl 289.

[60] Translated by Alois Richard Nykl. See Nykl 291.

beautiful form: (i) the urge to embrace it, (ii) the urge to kiss it and (iii) the urge for conjugal union with it" (221). When man loves with an "intellectual consideration," this makes him nobler and better in all respects, which is one of the primary motifs permeating the troubadour literature in general.

The poet Al-Sharîf al-Talîq (960-1008) described in one of his texts a delighted pupil which drinks out of the beautiful image of the beloved person under his eyelid. It speaks of the sight behind the pupil, therefore, about the sight of the heart, rather than of the sensory receptors:

كأنَّ إنســانَ أجفانِهــا
للخَمْرِ مــن تحييرها مُدمنُ
وليــسَ إنســانا ولكنّه
هــاروتُ في مُقلتِها يَســكنُ

Sa pupille ravie, sous la paupière,
Buvait sans mot, tout enivrée d'amour,
Quelque homme peint dans l'iris qui l'enserre,
Ange ou poupée – tentateur de toujours.[61]

In my translation: His delighted pupil, under the eyelid, / Drunk without a word, completely intoxicated with love, / Some man painted on the iris which it encloses, / An always tempting Angel or doll.

The importance of a beautiful sight was also analysed by the Occitan poets. For them, eyes were the means through which beauty enters the heart and rekindles love. The Occitan troubadour Giraut de Bornelh (c. 1138 – 1215) wrote that eyes serve as an instrument of the heart:

> … the eyes are the scouts of the heart,
> And the eyes go reconnoitring
> For what it would please the heart to possess.[62]

Another troubadour poet, Uc de Sant-Circ (1217 – 1253) wrote in a poem beginning with words "Tres enemics e dos mals senhors ai" ("Three enemies and two bad lords I have") that his eyes and heart are his enemies because they make him desire the ideal that he can never posses:

> L'enemic son mos uòlhs e·l còr, que·m fai Les ennemis sont mes yeux et mon cœur qui me fait

[61] Translated by Hoa Hoï Vuong. See Vuong 49.

[62] Translated by Joseph Campbell. See Campbell 20.

Voler celèi qu'a mi non tanheria; Désirer celle qu'il ne faudrait pas[63]

In my translation: My eyes and heart are my enemies that make me / Desire what I should not.

Leonard Cohen in his song "Sisters of Mercy" (*Songs of Leonard Cohen,* 1967) referred to in the previous chapters, mentions two girls touching his eyes: "They touched both my eyes and I touched the dew on their hem," which speaks for the revelation of the Virgin in his mind.

The Occitan troubadours were well aware of the fact that eyes serve as a gate that provokes desire for the Virgin. In addition, this motif was also explored by *Dolce stil novo* poets later on, who spoke of the beautiful feminine character whose beauty entered through the eyes. According to them, the aesthetic concept embraced through eyes gives birth to *love* lying dormant in the heart. Dante explains it in the *canzone* XX of his *La vita nuova*:

> Nature, disposed to love, creates Love king, / Making the heart a dwelling-place for him / Wherein he lies quiescent, slumbering. […] Then beauty in a virtuous woman's face / Pleases the eyes, striking the heart so deep / A yearning for the pleasing thing may rise. […] Love's spirit is awakened from his sleep. / By a worthy man a woman's moved likewise (59).

Intellectual or aesthetic appreciation of a beautiful form was believed to dignify human conduct, like in the troubadour poetry. All the means of possessing beauty, such as marriage union or living in partnership, were avoided by courtly lovers. Avicenna regarded marriage to be despicable. An observer of a beautiful form should not succumb to the urge to posses, if he does so, it is allowed to do so only for the purpose of procreation:

> With respect to the desire for conjugal union, it is fitting that a lover with this purpose in mind should be suspected, except if his need has a rational purpose, i.e., if his purpose is the propagation of species (222).

However, Avicenna was praising embracing and kissing which lead two souls into a union but he warns that lust usually follows and that *lovers* should be on guard against it:

[63] Translated into French by Paul Fabre. See Fabre 458.

> As for embracing and kissing, the purpose in them is to come near to one another and to become united. The soul of the lover desires to reach the object of his love with his senses of touch and sight, and thus he delights in embracing it. And he longs to have the very essence of his soul-faculty, his heart mingle with that of the object of his love, and thus he desires to kiss it. These actions, then, are not in themselves blameworthy. However, feelings and actions of excessive lust happen to follow them frequently, and this makes it necessary that one should be on guard against them, except if the complete absence of physical appetite and immunity even from suspicion is beyond doubt" (222).

Ibn Hazm in his work follows the same concepts as Avicenna. He also mentions danger resulting from carnal love, which destroys the *pure* love one harbours for the object of his desire:

> when carnal desire […] becomes so overflowing that it surpasses these bounds, and when such an overflow coincides with a spiritual union in which the natural instincts share equally with the soul, the resulting phenomenon is called passionate love. […] it is called love only metaphorically, and not in the true meaning of the term (146).

Both, Avicenna and Ibn Hazm, were paradigms of the *courtly poet* and exerted far-reaching influence upon the cultural milieu of their countries. Love does not mean lust, in their view, but rather an intellectual appreciation of beauty as we saw with regard to Cohen's Suzanne. According to Hazm, love comes "when the fire really takes hold and is firmly established, then you will see the secret whispering" (141). Its signs are the need for solitude, sleeplessness and other accompanying phenomena.

> Love's signs also include a fondness for solitude and a pleasure in being alone, as well as a wasting of the body not accompanied by any fever or ache preventing free activity and liberty of movement. The walk is also an unerring indication and never-deceiving sign of an inward lassitude of spirit. Sleeplessness too is a common affliction of lovers; the poets have described this condition frequently, relating how they watch the stars, and giving an account of the night's interminable length (143).

Ibn Hazm, like Avicenna and the Andalusian Muslim poets and their Occitan counterparts, believed that suffering refines. The suffering man "polishes his language [and] he refines his gestures and his glances" (144). The Cordobean poet mentioned also another shade of love that

was explored in detail by the Occitan poet Jaufre Rudel (c.1113 - c.1170). The so called *amor de lonh*, love on distance, which is provoked by a beautiful sight or upon hearing about a virtuous woman. “One of the strangest origins of passion is when a man falls in love through merely hearing the description of the other party, without ever having set eyes on the beloved” (144). According to Rouben Charles Cholakian, love on distance helps to create a “mythical female” in the poet’s psyche to whom he addresses all his songs and on whom he makes his fantasies.

> The *amors de terra lonhana* functions like any *senhal*, creating a mythical female, whose desexualisation is her most erotic feature. Geographic separation has become the ‘literal’ figuration for the emotional distancing imposed on the psyche by the mechanisms of conscious disapprobation (98).

Ibn Hazm described the creation of the Virgin within the poet’s psyche coming from his solitary life and a total devotion to her in his mind. If the poet could find the woman that would fit the already constructed “ideal feminine” he would either consummate his longing with her and thus prevent the flow of energy coming from such a fantasizing, or he would maintain his longing and continue following the precepts of *courtly lover*.

> If a man’s thoughts are absorbed by passionate regard for one whom he has never seen, the inevitable result is that whenever he is alone with his own reflections, he will represent to himself a purely imaginary picture of the person whose identity he keeps constantly before his mind; no other being that this takes shape in his fantasy; he is completely carried away by his imagination, and visualizes and dreams of her only. Then if some day he actually sees the object of his fanciful passion, either his love is confirmed or it is wholly nullified. Both these alternatives have actually happened and been known (144).

Virgin of the Medieval Andalusian Love Poetry

The poet needs to have the Goddess to whom he serves. The king of Seville, Al-Mu‘tamid ibn Abbad (1040-95), is known for writing sensual poetry to his wife Itimad who, at least in his poetic works, resembles the Virgin. In his poetry, there appear the motifs of admiration of her body, her divine resplendence, ephemeral experience of their union, their parting or even refusal.

The following piece in which the poet describes his conjugal union with the Virgin likens her body to a lissom tree (perhaps one of the citrus trees in Seville) and compares the mystery of Her beauty to the opening of a calyx.

Sweet night of joyous merriment
Beside the swerving stream I spent,
Beside the maid about whose wrist
So sweetly swerved her bracelet's twist:
She loosed her robe, that I might see
Her body, lissom as a tree:
The calyx opened in that hour
And oh, the beauty of my flower![64]

In the following poem, Her resplendence and beauty are more intense than that of the sun. She shadows the bright star with her (perhaps) naked body and the poet admires her beauty. Al-Mu'tamid captures the moment in which time stops. He wishes she would be trapped in this moment and safeguarded against time encroaching upon her beauty:

She stood in all her slender grace
Veiling the sun's orb from my face:
O may her beauty ever be
So veiled from time's inconstancy.[65]

In another poem "Ethereal Union" he speaks about the union with the Virgin in his mind. Everything is dreamed up, her cheeks, her breasts, her smell. The Virgin does not wish the union to be "ethereal" and asks whether the poet could find a "way" out of loving her only in his dream:

Des joues et seins tendus... qu'en rêve m'évoquait,
Les roses je glanais et les pommes croquais !
Et par sa lèvre encore, en ce corps je humais
L'encens dont son haleine exhalait le fumet.
Elle eût souhaité ce lien autre qu'immatériel,
Mais le chemin... réel, un mur dressait contre elle.
Ne pouvait-il, ce dam, détourner son chemin ?
L'exil, à nous choisir, était-il donc contraint ?[66]

[64] Translated by A.J. Arberry. See Arberry 1.

[65] Translated by A.J. Arberry. See Arberry 2.

[66] Translated into French by Idrîs Vos. See Vos 88.

In my translation: Her firm cheeks and breasts… in dreams they resemble, / The roses I gathered and apples I crunched! / And through her lip, yet in this body I smelled / The incense, from there her breath exhaled pleasant perfume. / She wished this union wasn't ethereal, / But the way… the real way is barred by such a wall. / Couldn't he, this damned, divert his way? / Exile to choose for us, thus was he forced?

The poet Al-Dabbaj (1170 – 1248) wrote a poem "Two Suns" in which the beloved shadows the poet from the brightness of the sun so that she cures his ophthalmia. His observing of the sun stands for his contact with the Divine. The woman / Virgin is thus a mediator between the Sun (G-d) and the poet:

When she floated into sight
One heaven's rim the sun was bright;
So I saw two suns appear,
The other distant, this one near.
The sun's wont, as all men find,
Is the beholder's eyes to blind;
This sun's light, I found, was a
Sure cure for my ophthalmia![67]

In a poem by the Cordoban poet and royal panegyrist of the Umayyads, Ibn Abd Rabbihi (860 – 940), the Virgin is described as a divine mind with rosy wine in her fingers. She is portrayed as "ewer," a decorative pitcher that bows to an ordinary glass. The poem also presents a contrast between the Virgin and a "godless lass" who lays prostrated in front of her.

Pretty as a posy
Runs my mind divine,
In her fingers rosy
Bearing rosy wine.
See with what devotion
Ewer bows to glass;
Prostrate to the potion
Kneels my godless lass.[68]

The poet Ibn Haiyun (fl. in 12th ct.) wrote in his poem "Moles" about a radiant girl who keeps disappearing any time the poet attempts to approach her.

My white, my shining girl,
As pretty as a pearl;

[67] Translated by A.J. Arberry. See Arberry 13.

[68] Translated by A.J. Arberry. See Arberry 71.

When I woo her dearly
She melts away, or nearly.[69]

One of the most outstanding Andalusian poets was Ibn Khafaja (1058 – 1138). In one of his poems called "Lovely Maid," the Virgin's eyes are compared to a gazelle, her neck to a hind, her lips have the colour of wine and her teeth are like sweet bubbles. She is a radiant girl surrounded by twinkling stars. The poet also describes how they spent their time together in a garden until the early dawn.

Of a lovely maid I tell:
Sombre eyes of a gazelle,
Throat of hind, and wine-red lip,
Teeth like bubbles sweet to sip.

Drunkenly she swooned and swayed
In her gown of golden braid,
Twinkling stars that interwove
Round the moon, my radiant love.

Passion's hand enveloped us
In his garment amorous
All the night, till it was torn
By the jealous hand of morn.[70]

Cortezia in the Medieval Andalusian Poetry

Hoa Hoï Vuong claims that in the medieval Andalusian poetry we can find all the essential elements that characterise *fin'amor* of the Occitan poetry: nobility of love (*wadd*), lovesickness (*wajd*), evocations of the environment and beauty of the beloved (*locus amoenus*) and amorous ecstasy (*ṭarab*) (Vuong 17). *Cortezia*, the particular conduct towards the lady that I presented with regard to the Occitan poetry, appears in the Arabic poetry altogether with its precepts such as *jovens* and *assag* or the presence of *lauzengiers*, informers and opponents of courtly lovers.

Jovens

The phenomenon of *jovens*, which stands for the generosity of the troubadour's patron, was well known in the Andalusian poetry under the name *fata* (young, noble, generous) or *futuwwa*

[69] Translated by A.J. Arberry. See Arberry 9.

[70] Translated by A.J. Arberry. See Arberry 146.

(youth, generosity and nobility) (Prokop 249). It appears for instance in the "Fragment" by Ibn al-Missisi (*fl.* 11th century) in which he praises generous sponsors. The poets of the court often solicited for money and made poems praising their benefactors:

> Praise not the avaricious man
> Who gives less freely than he can;
> The squinter who averts his eyes
> So does, their defect to disguise.[71]

Assag

Ibn al-Zaqqaq (d. c. 1135) from Valencia described the union with his lady in a poem "Night of Bliss," which reminds us of ***assag***, a test in which the poet will not make love to her during the night even if embracing her.

> I passed the night most blissfully,
> For my true love came to me
> And to my breast I held her close,
> Bright as morn, till morn arose.
>
> Her arms about my neck were hung
> As a sword-belt might be slung,
> The while my arms were interlaced
> Like a girdle round her waist.[72]

Mezura

This comportment is related to *mezura* which stands for restraint in matters of sex, lust, food and other pleasures of the body. The poem "Continence" by Ibn Faraj of Jaén (d. 976) could be a good example of the phenomenon. The poet portrays his lust and how he practices "continence" in order not to spoil the beauty of the Virgin:

> She came to me by night;
> Her veil was stripped away;
> The darkness through her light
> Shone radiant as day.
>
> But with all prudence I
> Suppressed my lust intense,
> That I might practise my
> Accustomed continence.[73]

[71] Translated by A.J. Arberry. See Arberry 36.

[72] Translated by A.J. Arberry. See Arberry 139.

[73] Translated by A.J. Arberry. See Arberry 116.

Mezura is a well-known theme that existed in Arabic poetry since time immemorial. The poetry of the Banu 'Udhra tribe, a Christian group later converted to Islam, is known as the first instance of *courtly poetry*, veneration of the divine feminine and love without consummation. Its most celebrated poet was Jamīl ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Maʿmar (660-701) who sang for his Buthayna, a semi-divine woman, or the Virgin. According to James T. Monroe, his style was imitated by early Andalusian poets such as by Ibn Faraj of Jaén (d. 976) who in the following verses describes his unwillingness to possess the beauty he sees:

> I spent the night with her like a small camel, thirsty,
> yet whose muzzle keeps him from drinking.
> Thus for one such as I, there can be nothing in a garden
> beyond looking and smelling the perfume;
> For I am not like grazing animals who use gardens as mere pasture grounds.[74]

Lauzengiers

The Andalusian and Occitan poets often described *lauzengiers*, people opposing love between the poet and his lady and telling on them to their lord or other authorities. In Al-Andalus, the poets used terms such as *hasûd*, the jealous husband; *raqîb*, the guardian of the belle, and *wâshî*, a scandalmonger (Marrou 123). *Wâshîs* were described, for instance, by the female poet Hamda (*fl.* 12th century) who said that they did "their utmost to destroy [their] love" and tarnish their reputation (Arberry 99).

Other Prominent Andalusian Muslim Poets

Ibn Zaidūn (1003-1071)

Ibn Zaidūn was the first poet who followed the precepts set in the works of Ibn Hazm. In his work, he was often addressing his fellow poet and lover Wallada bint al-Mustakfi (1001 – 1091), a blonde, blue-eyed, fair-skinned "Virgin." The love described is of the *fin'amor* type, distinguished by spiritual and religious language. The poet is often at the mercy of the feminine

[74] Translated by James T. Monroe. See Monroe 17.

character who is the arbiter in the love game. He, moreover, imagines their love union, which may come from the psychological need described earlier.

> Make open display of loyalty even if you do not generously accord me a love union;
> yet a dream image will satisfy us and a remembrance will suffice us (Monroe 20).

Zaidūn's desire was so strong that he even demanded Wallada's "miswak," a tooth-brush, so that he could taste her lips:

> Ce reste de miswak je t'en prie offre-moi,
> Ne retiens pas en pingre un simple bout de bois.
> Peut-être alors pourrais-je éteindre un temps ma fièvre,
> En embrassant celui qui embrassa tes lèvres.[75]

> **In my translation:** This remaining part of miswak, please, give it to me, / Don't be tight-fisted for this simple piece of wood. / Perhaps, I could bring down my fever finally, / When embracing that which embraces your lips.

Another outstanding poet and philosopher of Al-Andalus was Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) born in Murcia. This Sufi mystic often described the union with G-d and the dissolution of the self (Monroe 58). His two books which treat the theme of love are *The Meccan Illuminations* ("Al-Futûhât al-Makkiya") and *The Interpreter of Desires* ("Tarjumān al-Ashwāq"). The majority of his poems were written for the beautiful Persian erudite woman Nizam whom he met in Mecca. He regarded all the women he met in Mecca as the manifestation of the Divine and saw their names as the names of G-d (Schimmel 122).

Ibn 'Arabi wrote that G-d's image can be seen most perfectly in the human form, particularly, in the female appearance (Schimmel 123-124). His philosophy bears close resemblance to another Sufi philosopher Rumi (1207 – 1273) of Persian provenance. Both were writing their verse to G-d to whom they did not assign a gender. However, they addressed the One in their poetry so that He resembles a radiant white Virgin. Rumi often described G-d as his consort and when he spoke about *hal*, a mystical state, he described it as uncovering the veil of the bride. The following verses were reprinted in the book by Annemarie Schimmel:

[75] Translated to French by Idris Vos. See Vos 62.

Le hal c'est enlever le voile de la belle mariée,
Le maqam c'est quand le roi reste seul avec la mariée.[76]

In my translation: The hal is to uncover the veil of the beautiful bride, / The maquam is when the king is alone with his bride.

"Maqam" is a secret place in which the union takes place and with regard to all the references in his poetry and symbolism, we realize that this place is the heart. The feminine epithets given to the Beloved might have served as a description of the Kaaba according to Schimmel (121). The medieval Arabic poets often thought of it in feminine terms as of a veiled fiancé or the Virgin for whom they undertook the pilgrimage. Leonard Cohen must have been acquainted with all the above ideas when he wrote the following poem for the collection *The Energy of Slaves* (1972):

There was a veil between them
composed of good thread
not carelessly woven

therefore they did not ignore it
or poke at it, but honoured
what hid them, one from the other

thus they served their love
as those old Spanish lovers served
The One Who Does Not Manifest Himself (68).

The veil of Cohen stands for the division between the human and divine, which was the subject of worship of the troubadour and Andalusian poetry. Its culmination is the revelation of mystery, culmination of longing, the union of the divine and human, *hieros gamos* or the mystical state of *hal.*[77]

[76] Translated by Annemarie Schimmel. See Schimmel 124.

[77] The divine marriage will be introduced in detail in the subsequent chapter.

Musical Instruments

The typical instruments used for playing in Al-Andalus were the short-necked lute (*'ud*), the bow-necked lute (*rebec*), the spike fiddle (*kamanjah*), the plucked box zither (*qanûn*), the goblet drum (*darabukkah*), the tambourine (*daff*), pandereta (*tar*) and saz (*bağlama*) (Touma 83). Some of these instruments were used by the musicians accompanying Leonard Cohen throughout his career such as the saz which was used for the song "Teachers" (*Songs of Leonard Cohen*, 1967).[78] Javier Más has been playing bandurria, laud and archilaud which gives very Andalusian feeling to Cohen's live performances and recordings. It is recommended to listen to his introduction to the songs "Who by Fire" and "The Gypsy's Wife" during Cohen's latest world tour available on DVDs *Live in London* (2008), *Songs from the Road* (2010) and *Live in Dublin* (2014). Then we realize that Cohen has not been only using the thematic of the medieval Jewish, Christian and Muslim poetry but also employing the rhythm, melody and colouring of their music and incorporated it into his musical output. Moreover, the employment of these antique instruments contributes to the repetitive sounds in Cohen's music which, in the end, create musical chants mirroring the heartbeat and bodily rhythm in general, which has the potential to bring about the state of trance, which was, for instance an attempt made in the song "Lover, Lover, Lover" in the album *New Skin for the Old Ceremony* (1974) introduced in the subsequent chapter dealing with love and *hieros gamos.*

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that the themes permeating the troubadour poetry were present in the poetry of the medieval Andalusian Muslim poets two or three centuries before their appearance in the work of Guilhèm de Peitieus and his successors. As it was stated in the introduction to this chapter, the influence of Al-Andalus upon the medieval Occitanie has not been proved yet nor refuted. Alois Richard Nykl, although an advocate of the Arabic theory of influence, presented some crucial observations upon the melody and verse structure but did not show substantial evidence. Two literary traditions resemble each other in a few seminal aspects, that is, beside the musical and verse structure, the worship of the feminine character resembling the Virgin and in obeying the precepts of *courtly love* that had existed at the courts in the medieval Andalusia and at the royal courts in other Arabic countries such as Morocco, Tunis, Iraq or Syria before their appearance in the Midi. It was shown that the motifs of *cortezia,*

[78] See Kubernik 59.

especially of *jovens, assag, mezura* and literary characters of *lauzengiers* existed in both literary traditions. Even if the tradition of Islam does not consider the Virgin to be divine and portrays Mary as an ordinary woman,[79] her luminous description and whiteness reminds of the goddess of the Christian tradition.

The concept of G-d in the Ancient Persian and Arabic languages does not have a gender. Therefore, the poets spoke to the masculine divinity of our Western tradition in feminine and masculine terms at once. The English translators kept its neutrality by translating the words addressing the divinity as beloved or lover. The word *mawlaya*, or *midon* as used in the Occitan poetry, had the same function to guard the identity and the gender of the lover.

The Sufi poets such as Hallaj, Rumi, Nizami, Saadi or Sanā'ī and Ḥāfiẓ from Persia who exerted a direct influence upon the Andalusian writers, reflected in their works the mystical teachings concerning the union of the self, or human and divine union as an outcome of the sacred marriage, which resembles the union of *animus* and *anima* described earlier. These poets were the paradigms for the Andalusian authors and made considerable influence upon Cohen.[80]

This chapter had a double purpose and that was to bring about a debate concerning the Arabic influence upon the European love poetry among the scholars apart from the Arabic and Occitan Departments. The tradition of love poetry, or at least, writing about love as we know it nowadays, was not shaped only by the biblical texts but also by the tradition of the medieval Al-Andalus. Cohen has never been separated from this tradition as his output reveals and as will be shown in subsequent chapters. Here we are not speaking only about the influence of Arabic poetry upon his work but also of his praise and respect given to Ishmael's lineage.

[79] See the Surah Maryam.

[80] I presented the influence of Sufism upon Leonard Cohen in my MA thesis in 2013. See the bibliography.

VI. THE NATURE OF LOVE IN THE WORK OF LEONARD COHEN

From now on, the thesis focuses on the religious qualities of Cohen's output in relation to the biblical books. This chapter deals with the nature of love and its various shades in his work. The reader should bear in mind that the medieval authors drew on the same sources like Cohen and their concept of love more or less coincides with the concept voiced by him. Love in the work of the Cohen is seen in the sense of Christian agape*, the unconditional love of G-d and humanity, and Eros, the insatiable desire for bodily pleasures. In both senses, it has certain accompanying attributes, according to the singer, explained by the words "chain," "bond," "wound," "suffering," "longing" and "solitude."*

The literary persona of Leonard Cohen is viewed as longing for divine love, exploring prayer and solitude as a means of spiritual nourishment and resorting to carnal love, periodically, in order to quench its spiritual thirst. His work is characterised by a liturgical language, which he uses in order to glorify the most profane features of our human nature and highlight the potential of the body to serve as an instrument to reach the Sacred.

Love as portrayed by Cohen is partly analysed in relation to the Kabbalah, alchemical wedding "coniunctio oppositorum" and the Christian theme of the lover's death.

What is love according to Leonard Cohen?

"It is in love that we are made; / In love we disappear," Leonard Cohen sings after having been abandoned by the "Crown of Light, O Darkened One" with whom he experienced a momentary union.[81] Love is seen as a force which chooses the singer to serve it;[82] it is a scorching power in which he extinguishes his existence;[83] a purely divine phenomenon which unites both masculine and feminine forces inside him[84] and gives meaning to his earthly existence.[85]

[81] Cohen, Leonard. "Boogie Street." *Ten New Songs.* Columbia, 2001. CD.

[82] Cohen, Leonard. "Love Calls You By Your Name." *Songs of Love and Hate.* Columbia, 1971. CD.

[83] Cohen, Leonard. "Dance Me to the End of Love." *Various Positions.* Columbia, 1984. Cd

[84] Cohen, Leonard. "Joan of Arc." *Songs of Love and Hate.* Columbia, 1971. CD.

[85] Cohen, Leonard. "There Ain't No Cure for Love." *I'm Your Man.* Columbia, 1988. CD.

"Love Itself[86]" is seen as the light coming "through the window, / straight from the sun above," it is a kind of transforming power that opens the door towards the Divine. In an almost liturgical language, Cohen describes various means to receive this love. One time it is through prayer and repentance, other time through bodily pleasures. Yet he is afraid of it as he sings in a cover version of Frederick Knight's "Be for Real:" "I don't want to be hurt by love again."[87]

This chapter portrays the oscillation between the attainment of love through meditation, prayer or repentance and sexual intercourse. The singer is presented as a slave of love for the Divine and for the Human existence, the man who continuously fails in his faithfulness to each. Furthermore, the chapter suggests that the profane does not exclude the sacred in a language of love[88] and that the woman's body, and lust for it, may anticipate the attainment of divine love.

Divine Love

According to Cohen, love is a divine call which chooses a person, such as portrayed in the song "Love Calls You by Your Name" from the album *Songs of Love and Hate* (1971). There, the singer implies, love is coming when one is between two unspecified states: "But here, right here, / between the birthmark and the stain, / between the ocean and your open vein, / between the snowman and the rain, / once again, once again, / love calls you by your name."

In the very same song, Cohen says that this love is not love for the woman whom he abandons but some other call. "I leave the lady meditating on the very love which I, I do not wish to claim." He even describes "bandage," the symbol of healing, loosening and calls: "Where are you, Judy, where are you, Anne?," which sounds as if he was trying to address the women who had hurt him and who can no longer hold him back from his thirst for the spiritual form of love.

Love as a divine phenomenon coming unexpectedly is described in the song "Love Itself" (*Ten New Songs* 2001). There it is compared to light and seen as a form of enlightenment taking place in a room, which implies, with regard to Cohen's output, one's heart. The light coming into this "room" makes little particles of dust visible and the singer sees them dancing in the air. Out of this dust, he sings, "the Nameless makes / A Name for one like me," which implies

[86] Cohen, Leonard. "Love Itself." *Ten New Songs.* Columbia, 2001. CD.

[87] Cohen, Leonard. "Be for Real." *The Future.* Columbia, 1992. CD.

[88] Cohen, Leonard. "Light as the Breeze." *Ten New Songs.* Columbia, 2001. CD.

that love resurrects him from "the dust"—here the blind ordinary experience of the world—and gives meaning to his existence. He becomes realised in love and deserves his name. Perhaps, only after receiving this love, he deserves to be called a fully realised human being. However, love such as this, lasts for a while and then it disappears: "I'll try to say a little more: / Love went on and on / Until it reached an open door – / Then Love Itself / Love Itself was gone."

Cohen commented on this song after his return from the Zen Monastery in 2001 that it portrays a "rare experience of dissolution of self:"

> I was sitting in a sunny room, watching the motes of dust, and accepted their graceful invitation to join in their activity and forget who I was, or remember who I was. It's that rare experience if dissolution of self, not the careful examination of self that I usually work with. I played it for a couple of brother monks and sister nuns and they said it was better than *sesshin*—a seven-day session of intense meditation (rpt. in Burger 484).

Cohen's desire for this higher / spiritual or religious form of love enabling him the "dissolution of self" has been, however, portrayed in many songs throughout his career, such as in the song "Lover, Lover, Lover" in which he calls his Father (G-d) his "Lover.[89]"

The chorus of this particular song resembles an invocation and seems to be based on the words and melody of "La ilaha ilallah.[90]" It may be heard in Cohen's chorus repeating the word "Lover" seven times. Cohen is begging to have his name changed, which may be understood as taking away his sins, history and identity. He wants to be deprived of his *self* in order to attain divine union, which is well supported by the music encouraging ecstatic dancing and the loss of consciousness. The religious qualities of this song are affirmed once and for all by the fact that the number seven is the most sacred in Judaism and symbolizes the seventh day in the creation or the seventh month *Tishrei*, in which the Jews hold penance or the Sabbath of Sabbaths on Yom Kippur.

The dissolution of the *self* in love is portrayed in another song "Joan of Arc" from the album *Songs of Love and Hate* (1971). The song insinuates that the soul qualifies itself to accept divine love only after the trial period of unfulfilled longing and solitude. The soul is portrayed

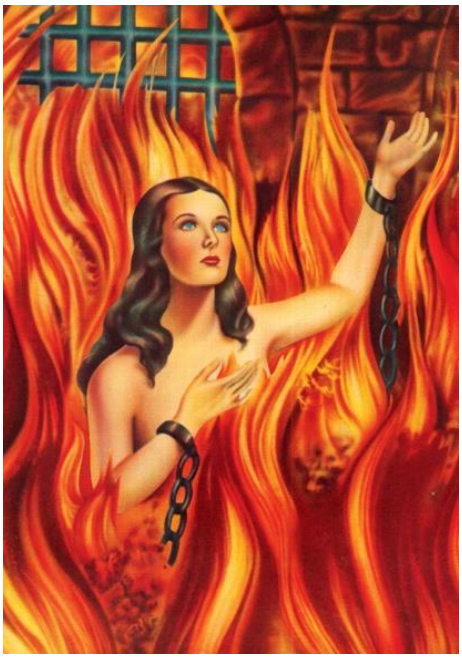
[89] This appellation might have been inspired by Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, a 13th century Sufi poet and philosopher, who was known for calling G-d his Lover.

[90] The exact translation of this: *la* means *there is no*, *ilaha* stands for *G-d* and *ilallah* for *except Allah.* There is no god except Allah, which is the first creed of Shahada.

as a lonely “bride” represented by the character of Joan of Arc, while the bridegroom is the “flame” pursuing her. The flame is, of course, G-d and the similar motif can be found in Christian mystical poetry. The soul also stands for the Virgin described earlier who resists to come into union with Her lover.

In a poem from the collection *The Energy of Slaves* (1972) Cohen acknowledges that he is “the ghost of Joan of Arc” (32) and hints at the possibility that the soul described is his own. Therefore, he acknowledges that the Virgin is a part of his being, concretely his psyche. In addition, on the back cover of his first album *Songs of Leonard Cohen* (1967), there is a picture of her engulfed in flames.

Ira Nadel says that Cohen found this picture as a postcard in a Mexican magic store and felt that he was this woman looking for an escape from “the chains of materiality” (154-155). The Christian concept of *anima sola*, a soul burning in purgatory and waiting for salvation is quite apt for this description. Therefore, the song portrays a purifying annihilation in the arms of the Lord represented by the flame.



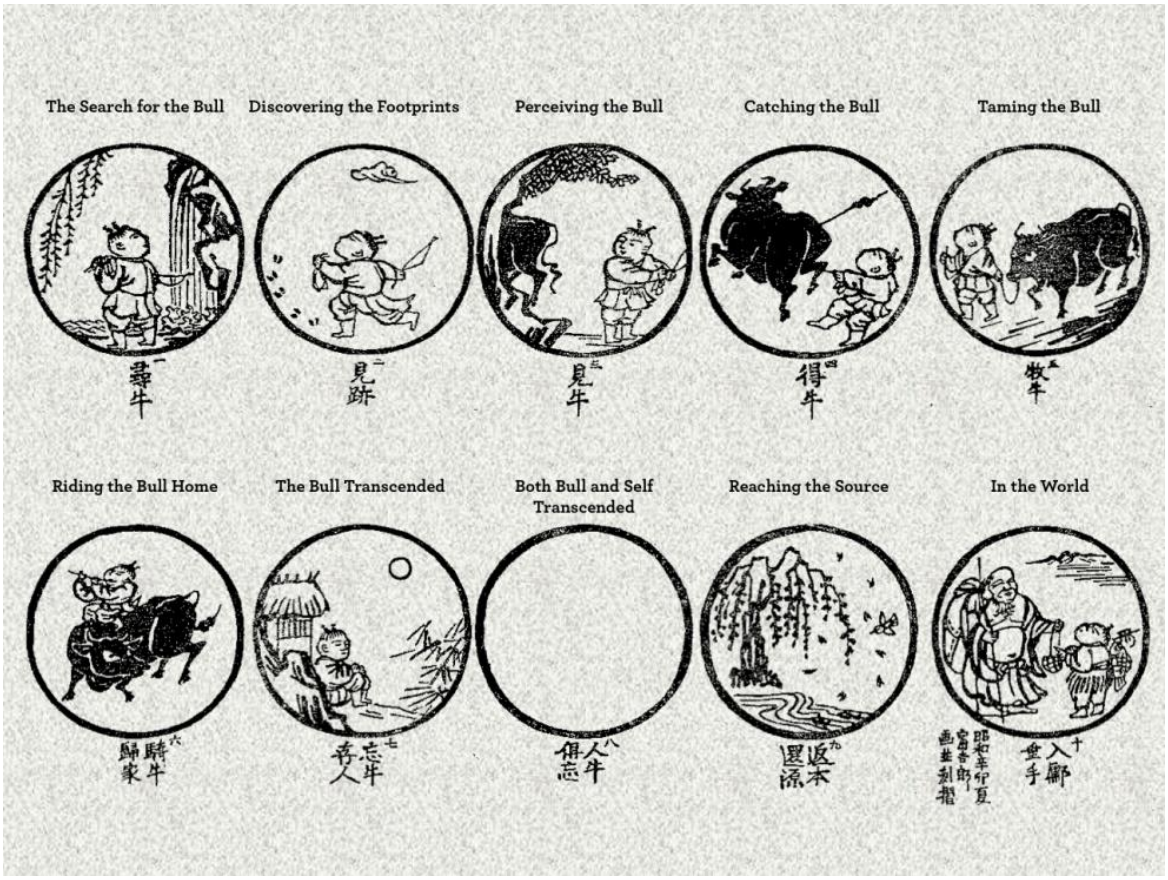
The motif of flame consummation is well known in the Kabbalah as it is an element “which transmutes forms to a higher level” and serves as a purgatory means (Knight 167). The flames are following the heroine who is riding through darkness.

Joan of Arc, the Virgin, is tired of the war, in other words, she is tired of living a solitary life seen as a kind of warfare against love. Now She is longing for “a wedding dress or

something white / to wear upon [her] swollen appetite." Her solitude and pride are to be abandoned before the Great Union will take place and out of which only ashes will remain.

Another song portraying the union in such a way is the song "Ballad of the Absent Mare" (*Recent Songs* 1979). There the union between the King and his Queen (Shekhinah), or between a man and his woman, or the soul and its body, or the masculine and feminine poles of our psyche, is depicted as between the Cowboy and his Mare. The song employs Cohen's syncretism at his best as Jewish symbolism collides with his Zen practice and other religious and mythical motifs.

Ira Nadel made us aware of the fact that the journey which the Cowboy undertakes to find his mare follows to some extent an old Chinese text "Ten-Ox Herding Pictures" (Nadel 225-226), which illustrates ten stages of self-realization in the Zen practice (Shigematsu 26).



Ten Bulls. Woodcuts by Tokuriki Tomikichiro (1902 - 1999), (rpt. in Shigematsu 6-23).

The seeker is an everyman trying to find his true self through taming the bull. The most important of the series is the eighth picture in which the tamer and the bull both disappear in their union. However, Cohen, instead of keeping the image of a bull, uses a mare for his song lyrics (another symbol of the soul) and brings it to an idyllic American setting.

Unlike the first picture in the "Ten-Ox" series in which the bull is wandering the plains and cannot be tamed, Cohen signals that the cowboy once kept the mare close to him and is about to depart to find her again and thus realise his complete *self*. The Cowboy, King, or simply the masculine principle in the song could be described as Fire as in the song "Joan of Arc." The horse, in the same fashion as Joan, is again being followed, she is close to him only "a minute away." The Cowboy is injured and being punished, which leads him to an incessant search, suffering, and solitude. Then suddenly the song describes that the mare is getting tamer. She even stands "there where the light and the darkness divide," which hints at the union of the conscious with the unconscious self. Their union takes place outside of space and time. The biblical echo is offered by Cohen quoting Ruth who expresses her devotion to her mother-in-law by saying: "Whither thou goest / I will go" (KJV, Ruth 1:16). But unlike the song "Joan of Arc" which does not speak about the length of the union, the singer indicates here that this union will be temporal, which is one of Cohen's most consistent statements.

The other song that portrays this divine union as only momentary is, for instance, "Boogie Street" (*Ten New Songs* 2001) in whose first verses Cohen sings: "O Crown of Light, O Darkened One, / I never thought we'd meet. / You kiss my lips, / and then it's done: I'm back on Boogie Street."

The name of the street has nothing particular about itself, although the word "boogie" evokes an idea of the fast movement (including sexual act), or a type of a dance we saw with regard to the song "Lover, Lover, Lover." Cohen's use of Kabbalistic symbolism is to be seen in the description of "O Crown of Light, O Darkened One" which resembles the highest sephirah *Keter* or *Crown*. In Kabbalah, this highest sephirah is the manifestation of the infinite, boundless, or Ein Sof (Azriel of Gerona qtd. in Matt 29).

Eliot Wolfson assumes that the singer depicts a state after being unexpectedly struck by "the primordial light so bright that it glistens in the radiance of its darkness" ("New Jerusalem" 135). This carries connotations of the revelation of light in the Kabbalah which springs out from its hiding place and is only to be seen thanks to its "concealing and clothing itself" (Moses ben Jacob Cordovero qtd. in Matt 91). Cohen invites us to accept this love, even if it is for a brief moment.

Another song which portrays the hungry soul is "The Window" from the album *Recent Songs* (1979). In the introduction to the song on German TV in 1979, Cohen said that the song is "a kind of prayer to bring two part of the soul together" ("The Window"). It speaks of a spiritual journey of the soul in three stages: solitude, suffering and the final union and employs the combination of Jewish, Sufi and Christian symbolism.

Why do you stand by the window
Abandoned to beauty and pride
The thorn of the night in your bosom
The spear of the age in your side

The soul depicted is in the state between two worlds: the primordial darkness of creation and the secular world. The window thus symbolises the threshold between two worlds wherein the soul lingers in order to experience the holy union. She is further described as "lost in the rages of fragrance," which implies a ceremony, such as the Havdalah Ceremony performed in the end of the Sabbath, which is concluded by the smelling of fragrant spices in remembrance of the Sabbath Spirit. The soul is suffering on account of the abandonment of the Divine / Holy Spirit or, perhaps, of an extra Sabbath soul *Neshamah yeteirah*.

The Christian imagery appears in the description of the thorn in her bosom, which may echo Jesus' Crown of Thorns and "The spear of the age in [her] side" which reminds of the Roman soldier piercing the side of Christ. The body is thus depicted as the outer manifestation of the soul and her suffering is compared to the suffering of Christ before being resurrected. The singer then pleads in the chorus the Saviour to come and gentle this suffering soul:

O chosen love, O frozen love
O tangle of matter and ghost.
O darling of angels, demons and saints
and the whole broken-hearted host—
Gentle this soul.

The Saviour's love is portrayed as "frozen" which probably hints at the fact that the soul has not received any love from the Virgin.[91] The Messiah is described as "a tangle of matter and ghost," but the verse could be transcribed as "a tangle of the flesh and soul," which points to the fact that he is an ordinary human being. "The whole-broken hearted host" may stand for the bread eaten during the Communion, or, perhaps, the Saviour is a real host inviting his guests to his table as described in the song "The Guests" (*Recent Songs*, 1979).

[91] Other songs which speak of the "frozen" love are: "The Avalanche" (*Songs of Love and Hate* 1971) or the song "So Long, Marianne" (*Songs of Leonard Cohen* 1967), in which the singer pleads the feminine character for not loving him since he cannot receive divine love.

The following stanza is an invocation for the soul's ascent from the bodily confinement, which enables it a more advanced form of existence:

> And come forth from the cloud of unknowing
> and kiss the cheek of the moon;
> the New Jerusalem glowing [the code of solitude broken]
> why tarry all night in the ruin? [why tarry confused and alone?]
> And leave no word of discomfort,
> and leave no observer to mourn,
> but climb on your tears and be silent
> like a rose on its ladder of thorns.

The "cloud of unknowing" is a clear reference to a 14th century book of Christian mysticism. According to Doron Cohen, "The book recommends not to seek God through knowledge, but rather through 'naked intent' and 'true love'" (14).

The "cloud" suggests an ordinary experience of the world which is to be abandoned, while the phrase "kiss the cheek of the moon" seems to be referring to the ascent and union with the lunar feminine side. "The New Jerusalem glowing" symbolises the union of the soul with the First Principle (the Lord) and its complete annihilation. The reference could also imply that this "New Jerusalem" is the fulfilment of the covenant that manifests itself in one's heart. The Book of Revelation says: "And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from G-d out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" (NLT 21:2). So this "Jerusalem" might stand for a purified soul that is to descend on the Earth. In a complementary verse appearing in Cohen's *Stranger Music* collection, the "New Jerusalem" is exchanged for the word "solitude," which means that the solitude such as that lived by "Joan of Arc" is to be abandoned in order that love may be consummated (299).

The soul is urged to climb on its suffering like a rose which climbs on its thorns before it blooms.[92] The thorn in the poem symbolises human experience that actually paves the way for the higher ascent and the appearance of the bloom.

The "rose" symbolism in Christianity represents the drops of Christ's blood. Its contemporary notion stands obviously for passion and the fire of love. It stands for life and death as it implies annihilation in love and re-birth, however, the rose in the song is the symbol

[92] Rose is a very common symbol in Persian poetry standing for Paradise and love (Baldock 142).

of soul as the last stanza reveals. The descending of the soul is described as its rebirth: "the word being made into flesh."

> Then lay your rose on the fire;
> the fire give up to the sun;
> the sun give over to splendour
> in the arms of the High Holy One
> For the holy one dreams of a letter,
> dreams of a letter's death —
> oh bless the continuous stutter
> of the word being made into flesh.

The blossom of this fire signifies that the soul has already gone through the period of solitude and longing and obeys the instruction to give herself up to the fire like in the song "Joan of Arc." Therefore, the whole song might be described as the instruction of the soul not to linger in the worldly realm but to ascend into the arms of the High Holy One, which echoes the Kabbalah once again. The rest of the stanza indicates that the purified soul will be returned back into the flesh. That is why "the continuous stutter" is mentioned. This process is never ending and the love for G-d triggers continuous rebirth. Rūmī, a medieval Persian Sufi mystic whom Cohen studied, comments on this by saying:

> In the slaughter house of love, they kill
> only the best, none of the weak or deformed.
> Don't run away from this dying.
> Whoever's not killed for love is dead meat.[93]

Love is the prerogative of "the best," not of "the weak or deformed." The Sufis encourage us that everyone should strive to die for love. Other songs in which Cohen uses the idea of a *window* and occasionally of a rose are: "So Long Marianne;" "The Stranger Song;" "Master Song;" "Stories of the Street" (*Songs of Leonard Cohen*, 1968); "Tonight Will Be Fine" (*Songs from a Room*, 1969); "Tower of Song" (*I'm Your Man*, 1988) and "Love Itself" (*Ten New Songs*, 2001). The rose is also humorously described in a text "The Rose:"

[93] Translated by Coleman Barks. See Barks 270.

> I never greet the rose and I never ask it to represent an idea or a woman. […] Then there is the wound like a rose. This is a particularly nauseating conception. The rose-wound. The petals are made of blood and the energy is made of pain. One of these dwells under my white shirt (*Death of a Lady's Man* 119-120).

However, the greatest portrayal of desire for love, which makes the union with the soul possible, came in the collection of psalms *Book of Mercy* (1984). The Psalm III reveals Cohen's longing to approach his own soul that is singing against him.

> I heard my soul singing behind a leaf, plucked the leaf, but then I heard it singing behind a veil. I tore the veil, but then I heard it singing behind a wall. I broke the wall, and I heard my soul singing against me. I built up the wall, mended the curtain, but I could not put back the leaf. I held it in my hand and I heard my soul singing mightily against me. This is what it's like to study without a friend.

The fact that the singer feels being abandoned or without love is revealed by the last sentence saying that he is studying "without a friend," perhaps, without the Divine "Friend."

In Psalm XVII, he addresses G-d with these words: "How strangely you prepare this soul," which says that he is in total loneliness before any union could take place. Psalm XLI portrays the singer's longing to receive divine love, which would start the ascent of his soul: "Bind me to you, I fall away. Bind me, ease of my heart, bind me to your love. […] And you say, I am in this heart, I and my name are here."

Divine Love and Mysticism

The above portrayal of the ascent of the soul in order to be purified is a Kabbalistic motif. In the Sephirotic Tree, such a liberation is the outcome of reaching Da'at, a point in which other sephirots unite or merge. This level makes the human soul, still perceiving itself as a soul, to receive the Divine Spark and lead it to the most profound state of existence.

> Da'at is the highest point of awareness of the human soul regarded as a soul (or in other terminologies Higher Self, Evolutionary Self, etc.) for awareness of the supernal levels can only be possible to the Spirit or Divine Spark itself. It is the gateway to what is called Nirvana in the East, and thus represents the point where a soul has reached the full stature of its evolutionary

> development, has attained perfect free will and can make the choice between going on to further evolution in other spheres or remaining to assist in the planetary Hierarchy (Knight 102).

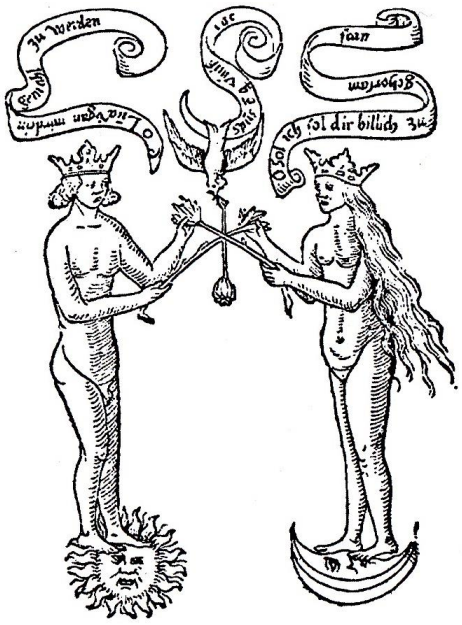
Eliot R. Wolfson quotes in his essay "New Jerusalem Glowing: Songs and Poems of Leonard Cohen in a Kabbalistic Key," Robert Charles Zaehner, who describes the path of the mystic and his soul as a bride which is annihilated in love of her Lord. The soul in such a state of existence is, according to Zaehner, very much aware of its feminine nature:

> Zaehner describes the soul of the mystic in relation to the divine as the bride who passively receives from the masculine potency of God. The soul recognizes its 'essential feminity' in relation to God, for in her receptivity, she is annihilated, which serves [. . .] as a paradigm of the mystical union whereby the autonomy of self is negated in the absorption of the soul in the oneness of being. Zaehner remarks that in this state the soul of the mystic, limited in his remarks to the male, is comparable to a 'virgin who falls violently in love and desires nothing so much as to be 'ravished', 'annihilated', and 'assimilated' into the beloved (Wolfson 132).

The completeness of the self was thus portrayed as a divine phenomenon, which resembles the alchemical process of transmutation of the human soul described in an alchemical tract called *Rosarium Philosophorum* published in Frankfurt in 1550, of which Cohen used one engraving as a front cover for his album *New Skin for the Old Ceremony,* 1974. The picture depicts the union between the King and his Queen (Shekhinah), or symbolically between a man and woman, or soul and body, or the two opposites, the masculine and feminine principles.

The whole tract contains 20 engravings and an accompanying text describing the process of spiritual transformation through the sexual union.

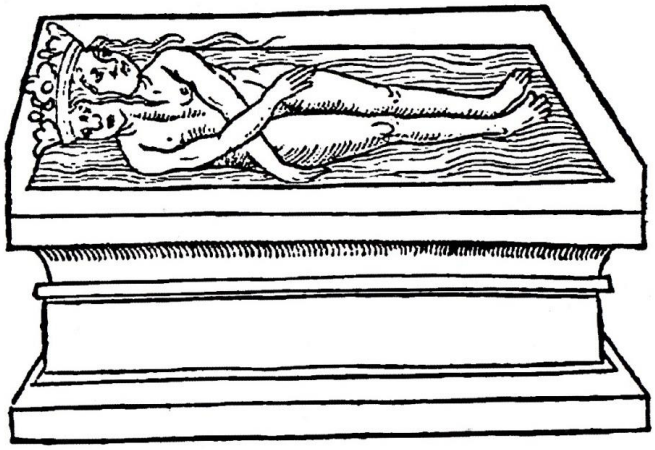
Milan Nakonečný, a Czech scholar, also claims that the act depicted aims to portray the union of opposites (*coniunctio oppositorum*) on the physical and also spiritual plane (Nakonečný 152). Moreover, the whole set of engravings describes the soul's transformation and the accomplishment of harmony between her and the body facilitated by the Holy Spirit, which represents a unifying symbol and might be seen for instance in the third picture of the series with the text above "Spiritus est qui unificat" (Nakonečný 159).



(rpt. in Nakonečný 159)

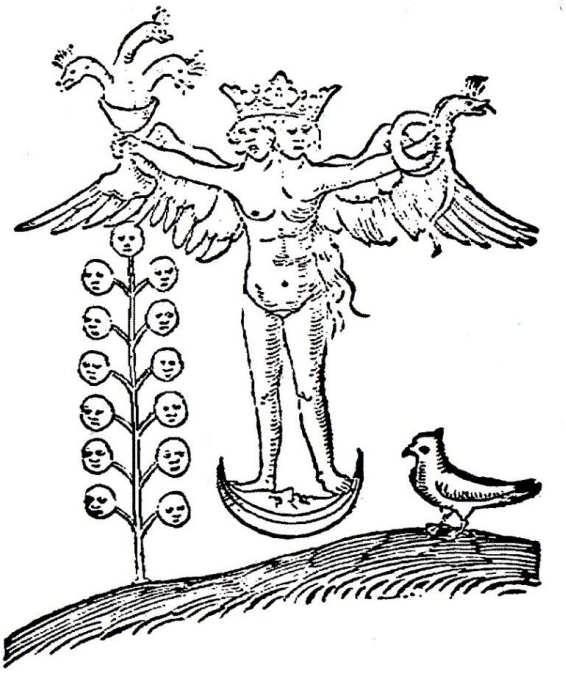
Paul D. MacLean, who is quoted in Nakonečný's book, describes *Rosarium philosphorum* in a similar fashion as portraying the process of a physical union; soul's separation; its purification; its subsequent re-union with the body and the restoration of harmony between the masculine and feminine divisions of a being (Nakonečný 153), which reminds us of "the New Jerusalem glowing" mentioned earlier.

The soul before qualifying itself to such a "process" is exposed to longing in which it, literally, putrefies. This is portrayed in the picture no. 6 of the series in which the soul is being prepared for dissolution and its rebirth. It is compared by Nakonečný to the "death" of a grain so that a wheat ear could develop (165).



(rpt. in Nakonečný 164)

The rebirth of the soul is portrayed in picture no. 10 described as *lapis philosophorum.*



(rpt. in Nakonečný 170)

Here, we may remember the notion of the invisible sephirah Da'at, which means that the soul at this stage, has reached the limits of its evolutionary possibilities. However, Cohen, by using the eleventh picture of the series, suggests that he wants to go further. According to Nakonečný, this continuation of the ascent of the soul symbolizes *transpersonal* love towards one's family, nation, or G-d (172).

As we may see the physical *coniunctio* does not take place in picture no. 11, which was used by Cohen, since the Queen does not allow the King to lie between her legs. *Eros* in the picture is transmuted into *agape*. Such a kind of love is the pre-condition to a more advanced union not only within one's self but also with the whole cosmos. Cohen's choice of this picture is a hint to show what his main objective is: to liberate the soul from her physical entrapment and merge it with the Creator. Not through the sex, however. This argument is most probable as far as, for instance, the conclusion of his novel *The Beautiful Losers* is concerned, in which the main protagonist "I" experiences a similar event: he literally *putrefies* on the spot and subsequently re-appears among the flashing frames of a film starring Ray Charles (Cohen 281-282).

Carl Gustav Jung analysed in his book *Psychologie der Übertragung* (1946) the first ten pictures in relation to his anima-animus theory stating that the convergence of the feminine and masculine divisions of the archetypal self is tremendously important for the inner development of an individual.. This fact leads us to comprehend the drama depicted in Cohen's songs, such as in "Joan of Arc" since it has psychological, cosmic and religious overtones.

Profane Love: Love as Between a Man and Woman

The various shades of love portrayed by Cohen have for ultimate goal: to reach divine union for which he prepares in solitude, repentance or prayer. Nevertheless, when he can no longer observe them, he takes avail of the physical union with a feminine character, which, as we have seen, has the same potential to purify the soul.

Cohen made a confession at Key Arena in Seattle, WA in 2012 when introducing the song "Ain't No Cure for Love" that sexual desire has been always winning him over:

> I studied religious values. I actually bound myself to the mast of non-attachment, but the storms of desire snapped my bounds like a spoon through noodles.[94]

"Ain't No Cure for Love" (*I'm Your Man* 1988) is a song that was inspired by the spread of AIDS in 1980s. The story goes that Jenifer Warnes was walking with Cohen one day around his neighbourhood and they were discussing the fact that people will not stop making love to one another. Cohen ended the conversation by saying that "there ain't no cure for love" meaning that there is no cure for people wanting to make love. Several weeks later he finished the lyrics and Warnes recorded the song for her album *Famous Blue Raincoat* in 1987 (Nadel 244).

The fact that it portrays longing for the woman, rather than for a divine concept / the Virgin, is supported by the following verses: "I see you in the subway and I see you on the bus / I see you lying down with me, I see you waking up / I see your hand, I see your hair / Your bracelets and your brush / And I call to you, I call to you / But I don't call soft enough." The feminine character to whom he addresses these words is unresponsive. Then he wanders to the church

[94] See Cohen, Leonard. *Ain't No Cure for Love*. N.d. *YouTube*. Web. 14 Apr. 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4R2-GlBd-c>.

and realises that his longing for the woman is of the same greatness as his longing for the Virgin.

Cohen sings that he longs for nakedness, not only of the body but also of the soul or spirit: "I'd love to see you naked / In your body and your thought" and refuses brotherly form attachment (*philos*): "I don't want your brother love / I want that other love" and repeats that he is not going to give up on his longing. The earlier version written for Jennifer Warnes portrays carnal longing to an even greater extent.[95]

Another song "Dance Me to the End of Love" (*Various Positions* 1984) describes not only the union of two lovers but also the union of masculine and feminine parts of our being. This is corroborated by the fact that there are two videos accompanying the song. The first video directed by Dominique Issermann in 1985 depicts, in a rather disconcerting manner, a woman who comes to the hospital to say the last goodbye to her male lover played by Cohen himself. Only a moment later, the ghost of a deceased lover pursues the woman through the song with his pleading voice until in the last part of the film she disappears behind a shroud. The song portrayed in this way represents the soul haunted by the fire as in the song "Joan of Arc." While this video emphasises the mystical union of soul and body, or the singer and his mind represented by the Virgin, the second piece made in 1994 promoting the live album *Leonard Cohen in Concert,* is concerned only with a sentimental depiction of romantic love.

Profane love, love that does not have any spiritual or religious connotations, is portrayed in the song "Closing Time" from the album *The Future* (1992). The song depicts a reverie in a country-like setting, with "Johnny Walker wisdom running high." The feminine character of the song, the only-sexualised Virgin, is described as the mistress who is "rubbing half the world against her thigh." The whole binge is going to lead to its end sooner or later but before it happens, Cohen sings: "all the women tear their blouses off / and the men they dance on the polka dots / and it's partner found and it's partner lost / and it's hell to pay when the fiddler stops / *It's closing time*." Each stanza ends with the symbolic "closing time" warning that this reverie is going to end soon since the sexual love that does not bring any spiritual fruit, is harmful to the humanity as whole.

The celebration of the union between two human lovers and their dissolution is also celebrated in the song "Hallelujah" (*Various Positions* 1984), which portrays this event as holy. This song confirms the supposition that the singer resorts to carnal union with the same result of experiencing dissolution of the self like through solitude and prayer. He confesses in the last

[95] Warnes, Jennifer. "Ain't No Cure for Love," *Famous Blue Raincoat.* Private Music, 1987. CD.

stanza that when he could not "feel"—feel the divine love—he had to "touch" the female body: "I did my best, it wasn't much / I couldn't feel, so I tried to touch."

Some of his poems illustrate that insatiable longing for the Lord leads the singer towards desire for the female body: "Last night I asked my brain / to put back into my loins / my love for you / Free at last I fell asleep / both of us naked and hungry / I am sure you willed me / the fullest audience with your body / on condition I die" (*Selected Poems* 235).

Cohen's Experience with Love

"I don't know a thing about love," such was Cohen's response when he was asked what he thought about love in 1973 in an interview with Pat Habron (Burger 50). However, as we have seen he has devoted all his life to writing about love and its complexities. In the song "Hey, That's No Way to Say Goodbye" (*Songs of Leonard Cohen* 1969), he compared it to a chain ("but let's not talk of love or chains and things we can't untie") and revealed his fear of love.

Cohen's deep disappointment about past human loves was unveiled in the song "Tonight Will Be Fine" (*Songs from a Room* 1969): "Sometimes I find I get to thinking of the past. / We swore to each other then that our love would surely last."

In the most recent songs, the singer doubts if he has ever been able to love someone as revealed for instance in the piece: "Did I Ever Love You?" (*Popular Problems,* 2014) in which he sings: "Did I ever love you / Did I ever need you / Did I ever fight you / Did I ever want to / Did I ever leave you / Was I ever able?"

Sometimes, he gets even to accusing the feminine character, some other god, or chimera of seducing him and leading him astray: "Crazy to Love You" (*Old Ideas,* 2012): "Had to go crazy to love you / You who were never the one."

Love is confined to longing as he sings in the song "Come Healing" (*Old Ideas,* 2012): "O solitude of longing / Where love has been confined." Moreover, he says that love—true love—does not leave any traces: "True love leaves no traces / If you and I are one / It's lost in our embraces / Like stars against the sun.[96]" Love, as a concept, is so great that it is "inhuman" as Cohen says in a poem from the collection *Book of Longing* (2006). These examples suggest that at certain moments Cohen believes that human love may mediate the union with the Divine but cannot be long-lasting.

[96] Cohen, Leonard. "True Love Leaves No Traces." *Death of a Ladies' Man. Warner Bros.* 1977. CD.

In an interview with the Spanish author and journalist Alberto Manzano in 1988, Cohen describes love as a divine power that hurts and makes one to sacrifice and bury his ego. According to Cohen, love is

> some divine balance at work—that if you experience love, you take a wound, that love and sacrifice are involved somehow one with the other, that the condition that most elevates us is the condition that most annihilates us, that somehow the destruction of the ego is involved with love. But once you submit yourself to this experience, you can never again feel at the center of your own drama, that somehow the heroic position has to fail here with love (rpt. in Burger 220).

In 1988, in another interview with Elizabeth Boleman-Herring, Cohen said that he never really fell in love until he met Dominique Issermann, a French photographer. However, as the following excerpt reveals, it may have been merely an infatuation with her and her work, which appealed to the singer:

> LC: It's finally happened . . . if by falling in love they mean that life becomes impossible to live and you hardly know how to get from one moment to another, and that you cannot entertain the idea of living without the approval and love of 'the object.' If that's what falling in love is, I know what's like.
>
> EBH: When did this happen?
>
> LC: A few months ago (rpt. in Burger 233).

Then, as the interview moves on, Cohen says that he fell in love only when he was fifty-two (rpt. in Burger 234). When interviewed in 1997 by Stina Lundberg Dabrowski, he commented that he was not able to reciprocate love of women earlier in his life (or perhaps until 1988?):

> SLD: In what ways have you experienced love in your life?
>
> LC: Oh, wonderful love . . . I had wonderful love but I did not give back wonderful love. There were people who loved me very, very deeply and very genuinely and I was unable to reply to their love.

SLD: Why?

LC: Because I was obsessed with some fictional sense of separation that I couldn't reach across the table for it. I couldn't reach across the bed. I couldn't reach across the moon. I couldn't reach across my song. I couldn't reach and touch the thing that was being offered me. It was being offered me everywhere and it is always being offered everyone. It is offered at all times, at all moments, and we create a fictional barrier, we succumb to a fictional disease, and we buy into a fictional separation from the thing we want the most, which is a sense of ourselves and a sense of being at home with ourselves[97] (rpt. in Burger 419).

SLD: What is love to you?

LC: Love is that activity that makes the power of man and woman . . . that incorporates it into your own heart, where you can embody man and woman, when you can embody hell and heaven, when you can reconcile and . . . when man and woman becomes your content and you become her content, that's love. That as I understand is love—that's the mechanics (rpt. in Burger 420).

This above says love is the force that makes the person complete or whole. Without distinguishing between divine and profane forms of love (as between people), he indirectly suggest that it is any form of love that enables the person to unify two polarities.

Conclusion

Leonard Cohen portrays the receiving of divine love through solitude and prayer or the sexual act. Love is seen as a means to weld two opposites together. It cannot be distinguished for being sacred, or profane according to the singer: love is profane and sacred at once and it has the same effect if received in solitude and prayer or in the climax of a sexual union.

[97] In 2001 in an interview with Elena Pita, Cohen repeated the same thoughts, being unable to accept love earlier in his career. "And it was not that I could not find love, but that I could not accept love, because I did not know how. Perhaps the breakup [with Marianne] was an element in that depression, but I really knew where my depressive condition came from, but it had to do with an isolation of myself. It has been the force, the determinant mechanism that made me adapt this attitude in life. I lived trying to avoid it, to escape it, to understand it, to handle it. It made me turn to drink, it pushed me to drugs, and it led me to Zen" (rpt. in Burger 478).

Love portrayed by Cohen uses motifs shaped by his knowledge of the Kabbalah, Christian mysticism, Sufism and Zen Buddhism. The same motifs were shaped by the mystical branches of the Abrahamic religions and used by the Occitan and Andalusian poets. The reader may now return back and, with the knowledge of Cohen's work, re-read the work of the medieval poets. The literary character of the Virgin in their poetry shares certain features of

the Jewish notion of Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary and the feminine appellation of the One as it appears in Sufism. The poets relate to this divine character in a language of religious worship. Ultimately, they regard the union with it as the Highest goal of their religious and literary aspirations.

VII. LEONARD COHEN THE PRIEST OF A CATACOMB RELIGION

The following chapter deals with the religious and spiritual nature of the singer. It focuses on the poet / prophet as a speaker of the divine word. While the gift of prophecy is a very marginal matter among poets of every generation, those who obtained the gift have been the most important voices of our culture(s). Such as Leonard Cohen, who reveals, or some may suggest, often stylizes himself into the role of a biblical prophet or a priest.

The Jewish community had objections to Cohen's literary works, especially, in the 1960s since he honored values at odds with the common religious practices. Therefore, he decided to become the partisan of a catacomb religion *in which he merged the roles of the priest and prophet together. This experiment crystallized in his later work and may be seen as an achievement of high spiritual and artistic merit.*

Summoned by G-d

The Torah, or, in a broad sense, the Old Testament often speaks about prophets whose words were inspired by G-d. G-d in these texts usually speaks by Himself or through his messengers / prophets and reveals His intentions to *the* people. In the book of Deuteronomy, He says: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (*King James Version*, Deut. 18:18). Therefore, G-d needs prophets to voice His commands. There are other claims in the Old Testament that support this, for instance, King David before he died said that his words, and subsequently his acts, were inspired by the Lord: "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2).

Other prophets such as Isaiah knew very well that these inspired words could have a direct effect upon their listeners: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). Therefore, this word must return back to the speaker in a way similar to the seed which returns to the soil when being ripe. However, one should be aware of the pronoun "I" because the person directed by the Lord is no longer him or herself when

speaking. Such a person could be better characterized as a medium free from their own self as it was the case with the female oracles in Delphi or Dodona.[98]

The Spirit is believed to dwell within the poet / prophet and may easily abandon him such as in the case of the King Saul: "the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him" (1 Sam. 16:14). The Noble Qur'an also speaks about the messengers / prophets being sent by G-d: "Already has Our Word / Been passed before (this) / To Our Servants sent (by Us)" (*The Holy Qur'an*, 37:171).

The prophets have often expressed their thoughts in poetry as the Old and New Testaments and the Noble Qur'an affirm. While the majority of poets cannot claim any prophetic gift, they express their thoughts as truly inspired "messengers" due to their erudition or well developed ability to imitate. For this reason, the development of our Western poetry may be seen as divided into two branches: while the first one includes biblical prophets like King David, Solomon, Isaiah and all those who expressed G-d's commands in verses, the other branch of our European tradition seems to have been based more on erudition and the ability to imitate.

The best of our poets have been often inspired by Eastern thoughts and prophecy in general. Their intellectual work, and yet, the lack of the prophetic gift makes their works to reach high artistic merits. The following chapter tries to find whether Leonard Cohen can be rightfully called a prophet, or an imitator in such a way as described.

Leonard Cohen, The Prophet

Earlier in his career, Leonard Cohen claimed a prophetic gift and said openly that his songs were inspired. In an interview with Jack Hafferkamp from *Rolling Stone* magazine, printed in the late 1970, Cohen claimed that he was an "instrument for certain kinds of information:"

> Look . . . the songs are inspired. I don't pretend to be a guide. I do pretend to be an instrument for certain kinds of information at certain moments. Not all moments, and it has nothing to do with me as a guy. I may be a perfect scoundrel. . . . As a matter of fact, I am . . . just like the guy on the scene. But there are moments when I am the instrument for certain kinds of information (rpt. in Burger 22).

[98] A good research in this field was done by Marguerite Rigoglioso. See Rigoglioso, *The Cult of Divine Birth in Ancient Greece.*

A striking similarity with the biblical prophets is obvious. However, the greatest revelation of Cohen's intention, or better to say position, comes as early as in 1964 in his speech called "Loneliness and History: A Speech Before the Jewish Public Library[99]" presented as a defense of the Jewish-Canadian poet A.M. Klein (1909 – 1972).[100] When commenting on Klein's oeuvre, Cohen said that he was often disturbed by Klein's usage of the pronoun "we" in places where he would expect the pronoun "I" (Fournier 146-147). This play with pronouns clearly suggests that Klein stylized himself into the role of the speaker of the community – the priest – which somehow disturbed the young Cohen who was not voicing the thoughts of individual people but a universal message about the state of humanity.

The functions of the priest and the prophet differ. While the first one speaks as a representative of the community and therefore uses the pronoun "we," the prophet, comes as an individual and addresses the community with the pronoun "I." He is entrusted by G-d to speak as His messenger. The manifestation of these thoughts appeared in Cohen's song "You Know Who I Am," which refers to the passage from the Book of Exodus in which G-d urges Moses to address the children of Israel under the name "I AM WHO I AM" (Exod. 3:14) and which reveals that Cohen played the role of the prophet in this song.

He says that the community "is marked with the fossils of the original energy" and that it has always had a priest as its representative to maintain "the fossils" (Fournier 150). Unfortunately, according to Cohen, "Klein chose to be a priest though it was as prophet that we needed him, as a prophet he needed us and needed himself" (Fournier 147).

The prophet has been always unwelcome to in the community since he is far closer to the original idea and far closer to the original community than the today's community is to itself. Cohen says that the prophet "continues to pursue the idea as it changes forms. […] He follows it into regions of danger, so that he becomes alone, and by his nature becomes unwelcome to the community" (Fournier 150). Prophet is then forced to live on the margin of society looking for the "original idea" of G-d and his influence upon the world. For this reason, Cohen stated that "the God worshipped in our synagogues is a hideous distortion of a supreme idea – and deserves to be attacked and destroyed" (Fournier 153), which must have provoked many of the defenders of "the fossil."

[99] The speech is reprinted in Fournier and Norris 143-53.

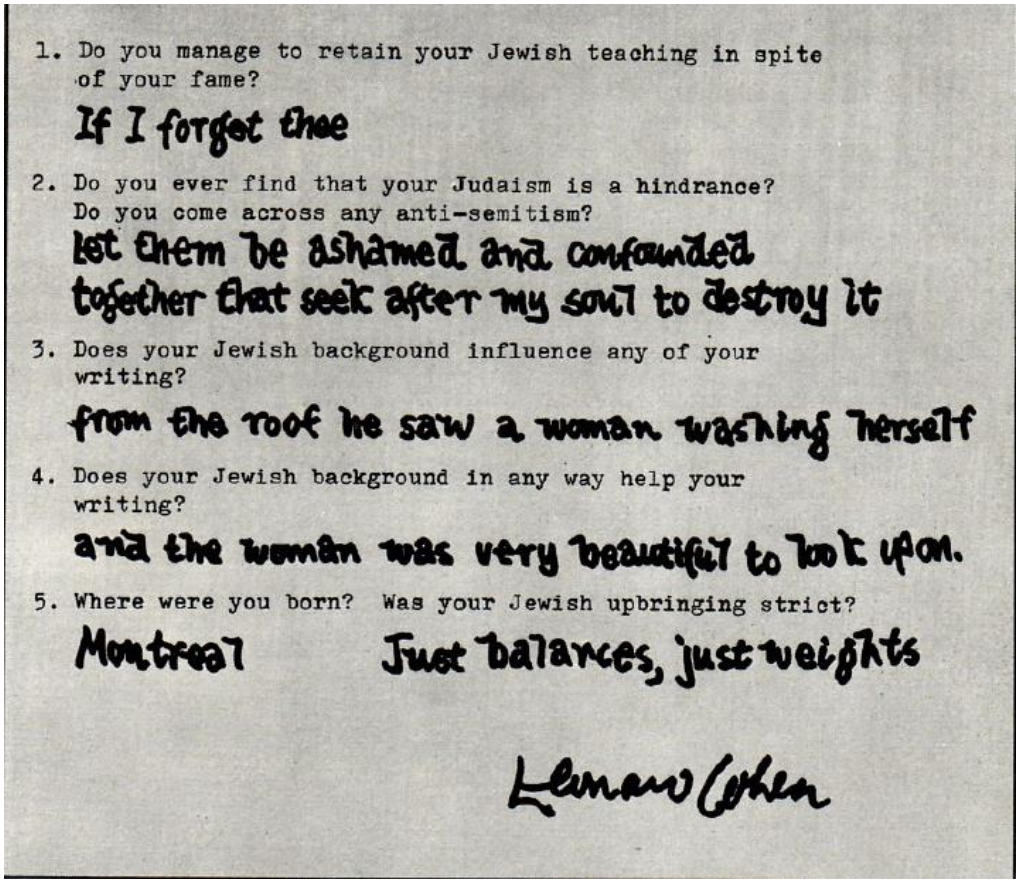
[100]Cohen had already devoted a poem to A.M. Klein in his collection *The Spice-Box of Earth* (1961) before the speech. See p.29. Much later he recorded this poem for his album *Dear Heather* (2004).

Cohen has been shifting from one extreme to another throughout his career when his poetry had distinctly prophetic qualities (such as when being totally divested of his persona and voicing divinely inspired messages) or when he consciously performed his priestly office. He believed that in the beginning, when the religion was established, people could hold both functions of the priest and the prophet at once but these two functions later, inevitably, differentiated.

> I believe that at the beginning of an idea, each of the men who hold it is both a prophet and a priest, but that as the energy of the idea diminishes it, the functions of priest and prophet tend to differentiate and soon no one man can perform both offices (Fournier 149-150).

Cohen saw Klein as a prophet striving to be a priest. Earlier, in 1961 Cohen published a poem "To a Teacher" in the collection *The Spice-Box of Earth* (39) in which he expressed his admiration for the old teacher who by then had fallen into silence and had been confined to asylum. He revealed that Klein was a prophet, closer to Eden than anyone else and that he was willing to become one of these men. Ultimately, such a person considers himself as the personification of the Messiah according to Cohen who says that Klein regarded himself as a "messiah in the mirror." He also called Klein his "teacher" and claimed that he "entered under [the same] dark roof," which could well signify that he transformed himself into the same kind of person.

Cohen's statements (not only those in the speech and the poem) were questioned by the Montreal Jewish community which could not accept Cohen's views. Therefore, they publicly questioned him on his beliefs. In an interview reprinted in the songbook accompanying his album *Song's of Love and Hate* (1971), there is a short questionnaire (originally printed in *the Jewish Telegraph*) interrogating Cohen on his Jewishness. It is supplemented by the commentary of several psychotherapists and a Dr. Judah J. Slotki, a then Director of the Central Hebrew Board. Cohen shows his deep knowledge of the Torah and also the scope of his synthetic thinking:



1. Do you manage to retain your Jewish teaching in spite of your fame?

If I forget thee

2. Do you ever find that your Judaism is a hindrance? Do you come across any anti-semitism?

let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it

3. Does your Jewish background influence any of your writing?

from the roof he saw a woman washing herself

4. Does your Jewish background in any way help your writing?

and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

5. Where were you born? Was your Jewish upbringing strict?

Montreal Just balances, just weights

Leonard Cohen

Cohen finds a fascinating way to give his answers through the words of the Tanakh. He does not only confirm that he is respectful of the tradition but also understands the history of the prophets and their deeds. As far as the first question is concerned, the answer is taken from Psalm 137:5. The full quotation is: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning" (KJV), or "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget how to play the harp" (NLT). As if saying that his Jewishness cannot be forgotten, otherwise his music abilities would be gone. With regard to the second answer, the verse comes from Psalm 35:4 in which King David begs G-d for help against his enemies. Dr. Slotki comments that "this could certainly be applied to Jewish identity" (*Songs of Love and Hate* 11). The third response relates to 2 Samuel 11:2 referring to David glimpsing Bathsheba bathing from the roof of his palace. Another psychotherapist says that the woman represents Cohen's "Jewish youth and his Jewish background" (*Songs of Love and Hate* 11). I do not understand how this fact could be inferred but I would rather relate this to sexuality and lust permeating the Tanakh and ultimately Cohen's work, with regard to the Virgin about which I wrote in the previous chapters. The last quotation comes straightforwardly from Moses' mouth in Leviticus 19:36 wherein he was lying down commandments concerning justice and proper behavior to the Israelites.

Twenty-seven years later after his "Loneliness and History: A Speech before the Jewish Public Library," Cohen was interviewed by Winfried Siemerling on his previous statements. The interview took place in 1990 and is again reprinted in the book *Take This Waltz* by Michael Fournier and Ken Norris. Cohen had changed his views by then and acknowledged that he could no longer attack the community and that he preferred to uphold it since it is more fragile than he understood earlier.

> Community is a lot more fragile than I understood then, and a lot more valuable, and to undertake the defence of a community is a high call and in no sense a betrayal of a personal destiny. That is more my position today, I would say. But I was a young man then, confronting, I suppose the same problems as A.M. Klein, but choosing a radically different path than A.M. Klein had chosen (Fournier 157).

However, the feeling that he is an outcast from the Jewish community permeates even his latest poetry. The following poem appeared in 2006 in the collection of poems *Book of Longing:*

> Anyone who says
> I'm not a Jew
> is not a Jew.
> I am very sorry
> but this decision
> is final (158)

As we know, some biblical prophets are generally regarded to be poets. Such as King David, Solomon or Isaiah. Cohen himself acknowledged the oracular function in artists: "Well, I think that there is an oracular function in any artist. In other words, generally if he's good, he's working on a level that is better than he knows and better than himself" (rpt. in Burger 433). The prophet is an instrument of G-d rather than a person concerned about his immediate needs. Since Judaism, Christianity and Islam venerate the same prophets (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Aaron, Miriam, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Ezekiel) whose deeds do not differ in the respective religious books, I will present a few instances of the function of a poet / prophet in the Old Testament and Qur'an.

David's Psalm 105:15 explicitly says that the Lord orders not to touch the prophets or do any harm to them: "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm" (KJV). However,

the community living from "fossils" of the old religion has always pushed the prophets out of their ranks and despised them. The Surah Ash-Shu'ara' ("The Chapter of the Poets") 26:16 in the Qur'an describes G-d advising Moses and Aaron how they should present themselves to Pharaoh: "We have been sent / By the Lord and Cherished of the World." While Pharaoh and his advisers think that these apostles were mad: "'Truly Your apostle who has been sent to you is a veritable madman!'" (26:27). This description is not so much different from the Old Testament description of the visit of Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh described in Exodus 7-10.

However, these messengers were often treated as liars by the community.[101] The Qur'anic chapter, Mecca 23:44 ("The Chapter of Believers") describes how the prophets have been always attacked by violent crowds for being liars. They were described in "The Chapter of the Poets" too, which says that evil descends upon every sinful liar and an *uninspired* poet:

> 221. Shall I inform you, (o people!), on whom it is that the evil ones descend?
> 222. They descend on every lying, wicked person,
> 223. (Into whose ears) they pour hearsay vanities, and most of them are liars.
> 224. And the Poets,—it is those straying in Evil, who follow them:
> 225. Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley?—
> 226. And that they say what they practise not?—
> 227. Except those [poets] who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of God, and defend themselves only after they are unjustly attacked. And soon will the unjust assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take!

The uninspired poets / imitators / fakers are the enemies of the community and the servants of evil. Cohen portrays how it feels to be condemned by the community in the song "Singer Must Die" (*New Skin for the Old Ceremony* 1974). The song speaks about a courtroom in which he is put on trial for his words. He is accused of being a traitor and is awaiting his death. The singer addresses the tribunal as "the keepers of truth" and "guardians of beauty" and sings: "Your vision is right, my vision is wrong, / I'm sorry for smudging the air with my song." In the prologue to the song in Hanover on November 11th, 1979, Cohen explained that he had felt "being on trial." Not only the trial held by the community but by our closest family and friends:

[101] See, for instance, the Surah Ash-Shu'ara 26:185-189, which reveals deep disdain for the messengers of G-d among the people of Al-Aïka.

> This next song I wrote from the feeling of being on trial – everyone is on trial. In every living-room there's a trial going on, in every bedroom there's a trial going on, not just in the courtrooms, not just in the jails, but in the most private places of our lives, yeah we subject each other to judgement and to trial ("Diamonds in the Lines: Leonard Cohen in His Own Live Words").

Cohen stylizes himself into the role of the prophet also in his latest album *Popular Problems* (2014) without distinguishing to which religion he belongs. In the song "Nevermind," there appears a female voice singing the word "Salaam" on three occasions,[102] which is used for greeting in the Arab world and advised by G-d Himself.[103] By presenting biblical references and suggestions to the tradition of the prophets, Cohen pays respect to the Abrahamic religions without giving priority to any of them.

The song from the same album "Almost like the Blues" is in many respects the confirmation of the prophet provoking the community by attacking "the fossil" when he sings "there is no G-d in Heaven / And there is no Hell below" which is not so much blasphemy as an acknowledgement that G-d lingers within. The lyrics go "So says the great professor / Of all there is to know," which sounds like boasting but then he sings "I've had the invitation / That a sinner can't refuse," which is a statement that once for all confirms that Cohen sings from the position of a prophet.

Notes above the line:

Leonard Cohen has always regarded the three Abrahamic religions in unity. Both books, the Bible and Qur'an speak about "the other" as about brethren. Everyone with a basic knowledge in this field knows that Isaac and Ishmael were brothers. It was stated in Genesis 16:12 that Ishmael (إسماعيل), a patriarch of the Arabs, would not have an easy life: "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." With a little ingenuity, we may say that he is predestined

[102] This word meaning "peace" in Arabic was sung by Donna de Lory (*1964), a Californian based singer-songwriter who did Madonna's backup singing during her tours and recording albums from 1985 to 2007. She is a close collaborator with Patrick Leonard, the producer of Cohen's latest albums, *Old Ideas* (2012) and *Popular Problems* (2014).

[103] G-d directs the believers to address themselves with the word "Salaam" in Qur'an. See, for instance "The Chapter of Cattle" 6:54.

to live in presence of the Jews and Christians on constant alert. The "Book of Genesis" also specifies his coordinates when saying that he "dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren" (Gen. 25:18).

Mohammad, as a follower of Ishmael, may have been already mentioned in the Old Testament. When G-d chose prophets "from among their brethren" (Deut. 18:18). He did not specify if these would come from the line of Isaac or Ishmael. In addition, Leonard Cohen blesses Ishmael in his collection of psalms *Book of Mercy* (1984). In Psalm no. 14, Cohen writes: "Blessed be Ishmael, who taught us how to cover ourselves. […] Blessed be Ishmael for all time, who covered his face with the wilderness, and came to you in darkness.[104]" In Psalm no. 27, Cohen criticizes the modern state of Israel and praises Ishmael's persistence (the persistence of the Muslims?): "Ishmael, who was saved in the wilderness, and given shade in the desert, and a deadly treasure under you: has Mercy made you wise? Will Ishmael declare, We are in debt forever?"

2) We may see a constant shift in Cohen's work between being an "instrument" and being a solitary "priest." The song "Death of a Ladies' Man" from the album *Death of a Ladies' Man* (1979) suggests that his solitude is caused by sexual union:

> She beckoned to the sentry of his high religious mood
> She said, "I'll make a place between my legs,
> I'll show you solitude"

What else could be the outcome of the carnal act than solitude? Does Leonard Cohen become a priest when being abandoned by G-d?

Leonard Cohen, The Priest

Already in 1967 in the interview "After the Wipeout, a Renewal" with Sandra Djwa, Leonard Cohen said that he was living in his own "capsule" as a priest:

[104]The psalm even offers an explanation on whom Ishmael was: "Ishmael, first son of Abraham and his hand-maid Hagar, is traditionally considered the father of the Arab nation."

> Everybody has a sense that they are in their own capsule and the one that I have always been in, for want of a better word, is that of cantor—a priest of a catacomb religion that is underground, just beginning, and I am one of the many singers, one of the many priests, not by any means a high priest, but one of the creators of the liturgy that will create the church (rpt. in Burger 11).

The name Cohen means "priest" in Hebrew. All Cohens are believed to be the descendants of Moses' brother Aaron, the First High Priest of Israelites. While Moses is more of a prophet, Aaron is the priest. The priest differs from the prophet, both are intermediaries between G-d and his people but while the prophet interprets G-d's will, the priest interprets the wishes of the people and offers oblations. The line of priests in Judaism started earlier with Adam when he and Eve were given "garments" (Gen. 3:21). Judaism elaborated on this story and defined Adam as the first priest who passed his priestly garments to his third son Seth (Schwartz 101). A similar legend is offered in Numbers 20:23-28 where Moses strips Aaron of his garments and passes them on to his son Eleazar, which signifies that the function of a Jewish priest is inherited.

Leonard Cohen confirms this in the poem "Lines from my Grandfather's Journal" from the collection of poems *The Spice-Box of Earth* (1961):

> All my family were priests, from Aaron to my father. It was my honour to close the eyes of my famous teacher.[105]
>
> Prayer makes speech a ceremony. To observe this ritual in the absence of arks, altars, a listening sky: this is a rich discipline.
>
> I stare dumbfounded at the trees. I imagine the scar in a thousand crowned letters. Let me never speak casually (63).

It is the prayer which "makes speech a ceremony." The priest may establish the connection with the Lord through his prayers. The prayer has, according to Joscelyn Godwin, the potential to reawaken the original archetype or "idea" through the inbreathing of the Holy Spirit or *spiritus*, which is "the breadth of the archetype: that is the element of Memory" (77). Theoretically speaking, this *spiritus* could enable the priest to feel that his words are heard by G-d.

[105] Cohen refers to his maternal grandfather Rabbi Solomon Klinitsky-Klein.

The Lord is believed in the Qur'an to be listening to all the prayers addressed to Him: "I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me" (Surah 2:186). Hadith Qudsi no. 51, from the book of sacred sayings of the Prophet, reveals Allah saying: "I am with My slave when he remembers Me and moves his lips (with remembrance)" (Masood-ul-Hasan 64).

The fact that prayer could make a supplicant to obtain the gift of prophecy has always been exploited by martyrs or mystics who added to it interesting and sometimes even sadistic methods to attain prophetic heights. To name but a few, medieval Christian mystics whose shadows can be seen in the work of Leonard Cohen: San Francesco d'Assisi (1182 - 1226), from the English tradition: Richard Rolle of Hampole (1290 – 1349) whose works were more popular in the 14th than those of Geoffrey Chaucer;[106] Walter Hilton (1340 – 1396) and Julian of Norwich (1342 – c. 1416). Furthermore, in Cohen's work, there are references to the book *Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous work which could be described as a manual on how to get rid of one's ego (14th century). Other medieval mystics also shadow the work of Cohen, such as Hildegard von Bingen (1098 – 1179) from Germany or Juan de la Cruz (1542 – 1591) or Kateri Tekakwitha (1656 – 1680) who is so vividly portrayed in Cohen's book *Beautiful Losers* (1966).

The young Cohen, must have been struggling with this urge to become a priest against very business-oriented family interests. He started criticizing his family openly as early as in 1957 when he described his uncle, father and cousins in the poem "Priests 1957" as sad and unhappy people consoling themselves with materialism. It is suggested in the poem that they have resigned on their inherited priestly duties:

> Beside the brassworks my uncle grows sad,
> discharging men to meet the various crises.
> He is disturbed by greatness
> and may write a book.
> My father died among old sewing machines,
> echo of bridges and water in his hand.
> I have his leather books now
> and startle at each uncut page.
> Cousins in the factory are unhappy.
> Adjustment is difficult, they are told.
> One is consoled with a new Pontiac,

[106] See Rolle 33.

one escapes with Bach and the folk-singers.
Must we find all work prosaic
because our grandfather built an early synagogue?

(*The Spice-Box of Earth* 78)

In his first novel *The Favourite Game* (1963), which is more or less considered to be autobiographical, the main character Lawrence Breavman described his family in similar terms: he blames them for losing faith and observing the religious ceremonies only in name:

> Uncles, why do you look so confident when you pray? Is it because you know the words? When the curtains of the Holy Ark are drawn apart and gold-crowned Torah scrolls revealed, and all the men of the altar wear white clothes, why don't your eyes let go of the ritual, why don't you succumb to raving epilepsy? Why are your confessions so easy? (77)

His disenchantment is portrayed in another passage of the same novel in which he criticizes his uncles for the money and prestige, which was their only interest.

> He had thought that his tall uncles in their dark clothes were princes of an elite brotherhood. He had thought the synagogue was their house of purification. He had thought that their businesses were realms of feudal benevolence. But he had grown to understand that none of them even pretended to these things. They were proud of their financial and communal success. They liked to be first, to be respected, to sit close to the altar, to be called up to lift the scrolls. They weren't pledged to any other idea. They did not believe their blood was consecrated.[…] They did not seem to realize how fragile the ceremony was. They participated in it blindly, as if it would last forever. They did not seem to realize how important they were, not self-important, but important to the incantation, the altar, the ritual. They were ignorant of the craft of devotion. They were merely devoted. They never thought how close the ceremony was to chaos. Their nobility was insecure because it rested on inheritance and not moment-to-moment creation in the face of annihilation (140-141).

The business-like family, which is no longer following the line of priests and prophets, according to Cohen, carries on its back a long history of religious devotion. Cohen's Canadian ancestry might be traced back to the Jewish immigration from Lithuania in the 19th century. Lazarus Cohen, Leonard's paternal great-grandfather, came to Ontario as early as in 1869 and

finally settled in Montreal in 1883. From being a man of letters and a rabbi he soon changed his profession and became a successful entrepreneur running a business in brass founding and the president of W. R. Cuthbert & Company (Nadel 9). His eldest son Lyon Cohen, Leonard's grandfather was also in the line of business and established the first Jewish paper in Canada, *The Jewish Times*. Moreover, he became the president of the largest Canadian congregation *Shaar Hashomayim* and the founder of Freedman Company, one time the biggest Canadian clothing manufacturer. He instilled Leonard Cohen's father Nathan with the necessity of observing *mitzvot* and broadening the knowledge of the Tanakh. Nathan Cohen was a respected businessman who stood as an important source of inspiration for the young poet (Nadel 11).

Leonard Cohen's maternal ancestry in Canada might be dated back to a rabbi Solomon Klinitsky-Klein, who was a respected scholar and often called "HaDikduki," or "the Prince of Grammarians" for his work *A Treasury of Rabbinic Interpretations*. He escaped pogroms in Lithuania by immigrating to England. Later, in 1923 he moved to Canada with his family. He frequently corresponded with Lyon Cohen who helped him to settle down in the new country. In 1927, his daughter Masha married Nathan Cohen (Nadel 8). Leonard Cohen was born a few years later in 1934. Cohen's mother is said to be in sharp contrast to his father, who was, according to Nadel's writing, very conservative, strict and hardworking. The mother, on the other hand, was "melancholic, emotional, romantic and vital" (Nadel 8). Moreover, Nadel claims that "she was quite musical and often sang European folksongs in Russian and Yiddish around the house" (8), which might have inspired the young son. As regards the family, the poet must have searched the way to escape materialism and pursue the original "religious" interests. Many years of fierce attacks by the poet lead against the contemporary Jewish community—not only in Montreal, his native city—but worldwide followed.

In 1994 in an interview with Arthur Kurzweil, Cohen acknowledged that he stylized himself into the priest when he was young:

> I wanted to *live* this world. When I read the Psalms or when they lift up the Torah, "Etz chayim hi l'mah chazikim bah." [*Literally, 'It is a tree of life for those who grasp it.' This verse is sung as part of the response from a congregation upon seeing the raised Torah scroll.*] That kind of thing sent a chill down my back. I wanted to be that one who lifted up the Torah. I wanted to say that. I wanted to be in that position. When they told me I was a Kohayn, I believed it. I didn't think this was some auxiliary information. I believed. I wanted to wear white clothes, and to go into the Holy of Holies, and to negotiate with the deepest resources of my soul. So I took the whole thing seriously. I was this little kid, and whatever they told me in these matters,

> it resonated. I wanted to be that figure who sang, 'This is a Tree of Life; all that you hold on to.' So I tried to be that. I tried to become that. That world seemed open to me. And I was able to become that (rpt. in Burger 383).

The above excerpt proves that Cohen has been aware of his responsibilities concerning religion. The passage also shows his erudition when he mentions the white clothes since the ancient priests wore white garments (*bigdei lavan*) upon entering "the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement" (Wolfson 147). Cohen's work often suggests that the role of the priest would suit him well but there is a constant incertitude in his poems, especially, in 1960s when it seems that he is wavering between accepting the role of the speaker of the community and the prophet. A poem from the *Parasites of Heaven* (1966) may illustrate this supposition:

> I am a priest of God
> I walk down the road
> with my pockets in my hand
> Sometimes I'm bad
> then sometimes I'm very good
> I believe that I believe
> everything I should
> I like to hear you say
> when you dance with head rolling
> upon a silver tray[107]
> that I am a priest of God
> I thought I was doing 100 other things
> but I was a priest of God
> I loved 100 women
> never told the same lie twice
> I said O Christ you're selfish
> but I shared my bread and rice
> I heard my voice tell the crowd
> that I was alone and a priest of God
> making me so empty
> that even now in 1966
> I'm not sure I'm a priest of God (68).

The book *Parasites of Heaven* is an interesting collection which maps both facets of Leonard Cohen, both as a priest and a prophet. The collection is permeated by humorous, sometimes even childish, rhymes portraying Cohen's changeability:

> Leonard hasn't been the same
> since he wandered from his name (33).

[107] A clear reference to Salome dancing with the head of John the Baptist one the silver plate. For the full biblical account see: Matt. 14:1-12 or Mark 6:14-27.

Wandering "from his name" clearly says "wandering from his priestly responsibilities" or, perhaps, from his origins. An interesting notion concerning the priest is offered in the song "Priests" which was written by Cohen and recorded by Judy Collins for her album *Wildflowers* in 1967.[108] The singer mourns the fact that when becoming the "lord" he will not be able to write love songs. He would lose his priesthood, and perhaps, achieve the final stage in his spiritual development. His priests will worship the woman's body as "some little highway shrine." However, in their acting, they are malicious to the shrine, and, in the end, make it only a "fossil."[109]

The relationship between such a "lord" and his complementary feminine polarity addressed in this song is portrayed already in Cohen's first collection of poems *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956). His view of love has always resembled the relation between the Virgin Mary and Christ who are implicit in the following song:

> The naked weeping girl
> is thinking of my name
> turning my bronze name
> over and over
> with the thousand fingers
> of her body
> anointing her shoulders
> with the remembered odour of my skin (34).

Leonard Cohen Between

The above analysis shows Cohen as a person who is between two poles. Once he stylizes into the role of the prophet while at other times into the role of the priest. Then we have a Cohen

[108] The song was further recorded by Richie Havens on his album *1983* in 1969 and by Enrique Morente in 1996. Cohen has never performed this song in public. Dorman and Rawlins say that "It's title and contents are so close to him that one wonders if there were not other reasons [for not playing the song]. (He astutely side-stepped our question on this!) Clearly set in Greece, where highway shrines are more regular than milestones, at which the dead are honoured publicly, it dramatises Leonard's more self-indulgent side in a soliloquy of hope and caring concerning himself and his beloved." Loranne Dorman and Clive Rawlins. *Leonard Cohen: Prophet of the Heart*. (London: Omnibus, 1990), 201.

[109] The text is reprinted in Dorman and Rawlins 201.

who says that he "became a bad priest" suggesting that he was not the speaker of the community but the speaker of his own ego-centric desires and the one who would be condemned as a liar according to the aforementioned chapters from the Qur'an. In an interview with Elizabeth Boleman-Herring in 1988, Cohen commented on his inheritance:

> EBH: Why didn't you carry on your family tradition?
> LC: I did.
> EBH: You became a 'priest'?
> LC: I became a bad priest.
> EBH: There's no such thing as a bad priest.
> LC: That's what Graham Green thought[110] (rpt. in Burger 229).

Then there is a humble Cohen who says that he has no "biblical ambitions." In an interview from 1993 with Alberto Manzano, which was printed in *El Europeo* the same year, Cohen claims, moreover, that that his life is shaped by other greater forces than he could command:

> I don't have any biblical ambitions and I know that whatever life I'm leading is beyond the control of my personality, beyond the direction of my intentions. I think as you get older you understand that you're in the grip of forces that are greater than the ones you believe you are commanding. Whatever role you tend to be living is fueled, it's running on its own, an energy with its own motion. So I don't pretend to emulate a prophet and I don't pretend to emulate one that's not a prophet. I just go to where the energy is in my own landscape (rpt. in Burger 319).

Then we have Cohen, the singing priest addressing Solomon whom he begs for consolation:

> When I hear you sing
> Solomon
> animal throat, eyes beaming
> sex and wisdom
> My hands ache from

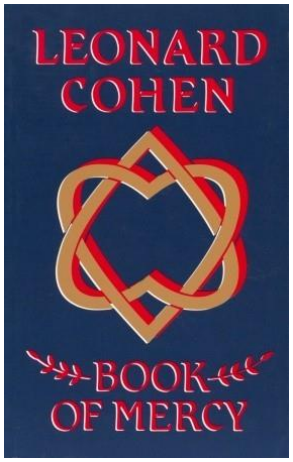
[110] The reference is to Graham Green's book *The Power and the Glory* (1940) in which the main character, a cowardly "whisky priest" tries to restore his dignity. The book was criticised by the Vatican for harming priesthood as such. See, for instance, the article on BBC: "Vatican's Bid to Censure Graham Greene." BBC News. BBC, 03 Nov. 2000. Web. 18 Mar. 2015. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1005484.stm>.

I left blood on the doors of my home
Solomon
I am very alone from aiming songs
at God for
I thought that beside me there was no one
Solomon (*Parasites of Heaven* 41).

The ancient myths often portrayed the poet as a musician accompanied by an instrument that served as a carrier of the divine word. Let us remember King David's playing to the king Saul in order to soothe his strained nerves (1 Sam. 16:14-23) who stands as the early paradigm of troubadour poetry.

The Priest of Love

Cohen created the "Order of the Unified Heart" in order to express his position on the unification of both good and evil, masculine and feminine polarities and opposing forces in all spheres imaginable. The symbol is represented by the Star of David made out of two intertwined hearts. These hearts are opposites to each other. The motif appeared on the cover of the collection of Psalms *Book of Mercy* (1984):



The two hearts are in mutual dependence as described in the song "Come Healing" in the album *Old Ideas* (2012): "The Heart beneath is teaching / To the broken Heart above." The unity of opposites is the state which ends all disharmony. Cohen has also developed the symbol of the two intertwined hearts as the main focus of the Priestly Blessing. The picture below of his seal contains, moreover, the word Shin, which is the twenty-first word of the Semitic alphabet. In

translation: “teeth” or “press” or “sharp.” It also represents another name for G-d, Shaddai. Shin is formed by the priest’s hands when giving Priestly Blessing and, moreover, it symbolizes the ventricles of the heart – the Throne of the Lord.

Merchandise accompanying Cohen’s 2012 world tour

Conclusion

Cohen’s words, lyrics, poems, novels are well-accepted, appreciated and even worshipped nowadays. Between the years 2008 and 2013 he did 470 shows in 31 countries which attracted around 4 million fans. Moreover, he received the most important prizes for his literary and music achievement. In 2008, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the same year he received the title of the Grand Officer of the National Order of Quebec. In 2010, he received a Grammy Award for Lifetime Achievement, the same year, he was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. In the next year, 2011, he received the Prince of Asturias Award for Literature in Spain, which is the highest literary award in the country. In 2012, he received the Inaugural PEN Award for Song Lyrics of Literary Excellence and in 2013, it was the Juno Award for being the Artist of the Year. His latest prize, Juno Award, for the Album of the Year was given for his latest album *Popular Problems* (2014). All this testifies that he has become an important member of the music industry and a well-respected littérateur.

The singer must have gained securer footing recently as far as the Jewish community is concerned, since he decided to perform Priestly Blessing (*birkat kohanim*) officially on 24th

September 2009 at the Ramat Gan[111] concert in Israel to the audience of around 50.000 spectators.[112] In Numbers 6:23-27, his predecessors, concretely Aaron and his sons, were instructed to bless the community with the following words:

> May the LORD bless you and guard you –
> יְבָרֶכְךָ יהוה, וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ
>
> May the LORD make His face shed light upon you and be gracious unto you –
> יָאֵר יהוה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וִיחֻנֶּךָּ
>
> May the LORD lift up His face unto you and give you peace
> יִשָּׂא יהוה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וְיָשֵׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם

And so did Leonard Cohen accompanied by a roaring applause and emotional cries of the Israel community. With this blessing, he proved, once and for all, that he has not abandoned his priestly responsibilities and added them to his prophetic role. Earlier, in 1964, when he commented on the oeuvre of A.M. Klein, he claimed that it was impossible to make their fusion. Forty-five years later, he proved that he was a priest and prophet at once.

[111] A city close to Tel Aviv and included in Tel Aviv District.

[112] For the full report see: Nathan Jeffay, "'Hallelujah' in Tel Aviv: Leonard Cohen Energizes Diverse Crowd." The Jewish Daily Forward. N.p., 25 Sept. 2009. Web. 20 Mar. 2015. <http://forward.com/articles/115181/hallelujah-in-tel-aviv-leonard-cohen-energizes-di/>. The video of the blessing may be seen on YouTube: *Leonard Cohen Finale in Israel - Priestly Blessing*. Perf. Leonard Cohen. N.p., 29 Sept. 2009. Web. 20 Mar. 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4imJ7wWB9FU>.

CONCLUSION

My songs are kind of bleak, but underlying the whole dismal affair is actually a tiny thread of light. I studied religious values. I actually bound myself to the mast of non-attachment, but the storms of desire snapped my bounds like a spoon through noodles. In any case, FRIENDS, you know as well as I, there ain't no cure for love...

The thesis traced the significance of the medieval troubadour poetry that played such an important role for the Anglo-American modernists and manifests itself in the work of the contemporary author. Leonard Cohen has been put for comparison with his Occitan predecessors in order to highlight the significance of their poetry and see to what extent he follows upon their work. The thesis also dealt with the medieval Andalusian love poetry in order to highlight its similarities with the troubadour poetry and claims that the medieval European poetry was not only shaped by Jewish and Christian doctrines but also by Islam. The reflections of this literature and culture makes itself visible in Cohen's work as well.

The last two chapters made a digression from the primary focus on the Occitan and Andalusian literature in contrast with the work of Cohen and, instead, dealt with the phenomenon of love, evil and religion in his work. In these last chapters, I portrayed the influence of the religious literature upon the singer and how it shaped the concepts that he inherited from his medieval predecessors. The reader may use this knowledge to re-read the work of the Occitan and Andalusian medieval poets since they were studying the same texts like Cohen.

It was in 12th century France, where the first mystics, the Cathars as well as the Kabbalist, commenced their work and it was in the 13th century Spain where the book of *Zohar* appeared / was revealed and made accessible to the Sephardic mystics and Muslim authors, concretely to Sufis, and widely studied in general by the Occitan and Andalusian poets. These sources were studied by Cohen some eight hundred years later. Considering this fact, we are not surprised to see how little has changed, how the poets still deal with the same feelings, although in different historical contexts, and describe love in the same way how they have been doing since the time immemorial through the means of religion and philosophy, which find their source in the innermost depths of our beings.

We saw that love in Cohen's work was not only love towards women but also to the divine feminine and the relation between the poet and this divine concept presents a parallel with the Virgin and her Son who come into union during *hieros gamos,* or the coupling of gods, which when taken as a psychological phenomenon, brings unity within one's self and with the whole cosmos. This was also portrayed as the unifying theme between the medieval lyrics and the contemporary work of Cohen.

The worship of the feminine character in troubadour poetry and in the poetry of Leonard Cohen carries many religious implications. It is not a coincidence that many of the troubadour poets ended up in monastery or became priests as their *vidas,* anonymous biographies, describe. Leonard Cohen, who has spent dozens of years in the Zen Monastery resembles medieval poets such as Monge de Montaudon (fl. 1193 – 1210) whose *vida* speaks of a man of a voracious appetite for food and women who towards the end of his life became secluded in his priory of Montaudon, which he governed. Bernart de Ventadour (c. 1130 – c. 1190), who was writing about the duality of the Virgin, entered a monastery towards the end of his life and became completely secluded from society. Bertran de Born (c. 1140 – 1215) became a monk of the Cistercian abbey of Dalon at Sainte-Trie after he was widowed for the second time. A great womanizer Folquet de Marselha (1150 – 1231) is known for renouncing worldly pleasures and becoming a Cistercian monk in the monastery of Thoronet. In 1205 he was even elected a Bishop of Toulouse.[113]

Cohen was ordained as a Buddhist monk in 1994 at the Zen Buddhist centre at Mount Baldy near Los Angeles and since that time he has been following a modest life and has tried to pacify his carnal desires. He said that the Zen Monastery "seems to be able to provide a landscape where Jewish practitioners can manifest their deepest appetites concerning the absolute" (rpt. in Burger 376). A conversation with his friend Jarkko Arjatsalo in 2013 in Helsinki revealed some information about his life and diet: a modest portion of rice, frequent recourse to prayer, the need for solitude. His last world-wide tour taking place between 2008 and 2013 was marked by a religious atmosphere and his performance in the O2 Arena in Prague on 21st of July 2013 resembled a spiritual session rather than a music concert.

I believe that the main merit of this thesis is that it refers back to the literary tradition and that it is the first work on Leonard Cohen that puts him in contrast with his predecessors and presents literary contexts in which his work is rooted. I hope that it may inspire other writers

[113] A good review of these troubadours completed by their *vidas* may be found in the book: Lemaître, Jean-Loup. *Les Troubadours et l'église*.

to embark upon similar projects regarding other important singer-songwriters, especially, those knowledgeable ones of the music of their ancestors.

The books published on Cohen so far, have been mostly dealing with his biography, which is, well, interesting but lacks the investigation of the thematic of his work. Rather, they resort to interviewing his friends. The new books thus contain newer and newer biographical data, which only add to the story of the Cohen, the man.

The main conclusion to be drawn is that Leonard Cohen is the 21st century troubadour, he follows the main precepts of the medieval Occitan and Andalusian love poetry and also draws upon the biblical motifs like his predecessors. In this respect, he leans towards the mystical teachings and heresy like the mystical sects. Ultimately, his life resembles the troubadours in his seclusion and penchant for prayer. In the course of my research, I discovered that Leonard Cohen is not isolated in his efforts and output. The accompanying study of Mediterranean contemporary music revealed other authors who were drawing on the same cultural heritage. To name a few, in Italy, we find Fabrizio de André (1940 – 1999) who was working with the same thematic as Cohen and the troubadours. The French tradition accommodated Georges Brassens (1921 – 1981) whose ballads also contain the thematic and form of the medieval poems, not speaking of his origins in the troubadour land of Sète. In Spain, the folkloric tradition drawing on the medieval Andalusian poetry is most spread, supported and celebrated in *flamenco*. Its representatives such as Enrique Morente (1942 – 2010) whose cantos resemble the antique tradition with the flavour of modernity are exactly in line with the modernist precepts. In Portugal, we discover a phenomenal Amália Rodrigues (1920 – 1999) who recorded modern *fado* as well as medieval lyrics *cantigas de amigo.*

Of course, the above authors are not the only representatives of the greatest singer-songwriters of the contemporary era, each of the countries of the Mediterranean has its own ones who feel, quite naturally, the need to uphold the tradition and maintain the best of their culture.

The thesis could have been expanded in several possible directions. At first, it could have analysed the Kabbalistic motifs in his poetry and compare them with the Cathar influences of the troubadour poetry. It could have spoken about the Virgin of Judaism, which is the feminine aspect of G-d known as Shekhinah. However, I already devoted my BA and MA theses to this topic when studying at the university of Ostrava. Therefore, I refer a potential reader to the university archives.[114]

[114] See the Bibliography for particular references.

As usual, my work prepares the ground for further research which will continue by investigating medieval Arabic and Persian poetry and its influence upon the troubadours and Anglo-American popular culture and literature in general. At the same time, I am interested about how much the Anglo-American modernist poets actually knew of the Arabic and Persian literatures and how much these literatures influenced their works. I will also continue to trace the manifestation of the troubadour motifs in popular music and especially search for the manifestation of the medieval Andalusian poetry in flamenco, which also influenced Cohen.

In the course of writing this thesis, many of Pound's observations came to my mind. Reading poems that are almost a thousand of years old and still modern, still topical, I came to understand what Pound meant when he said that "all ages are contemporaneous." Literary motifs never grow old, we may see the characters who do, but a literary motif is always fresh, always contemporary, always in force and its not necessary who writes about love or in which time since love in literature is always the same, we use only different means, different techniques, forms and structure to describes its nuances. Therefore, we may live the 11th century story in 21st century and feel everything what the medieval authors did.

In contemporary works of art, we may see a certain naivety coming from romanticizing tendencies in which love for the feminine character does not have any colouring and is divested of spirituality or veneration. This literary decay seems to have commenced in the 19th century and the post-war years seem to be a fertile land in which these tendencies began to grow. Generally speaking, the utmost majority of contemporary popular lyrics is so simplistic and divested of spiritual, religious, philosophical, historical and poetic elements that they fail to become an important part of our history and literary tradition. Like the Occitan troubadours, many today's singer-songwriters suffer from loss, but they are afraid to probe the nature of this loss, as their predecessors did, by expanding their knowledge trough other works and thus ultimately improve their art.

The role of the critic is to put together the best of our culture and present it to his audience and by his strivings somehow cultivate humanity. According to Pound, the critic justifies his existence when he is able to compare individual artists and their works with one another:

> The critic, normally a bore and a nuisance, can justify his existence in one or more minor subordinate ways: he may dig out and focus attention upon matter of interest that would otherwise have passed without notice; he may, in the rare cases when he has any really general knowledge or 'perception of relations' (swift or other) locate his finds with regard to other literary inventions; he may, thirdly, or as you might say, conversely and as part and supplement

> of his activity, construct cloacae to carry off the waste matter, which stagnates about the real work, and which is continuously being heaped up and caused to stagnate by academic bodies, obese publishing houses, and combinations of both, such as the Oxford Press (Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, "Cavalcanti" 191).

I hope that my work enabled the reader to see the importance of the troubadour poetry and the importance of the literary tradition, which is the treasury of knowledge and the instrument of cultivation. May the study of poetry and our past cultivate ourselves and promote the best of our diverse cultures in order to come to terms with one another in mutual understanding and respect.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KJV *King James Version*

NLT *New Living Translation*