Shiraz University
Journal of *Poetry Studies*
Quarterly, ISSN: 2980-7751
Summer 2025

Extended Abstract

Vol 17, Issue 2, Summer 2025, Ser 64

Object Between Icon and Word: A Study of one of Mawlana's Ghazals in Connection with Aflaki's Report on it, based on Myth and Iconography

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Introduction

In *Manaqib al-Arifin*, Aflaki narrates a story about Gorji Khatun, a courtier and a disciple of Mawlana (Rumi). Because of travel and her distance from Mawlana, she asks the painter of her time to paint a portrait of Mawlana, to ease the pain of distance by looking at his image. But every time the painter paints a picture of Mawlana, he finds it different from the previous picture. Mawlana wrote the ghazal "How colorless and unmarked I am" in connection with this event.
Whenever the connection between literature and painting is discussed in research, it refers to the illustrations of the events of stories. But in this research, literature and painting have a dialectical relationship, along with the subject-object that constantly moves between these two realms, there are two sign systems or two discourses that are in opposition to each other. These events are received from Mawlana and Aflaki's reports, and they show a process that represents two different discourses.

Methodology

This research, with a descriptive and analytical approach based on mythology, iconography, and painting, examines and analyzes Mawlana's ghazal in conjunction with Aflaki's report. This analysis, while paying attention to the art and mythology of Iran, India and the Far East, makes use of the ideas of Jung, Corbin, Burckhardt, Genette, Foucault, as well as the discussion of super-ego in Mawlana's ghazal from Pournamdarian. Since part of the discussion is related to the history and origin of symbolic painting and the image of man in this period, which is presented in the form of a paratext (Aflaki's report) alongside Mawlana's words, these topics will also be addressed. The aim of the research is to draw a relationship between the three realms of literature, painting, and historical report, and to show how the discourses formed confront and combine in the interaction between Aflaki's report and Mawlana's ghazal.

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DOI: 10.22099/JBA.2025.51494.4577

Results and Discussion

In the confrontation of the three realms of literature, painting, and historical report, it can be said that Mawlana's ghazal is like a commentary on a painting and also the denial of those images. Mawlana considers the transcendental signifier to be inimitable. It is as if each image deconstructs the previous one. From this perspective, literature and painting represent a sliding subject-object relationship in a dialectical fashion, with two discourses that have different origins and cause a process of exclusion and combination in the three realms of language, painting, and historical report. This process is the result of two discourses that have an extratextual confrontation. The first discourse is related to the Gorji Khatoon who is looking for a portrait of Mawlana. This discourse is in favor of representation and has its roots in Christian iconography. And the second discourse is linked to Mawlana, who is against representation. On the one hand, this discourse is rooted in the ritual prohibition of images, and on the other hand, from a Sufi perspective, it considers the representation of the ideal human being as impossible. The fluid images in the painter's paintings also show that it is impossible to depict the body connected to the ideal human being. These two discourses reach a kind of correspondence in the realm of language. The first discourse, while distinguishing between the image, which has a physical aspect, and the icon, which is linked to an ideal aspect, transforms the icon into the word; and in the second discourse, the correspondence of man/language is formed. Language is not the body and skin for meaning, rather an idealized aspect of language that is timeless.

Conclusion

The results of the research show that in the three realms of literature, painting, historical reporting, and intratextual and extratextual confrontations, the structure of exclusion and combination prevails. Extratextual confrontations are based on two discourses, one (Gorji Khatun) believing in the representation of images and iconography, and the other (Mawlana) considering representation impossible. Intratextual contrasts, also, indicate a transition to a distinct state from contrasts. And finally, extra-textual confrontations with the transformation of icon into word in the first discourse and the formation of man-language in the second discourse, and in connection with that, intra-textual confrontations also enter the timeless common realm of language. Such combination and similarity are the result of the elimination and rejection of image, time, and language (as clothes and skin for meaning).

Keywords: Sonnets of Shams, Aflaki, iconography, mythology

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