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Universe - Man - Text; The Sufi concept of literature (with special reference to Malay Sufism)

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'If thou correctly readst thyself as thou dost read a scroll, Thou gainst eternity. Only the Spirit's true. The world's not true at all.'

Nizami, *Haft Paikar* [The Seven Belles]

It is almost superfluous nowadays to observe that literature, including that of the Middle Ages, is a specific 'world in words' created for communication with the reader/listener, that is, in order to produce a definite impact on him. That the perception of the nature of this verbal world and the interpretation of the nature and purposes of its impact were considerably different in medieval cultures from those in contemporary ones is another matter.

Below I shall consider the complex of literary concepts in one of the great literary traditions of the East – the tradition of Muslim mysticism, or Sufism –, investigating this complex in the context of the Sufi view of the world on the one hand, and of the Sufi view of man on the other. Of course, I am primarily interested in the concept of literature as it existed in the medieval Malay world. However, a sufficiently profound and exhaustive understanding of this is impossible in isolation from the doctrine of literature as elaborated by the Sufis of the Middle East, in particular in the Persian area.

A study of the concept of literature in the context of the Sufi view of the world and of man is impossible if one disregards the idea of analogy, or parallelism, between the macrocosm and the microcosm (man) that is so
characteristic of Sufism as well as many other medieval traditions. It is precisely the analysis and understanding of this idea that enables the scholar to grasp the essence of the Sufi concept of literature. I do not, of course, intend to make an all-embracing semantic, functional or historical study of the concept of macro-/microcosmic parallelism on the basis of an interpretation of both the Universe and man as multilevel physical-spiritual organisms, as quite enough work of this kind has already been done (see, for instance, Berthels 1970). However, a preliminary and tentative classification of the numerous types of expression of macro-/microcosmic parallelism will not be altogether out of place in the framework of this article. This classification is based on the following criteria:

**anthropoidness** (ascription of external human features) or **anthropomorphism** (ascription of structural human characteristics) in descriptions of the macrocosm;

**degree of abstraction** of descriptions, i.e., the prevalence in them of cosmologico-physical or ontologico-psycho-somatic aspects of reality;

**type of reduction** of descriptions (for instance, the use of the human face as representative of the macrocosm).

Among other forms of cosmo-/anthropogenesis, one finds an anthropoid representation of the creation of the cosmos in the Sufi tradition. The first thing that Allah creates here is the Light of Muhammad (*Nur Muhammad*), or Spirit, which is generally likened to a bird and yet, in the opinion of many commentators, is like a human being, with a head, hands, legs, a body, eyes, ears, etc. However, the reservation is then immediately made that all these organs are spiritual (*ruhani*), or luminous (*nurani*), or sublime (*'uluwwi*) - the same reservation that is made for the food and drink of the Spirit (Tujimah 1961:211-12). Subsequently, Allah gazes at the Light of Muhammad with the 'gaze of Majesty', causing the Light to perspire. Created from it then are all the elements of the Universe, including the angels, prophets, and people of various faiths (*Hikayat Syah Mardan*:66-7).

Passing from the quasi-mythological (the ‘myth’ of the Light of Muhammad; cf. the Indian myth of Puruṣa, the Chinese myth of P’ānku; see *Drevneindiyskaya* 1972:31-2; Yuan K’e 1987:34-5) concept of macro-/microcosmic parallelism to the more metaphysical ones, we can single out an intermediate anthropoid/anthropomorphic kind of expression of this correspondence. It stands out because of a weakened external anthropoidness coupled with an increased degree of abstraction in the representations of the macrocosm. In these representations an integral anthropoid image is replaced by a series of metaphorical analogies between individual elements of the Universe and of man. Series of macro-/microcosmic correspondences of this sort appear in the Arabico-Muslim tradition from at least the 10th century onward (see, for instance, 'Epistles of the Brothers of Purity', Bakhtiar 1976:105), and later played an important role in falsafah (philosophical), Ismailite and Sufi treatises. Thus, in the Sufi treatise *Mirat al-Muhaqqiqin* [The Mirror of Those Seeking the Truth], ascribed to the Persian Sufi poet
Mahmud Shabistari (died 1320), mountains are likened to bones, trees to the hair on the human head, and bushes and grass to the down on the human body. There are as many parts of the human body (the head, hands, legs, spine and belly) as the seven climatic zones (iklim) on earth. Just as there are 12 signs of the zodiac, so there are as many apertures in the human body. Just as the moon has 28 mansions, man has 28 nerves. The seven planets correspond to that same number of principal human organs, and so on (Berthels 1970:22-3).

In the above description, the system of macro-/microcosmic correspondences is presented in a relatively gross, external, cosmologico-physical form. Nevertheless, in Sufi anthropomorphic representations, descriptions which emphasize subtle, internal, ontologico-psychic-somatic qualities were predominant. A representation of this kind is found in, for instance, Ghazali’s (11th-century) doctrine of the hierarchy of three ontological ‘worlds’, viz. mulk, jabarut, and malakut. In the macrocosm, mulk is the sphere of the manifest, the corporal, and that which is perceivable by the senses, while malakut is the sphere of the non-manifest, the spiritual, and that which is not perceivable by the senses, and jabarut is the sphere of Divine Names connecting mulk and malakut. On the microcosmic level, mulk is the human body (flesh, bones, blood, etc.), malakut is the intellect and the essential human attributes (life, knowledge, will, etc.), and jabarut comprises the senses (sight, hearing, touch, etc.), serving as a link between the physical and spiritual spheres. Unlike Ghazali, the Sufis of the Ibn al-'Arabi school (wahdat al-wujud) termed the connecting sphere ‘malakut’ and the spiritual sphere ‘jabarut’. These they supplemented with a fourth, sublime world called ‘lahut’, the sphere of the Divine Essence, which they considered at the same time as the most profound reality of man (Johns 1957:75-6; Saeed Sheikh 1963:620; Bakhtiar 1976:13).

Along with complete kinds of anthropomorphic representations of the macrocosm, Sufi works include reduced versions of these. Thus, the macrocosm might correspond to the human heart as a substitute for and reduced form of the microcosm. The eye was another such reduced form. An elaborate doctrine of correspondences between various parts of the eye and the ontological spheres and psychosomatic planes is found in one Malay Sufi treatise. The white of the eye here is said to correspond to nasut (a conceptual synonym of mulk), the dark ring around the iris represents malakut (in Ibn al-'Arabi’s terms), and the iris itself is likened to jabarut, while the pupil of the eye is a metaphor for lahut (Nieuwenhuijze 1945:139). Finally, an important role was played in Sufi literature by the comparison of (parts of) the human face to various ontological planes of the macrocosm. A mole symbolized the Divine Essence in its transcendental aspect, the face itself corresponded to the Essence in its immanent aspect (i.e., the Essence with its attributes and names), the eyes and the lips represented attributes of Majesty and Beauty respectively, the down on the face corresponded to the first of the created worlds – the world of spirits –
and the curls or tresses to the plurality veiling the Unity, i.e., to the sensual world (Shabistari 1978:70-8).

The macrocosm and the microcosm, whose parallelism was represented in both a gross, cosmologico-corporal, and a more subtle, ontologico-psychico-somatic, form, derived their similarity also from being regarded as texts, in the direct meaning of the word, or, to be more exact, as two copies of one and the same text. For instance, the Sufi treatise by the Persian author Aziz Nasafi (13th to early 14th century), Zubdat al-Haqaiq [The Cream of Truths], is quite positive about this. Aziz Nasafi says that man (dervish) is a small world (microcosm), while the Universe is the great world (macrocosm), and thus develops the idea that the Lord created the Universe as a sign of His Being in the form of a book and subsequently said that anyone who read this book would know Him.

'We [humans - V.B.], continues the author, were too small and the Book was too great, and our sight could not see it in full – its margins and all its pages. The [Supreme] Teacher, seeing our weakness ..., diminished it in size. He called the first the great world, and the second the small world; He called the first the great (macrocosmic) book, and the second the small (microcosmic) book. Everything that the first book contained He inscribed in the second book, so that anyone who has read the smaller book could [by means of this act] read the great one [and could thus know God – V.B.]' (Shukurov 1989:70).

It is particularly important to note that the Qur’an, the sacred text, is both the macrocosmic and the microcosmic book. A description of it as the macrocosm is found in the writings of Mahmud Shabistari:

'The Universe is the book of the Truth Most High.
Accidents are its vowels, and substance its consonants,
And grades of creatures its verses (ayat) and pauses.
Therein every world is a special chapter (surah),
One the chapter Faiihah, another Ikhlas’ (Shabistari 1978:21-2).

No less noteworthy are the representations of the correspondence between the microcosm and the Qur’an. This correspondence may be expressed both in a complete form (man) and in reduced forms (heart, face) (Schimmel 1975:412-13; Shabistari 1978:21-2), as for instance in:

'Your face is like a Qur’an copy, without correction and mistake,
which the pen of Fate has written exclusively from musk.
Your eyes and your mouth are verses and the dot for stopping,
your eyebrows the madda [for lengthening the alif],
The eyelashes the signs for declension, the mole and the down letters and dots’ (Schimmel 1975:413).
Creation in the Sufi tradition is the act of writing immediately following the Divine Command 'Be!' (Kun!), executed by the Supreme Pen on the Guarded Tablet (Nicholson 1981:112). Ontological correspondences apply to the very letters of the Arabic alphabet. Thus alif (a) corresponds to the absolute transcendentual Divine Unity, the letter ba (b) symbolizes the manifest world, and more precisely the principle of its creation, the letter waw (w) represents the connection between the manifest world and the Divine Unity, and so on (Schimmel 1975:417-20). The process of evolution of the various forms of the created world from the Divine Unity may be represented by the appearance of letters varying in shape from alif, which is denoted by a vertical dash: a bent alif gives rise to the letter dal (d), an alif bent in a different way to the letter ra (r), an alif with its two ends bent to the letter ba (b), and the alif shaped into a horseshoe to the letter nun (Schimmel 1975:417-18). Ibn al-'Arabi quotes all the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet with their corresponding Divine Names, which in their turn relate to certain ontological and cosmological planes (Bakhtiar 1976:62).

Not only the macrocosm is made up of letters. Also likened to them are the limbs of the human body and facial features (the microcosm and its reduced forms). All the letters of the alphabet can be read in the human body, which spells the word Muhammad, the name of the Prophet, who is the prototype of both the macrocosm and the microcosm (Berthels 1970:34). All the parts of the face as a reduction of the microcosm also correspond with certain ontological entities, as well as certain letters. So the mouth corresponds to the letter mim (m), the eye to the letter sad (emphatic s) or to 'ain (which means both 'eye' and 'essence'), and the curls and tresses to the letters dal or jim (j), and so on (Schimmel 1975:413).

It is only natural that the macro- and microcosms, in their aspect as texts, should contain certain information, or knowledge, which is also differentiated into levels to which correspond certain stages of cognition. Thus, the four following types of mystical cognition correspond to the hierarchy of the four worlds (mulk/nasut, malakut, jabarut, lahut), which constitute both the macrocosm and the microcosm: certain knowledge ('ilm al-yaqin), i.e., the knowledge acquired through proof and discourse; certain vision ('ain al-yaqin); true certainty (haqq al-yaqin); and perfect certainty (kamal al-yaqin); i.e., the three forms of direct experiential cognition achievable thanks to the identification of the Sufi with the Divine Names, Attributes and Essence respectively (Braginsky 1985:122, 130-1, 168).

Since the macro- and microcosms are a text containing hierarchically ordered knowledge, the penetration of this knowledge, which was conducive to the transformation of the gnostic in the course of his ascent by ontologico-psychic-somatic stages, was naturally understood as a process of reading correlated with the above-mentioned process of Creative Writing sui generis. In the Sufi tradition, the process of reading, or, more precisely, of penetrating a text from beginning to end through reading, is definitely paralleled by the stages of dhikr (recitation of the Divine Names), which
relates directly to macro- and microcosmic reality. The first stage of dhikr here is the repetition of the first part of the shahadat formula: La ilaha ila Llah (There is no god but Allah); the second is the repetition of the Name Allah, the last word in the shahadat formula; and the third stage of dhikr consists in the repetition of the Name Huwa or Hu (He), which is considered to be identical with the last letter of the word Allah (Johns 1957:96-7; Schimmel 1975:420). Thus the shahadat formula is literally read to the last letter.

Probably the Sufi doctrine of 'reduction' of the Qur'an, the text embodied in the macrocosm and the microcosm, is to be interpreted in the same way as 'reading to the very end'. Schuon wrote, expounding this doctrine:

'It is said that Al-Fatiha contains in its essence the whole of the Qur'an; in its turn, the whole of Al-Fatiha is contained in the basmala; the basmala is contained in its last letter ba; the letter being contained in the diacritical dot [under the letter ba – V.B.].' The diacritical dot is 'the first drop of Divine Ink which dropped from the Supreme Pen. It is the Divine Spirit itself, or the archetype of the entire Universe.' (Schuon 1981:61.)

Thus, both the macrocosm and the microcosm, in the same way, were reproductions of one and the same text (i.e., an intelligible sequence of letters) and in turn contained hierarchically arranged knowledge obtainable through a type of reading which allowed the reader to penetrate to the innermost core of the text, to be eventually rewarded with a perception of the ultimate reality, the Absolute. I will not dwell here on either the contemplative character of this type of reading or the acquisition of knowledge as a process of identification of the individual with particular planes in the macro- and microcosmic hierarchy. Suffice it to note that both the Universe and man were regarded as 'copies' of sacred texts (the Qur'an, dhikr formulas), while these texts themselves, in their aspect as the basis of both the Universe and culture, in their turn served as archetype, paradigm, and generative model of a sort for other types of literature.

The interrelations between the sacred text (the Qur'an) and belles-lettres in the Arab-Muslim tradition were rather complicated and subject to change. The strict monotheism of classical Islam provided an impassable barrier between God and man and between the Qur'an, as a text that was Divine in origin, and human literature respectively. Although the principal and the most cherished category of the latter – poetry – gradually gained a legitimate place in the system of Muslim literature, the Qur'an, unlike the sacred texts of, for instance, China and India (Braginsky 1991:52-62), could not be regarded as its direct paradigm. However, there were signs of a gradual reconciliation of a kind between the Qur'an and poetry. On the one hand, the idea of the totality of semantic elements of poetry, the so-called poetic motifs (ma'ani), evolved as a canon of a kind in classical Arabic poetics of the 9th to 11th centuries, where the poetic tradition itself served as a kind of
absolute. This canon, like any other, afforded opportunities not only for its reproduction (quotation), but also for penetration into the ‘primordial truths’ or ‘archetypes’ of poetic motifs, which were potentially inherent in it from the beginning of time, but were only gradually actualized in the sum total of such penetrations by individual poets (Kudelin 1983:174-98).

On the other hand, the doctrine of the ‘inimitability’ (i’jaz) of the Qur’an represented the sacred text as the receptacle of the best of meanings (ma’ani) expressed in the best of words (alfaz), which matched them in the best of ways. Combining within itself (and transcending) the merits of all kinds of forms of speech (poetry, prose, saj, i.e., rhymed prose), the Qur’an, although it did not belong to any of these genres, was, in the opinion of the exponents of its ‘inimitability’, an actualization of a ‘super-literature’ of a kind (Suyuti 1987:109-12). The comparison of the Qur’an with literary works on the basis of the criteria of poetics placed it in the same domain as them and, at the same time, on a higher level. This turned it into the embodiment of literature in its ideal aspect: a totality of inaccessible ‘primordial ideas’ (motifs), ‘primordial images’, ‘primordial perfection’.

The evolution of the Arab-Hellenistic synthesis, which provided Islamic culture with concepts like the transcendent-immanent Absolute and the path of ascent to this Absolute, as well as with full-fledged ontological and psychological theories, reached its culmination in Sufism. Sufi poetics linked the Qur’an and literature together by still closer ties by placing above classical Arabic poetics a new, mystical level, i.e., the doctrine of the Divine Word embodied in the sacred text of Revelation and reflected in symbolically conceived and interpreted poetry. Thus, the great Persian Sufi poet Jalal al-Din Rumi (13th century) wrote that a perfect poet ‘must lay the table of laudation in such a way as to fill it with various dishes. None of the guests should remain hungry; everyone must find food at this table. This table is like unto the Qur’an [italics mine – V.B.], in which seven thoughts are embodied. Both the common people and the elect and learned will benefit by it.’ (Quoted by Javelidze 1979:216.) It is precisely in the Sufi tradition that the Qur’an acquired the features of a paradigm vis-à-vis poetry, in the same way as this happened in the Indian (Sanskrit) and Chinese cultures.

As though emanating from the Qur’an, poetry transferred elements of the latter’s Weltanschauung and, in part, its poetics and topos (fixed themes, motifs, images) to the hierarchically lower aesthetic level. In terms of medieval Oriental traditions, this was the sphere of ordered intellectualized emotions, which, ‘grasping’ and ‘conveying’ essences rather than only external manifestations of things, was capable of eliciting a direct emotional response to these essences (Braginsky 1991:99-104). In the cultural self-awareness of the Muslim tradition, poetry continued to be correlated with the macro- and microcosms, as befits the sacred text, the Qur’an, and retained the anthropomorphic qualities inherent in it. As the aesthetic emanation of the Qur’an, poetry was an important means of influencing social psychology, since it affected simultaneously the intellect and the
feelings, thanks to the intellectualized emotions it bore within itself. Hence the importance of literary education in Arab-Moslem culture. In accordance with the *universal* medieval law of 'like influencing like', the impact of poetry was evidently understood as being the result of its anthropomorphic character.

There were several ways of comparing poetry to man in classical Arabic poetics. One of them was the likening to man of *qasidah*, the main generic category of Arabic poetry. For instance, an authoritative poetic theorist of the 11th century, Ibn Rashiq, wrote:

‘The *nasib* [erotic beginning of a *qasidah* – V.B.] opening a *qasidah* should not be separated from the subsequent *hija* or *madh* [vilification and praise – V.B.], but must be linked to them, for *qasidah* is like the human body, in which all the limbs are connected with each other. If any is separated from the others, the structure [of a *qasidah*] will be distorted in an ugly way, and the image of beauty will be defective.’ (Ibn Rashiq 1972, II:117.)

In this comparison of *qasidah* to the human body, the three most important genres of classical Arabic poetry, which are at the same time three components of a *qasidah*, are mentioned, viz. the *nasib*, and the *madh* or *hija* following the *nasib*. Their combination in a *qasidah* turns the latter into a kind of model for Arabic poetry as a whole, speaking in terms of genre. This was realized by Arab theorists themselves, including Ibn Rashiq, who noted that ‘poetry can comprise two genres: *madh* and *hija*, and regarded all other genres, including *nasib*, as subdivisions of these (Ibn Rashiq 1972, I:121). Thus, in the comparison of a *qasidah* to man, a likening between him and poetry as a whole may be seen.

On the point of the form and content of verse, the *bait* as a unit of its external phonetic structure (*lafz*, pl. *alfaz*) and internal meaning (*ma’na*, pl. *ma’ani*) served as a model for Arabic poetry. It was also related to man by the anthropoid (with *lafz* standing for ‘attire’ and *ma’na* for ‘beautiful woman’) or the anthropomorphic (with *lafz* denoting the body and *ma’na* the soul) type of metaphor. Both kinds of metaphor are found in the works of the 10th-century poetic theorist Ibn Tabataba (Kudelin 1983:139). The terms ‘*lafz*’ and ‘*ma’na*’ could be used not only for an individual *bait*, but also for an entire poem, regardless of its length. Hence the explicit comparison of poetry to a beautiful woman as elaborated in detail by the Persian Sufi poet (and poetic theorist) Abd al-Rahman Jami (15th century):

‘There is no beautiful woman who surpasses rhymed and rhythmic speech [in fascination];
The secret of [her] beauty is concealed within herself.
To endure [her caprices] is burdensome, [to find] consolation is difficult,
Especially when [she] is chasing hearts.'
She dons the exquisite attire of metre,  
She adorns her legs with radhif,  
And enhances the beauty of her brow with a mole of imagination.  
She imparts the radiance of the Moon to her face through tashbih  
[= comparison],  
[And thus] robs the wits of a hundred stray ones [i.e., people in love].  
She parts her hair in two equal portions with tajnis [= paronomasia or puns]  
And braids it in two identical plaits [= the two hemistichs of a bait].  
She makes her mouth disgorge pearls through tarse [= parallelism];  
A musk-scented curl serves for a cord for the pearls.  
She gives her eyes a coquettish look with the aid of iham [= ambiguity],  
Causing a disturbance in the assembly of those endowed with imagination.  
She covers her head with a tress of majaz [= indirect meaning],  
By means of a veil she brings the truth nearer.’  

The idea of a correspondence between poetry and the macrocosm was, as far as the evidence goes, alien to classical Arabic poetics. However, usually in its ontological aspect, it played an important part in the Sufi conception of literature. This was based on either a direct reduction of the poetic word to its archetype, i.e., the Divine Word creating the Universe, or a deliberate, as it were playful, confusion of the two. Thus the Persian Sufi poet Farid al-Din Attar (12th to the beginning of the 13th century) wrote in his introduction to the poem Ilahi-nama [Book of God]:

‘Do not look with the eye of contempt upon words,  
For both worlds are filled with the single word “Be!”.  
The foundations of both worlds are nothing but a word,  
For they were created with the word “Be!” and can be destroyed with the words “Be not!” ...  
It is all limited, except when put into words,  
The Preserved Tablet [containing the archetypes of all that exists – V.B.] is all-embracing because of the power of words.’  
(Attar 1976:28-9.)

The idea of an analogy between poetry and the macrocosm (as well as the microcosm) was usually most fully reflected in the introductory parts of Sufi mathnawi poems, which comprised, in a way, a ‘justification’ for the writing of the mathnawi in question on the one hand, and a component thanks to which the relevant poetic work had its place in the orderly, integral system of the Universe assigned to it on the other.  

An example of such an introduction is provided by the poem of the 12th-century Persian poet Nizami, Mahzan al-Asrar [A Repository of Mysteries].
Here the Word is represented as the first thing to have been created. Then, as the creative Logos, it endowed the Universe (macrocosm) with Being, or ‘opened its eyes’, as Nizami put it. The Word was also the creator of man (microcosm) and at the same time his innermost essence. Poets, in their turn, having gained access to the Supreme Word in an act of meditation, are capable, just as prophets are, of revealing the meaning and command of the Word in their works:

‘The creators of the word [poets – V.B.] are the nightingales of the Divine Throne
Can other [mortals] bear comparison with them?
Burning in the fire of meditation,
They become akin to a host of angels.
The veil of mystery beyond which word creation [takes place]
Is the shadow [i.e., the replica – V.B.] of a prophet’s veil.’
(Nizami Ganjawi 1983:46.)

The same complex of ideas is presented in Tuhfat al-Abrar [The Gift of the Righteous Ones] by Abd al-Rahman Jami. A eulogy to the creative power of the Divine Word, in which Jami outdoes Nizami, calling the Word (identical with the Light of Muhammad) the Creator of the Supreme Pen, is followed by the above-mentioned image of poetry = a beautiful woman. She is ‘the bride of the Word’ and is full of its sound. Thus the link between the creative Word, the foundation of the Universe, and poetry is established.

No less noteworthy, though, is another salient feature of the Tuhfat al-Abrar. It can be assumed that the description of poetry = a beautiful woman contains, apart from its manifest poetic meaning, also mystical allusions to ontological implications of the human face. The very first bait of this description, in fact, provides certain grounds for such an assumption. The line which has been translated as ‘The secret of [her] beauty is concealed within herself’ (lit. ‘does not go beyond the written record of it’ or ‘its text’ /khatt/), on the basis of another meaning of the word khatt (‘down on the face’) can be interpreted as meaning ‘the secret of [her] beauty is not evident from the down [on her face]’. As was mentioned above, down symbolizes the first outward manifestation of the Divine Essence. Thus this sentence is probably an allusion to the notion that the mystery of poetry lies deeper down than any created worlds, either spiritual or physical. There is mention in the last bait of the ability of poetry to bring ‘the truth nearer by means of a veil’. This paradox must be interpreted as a reminder that the Truth is perceived through the symbolism of poetry, because in Sufism a symbol is both a ‘veil’ covering the Truth and an allusion to It, while the Path of Sufi cognition is one of meditative penetration through the visible surface of a symbol towards the Truth concealed behind this surface.

The two bait examined are only a framework for a supposed, elaborate allusion. More important in this fragment is the nature of the facial features...
of poetry = a beautiful woman mentioned in it. The fragment lists the full set of features which have symbolic meaning in Sufism. The eyes, according to Lahiji’s commentary on Gulshan-i Raz by Shabistari, symbolize the Attributes of Majesty which deter a ‘slave’ from intimacy with his Lord, because the coquetry which is an inherent characteristic of the eyes keeps a ‘slave’ at a distance (Shabistari 1978:73). Jami’s poem mentions eyes which are coquetish thanks to ḩam. The mouth symbolizes the Attributes of Beauty, because the breath from it is associated with revival, mercy and kindness. The image of the mouth which ‘disgorges pearls’ in the Tuḥfat al-Abār also gives rise to associations not only with eloquence, but also with generosity and mercy. The tress is a symbol of the illusory plurality of creation veiling the ‘face’ of true Unity (Shabistari 1978:74). In Jami’s poem, the tress covering the head of poetry = a beautiful woman is associated with maḥaž, = an indirect statement, hence a metaphor – with illusion being opposed to and veiling the truth (ḥaqqiql). The mole symbolizes the innermost Divine Essence, ‘single in itself, but embracing all phenomena’ (Shabistari 1978:77). With Jami, the mole is identical to the imagination, which may be considered as the innermost essence of poetry, both completely embracing it and being itself covered by words and poetic figures (ṭashbīh, ṭarsē, ḩam, etc.). This is precisely the way in which a number of Persian poetic theorists of the 15th century, including Jami himself, envisaged the imagination (see Tabrizi 1959:33-4; Kashifi 1977:7; Jomi 1966:84-5).

Thus, if our hypothesis of a symbolic background of the representation of poetry as a beautiful woman is correct, it would mean that Jami, in his Tuḥfat al-Abār, complemented the Sufi concept of the origin of the poetic word from the Divine Word (and consequently of a correspondence between poetry and the macrocosm) with an implicit ontologization of poetry, having related it to the symbolism of different planes of the macrocosmic hierarchy (Essence – Attributes – created world). This way, the human face appears to be related with the macrocosm, writing, and poetry.

Thus the comparison of literature to both the macrocosm and the microcosm in the Sufi tradition takes place in the anthropoid-anthropomorphic form in Middle Eastern works. A purely anthropomorphic perception of literature – which, as I will try to demonstrate below, could play an important part in the shaping of a literary system and in its impact on the reader – will be discussed below on the basis of examples of Malay classical literature from the 17th century, a period when the influence of the Sufi school of wahdat al-wujud on the Malay world was at its peak (see, for instance, Johns 1961). I will begin with an attempt to characterize the cultural and ideological context in which Malay literature of the period evolved and which, with the inclusion of the above-mentioned complex of ideas, provided ample encouragement for the emergence and development of an anthropomorphic literary system.
called marifat are the bones’ (Van Nieuwenhuijze 1945:138).

A similar anthropomorphic description of the Path is found in Hikayat Syah Mardan [The Romance of Syah Mardan], in which the Sufi doctrine is expounded to the hero by his wise teacher Lukman al-Hakim. He establishes a connection between the four stages of the Path and the four elements water, air (or wind), earth and fire, of which both the human body and the body of the Universe consist. Elsewhere he says that the letter alif is inscribed in the fire, the letter lam awal (initial ‘l’) in the wind, lam akhir (final ‘l’) in water, and ha on the earth. Thus, the elements and, together with them, the four stages of the Path form a text, namely the word Allah, which in this story is identical with the basma formula, the first ayat of the Qur’an: ‘In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate’.

Then the discourse about the elements and their correspondence with the stages of the Path is connected with the hadis ‘He who knows himself knows his Lord’ – an invitation to Sufi self-knowledge. From this it follows that the elements should be understood in the microcosmic sense of elements which form the human body. As a result, the Path acquires an external, physical anthropomorphic aspect. At the same time the Path, like a human being, is endowed with four souls, or to be more precise, with one soul in which purification and transformation consecutively reveal its four aspects: ‘the wrathful soul’ (nafsu amarah), ‘the repentant soul’ (nafsu lawamah), ‘the pure soul’ (nafsu safiah), and ‘the tranquil soul’ (nafsu mutmainah). The fourfold soul of the Path is evidence of its also possessing an internal, psychic anthropomorphic aspect.

Thus, the Path is anthropomorphic both externally and internally. This is not, however, all there is to it. According to Lukman al-Hakim, the Path has ‘palaces’ (istana) inside the human body. These ‘palaces’ are the tongue (lidah) for syariat; ‘the carnal soul’ (hai), governing movement and sensual perception, for tarikat; the intellect (budi) for hakikat; and ‘the mystery’ (rahasia), i.e., ‘spiritual heart’, or organ of spiritual intuition, for marifat respectively. Thus, the Path not only is anthropomorphic, but, like a mould, wholly encompasses the psychic-somatic structure of man and, as appears from Lukman al-Hakim’s further account, determines all human behaviour: speech, actions, psychological states, gnosis of God (Hikajat Radja Moeda Sjah Merdan 1916:21-4).

The above-analysed properties are inherent in the two most important means of advancement along the Path, viz. mystically conceived prayer and zikir. Prayer is represented as an anthropomorphic entity. According to Hikayat Syah Mardan, the ‘self’ of prayer is takbirat al-ikhram (the first exclamation, Allahu Akbar – ‘Great is Allah!’); its head is niat (the intention to perform a prayer); its spirit is the Qur’an; its hands are tahat

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4 The Malay text reads: ‘Adapun yang bernama syariat itu kulit, dan yang bernama tarikat itu isinya, dan yang bernama hakikat itu urat, dan yang bernama marifat itu tulang’.
(the formula pronounced in a kneeling position); and its legs are salam (the exclamation closing a prayer). The basis (stem) of the five daily prayers is the Fatiha. These prayers are created from the letters of the first word of this: zohor (the prayer performed at noon) from the letter alif, asar (the afternoon prayer) from lam, maghrib (the evening prayer) from the letter ha, isa (the night prayer) from mim, and subuh (the morning prayer) from the letter dal. The entire cycle of the daily prayers forms a text, the word al-hamd ("[all] praise [be to Allah]"), while the utterance of these prayers is an act sui generis of reading this word letter for letter from beginning to end.

The five prayers are also correlated with the macro- and microcosm. Zohor comprises four rakat (prayer units), because the first manifestation of Allah, the beginning of the creation of the macrocosm, is fourfold (Being, Knowledge, Light, Sight). Maghrib consists of three rakat, because the evolution of Being from unity to plurality in the Divine Consciousness is threefold (Ahadiat, Wahdat, Wahidiat). Thus, zohor and maghrib testify to the macrocosmic aspect of the prayers. At the same time, since the microcosm (man) is made up of four elements, asar consists of four rakat: fire, as we remember, corresponds to the muscles; air to the breath; water to the bones; and earth to the body; together they form the word Allah. There are also four rakat in isa, because the evolution of the human embryo from sperm is fourfold (wadi, madi, mani – the components of sperm – and manikam – the embryo formed from these components). Thus, asar and isa testify to the microcosmic aspect of the prayers.

Each of the prayers encompasses the entire psychic-somatic structure of a human being. The four prayer postures are correlated with the four physical elements, viz. the erect stance with fire, the bowed posture with wind, the prostrate position with water, and the kneeling posture with earth. Besides, the erect stance stands for the worship of Allah with the spirit, the prostration for worship with the blood, the bent posture for worship with the soul, and the kneeling position for worship with the body.

Whereas prayer was positively correlated with the macro- and microcosm, so to speak, in that it affirmed their existence, zikir, which consists of nafi (the negation la ilaha – ‘there is no god’) and isbat (the affirmation illa Llah – ‘but Allah’), was correlated with the macro- and microcosm in a negative way. Through zikir a Sufi denied on the one hand the reality of being of the Universe, or the macrocosm (the seven layers of the earth and the seven heavens with their inhabitants, the Throne, the Pedestal, paradise, hell, the Guarded Tablet, the Sublime Pen, and the four elements, see Van Nieuwenhuijze 1945:403), and on the other hand the reality of his own

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2 The above description of the mystical meaning of prayer is based on Hikajat Radja Moeda Syah Merdan:18-22, 28-29, with some modifications on the basis of Hikayat Syah Mardan:23.

3 The Malay text reads: ‘Yang dinafikan ... bumi ketujuh serta isinya sekalian, dan langit ketujuh serta isinya sekalian, dan Arsy dan Kursi, dan syurga, dan
'self' (the individuality of his own being, which is illusory, and of his own determination, which is likewise relative and unreal, see Johns 1957:97, 99). In the initial phase zikir, like prayer, has the form of a text: 'Inscribe the Name of Allah in thine heart with the pen of thought and ink of gold or silver, and make His radiance, which is like the radiance of the Sun or Moon, thy kiblat [focus of attention - V.B.] for thy spirit, for thy concentration, and for thy gnosis' (Van Nieuwenhuijze 1945:405-6).

However, as was noted above, zikir as a text was destined to be read, as it were, to the last letter, to the point of its total extinction, in order that the Sufi might attain union with God through the loss of his self-awareness. For this act to be successful, zikir must encompass the Sufi’s entire being:

‘One who practises zikr should do it in this way, that he makes la ilaha come up from below his navel and must beat his breast [the seat of psychic and spiritual life - V.B.] with a mental picture of illa Llah in such a way that the effect of the zikr becomes joined to all his limbs, and fixed firmly within him so that he contemplates the Being of God – if God so will’ (Johns 1957:97-8).

Thus, the cultural and ideological context in which 17th-century Malay literature evolved possessed inter alia the following features:

– characterization of the Sufi tradition which played an important part in this context by anthropomorphism of the expression of macro-/microcosmic parallelism and of the conception of man and the Universe as texts;

– perception of the Sufi Path and of the main instruments in the Sufi’s transformation of the ‘self (the Path, prayer, zikir) in anthropomorphic terms;

– the correlation of these instruments with the macro- and microcosm and their representation as a text the ‘reading’ of which prompted a spiritual ascent, and which encompassed the entire human psychic-somatic structure.

The system of 17th-century Malay literature should in my view be regarded as one of these instruments, having in common with them the principles of
influence on man, in this case the reader.

The 'backbone' of the system of Malay literature was provided by a complex of ideas concerning the creative process reflecting the paradigm of Divine Creation in a special aspect – creation through man. As elsewhere in late medieval Muslim culture, imbued as it was with the Sufi world view, the genuine ability to create was recognized only with respect to Allah in the Malay literary tradition, too. His all-embracing Knowledge includes the general ideas, or the 'fixed essences' (ayan sabita), of all things created. His Omnipotence (kudrat), manifesting itself as Mercy, or creative energy (rahmat), presents these general ideas as things in the phenomenal world (alam syahadat) which are accessible to the senses. Man, to a certain extent endowed with the gift of prophecy, in the first, receptive, phase of the creative process could perceive the luminous stream of creative energy which emanates from the Creator through the agency of the prophet Muhammad in his aspect of pre-eternal Logos (Nur Muhammad). This creative light of inspiration (cahaya nurani), pouring into the 'spiritual heart', or, what is the same thing, the illuminated soul (hati nurani; hati yang safi) of a poet, illuminates, i.e., actualizes, the general ideas contained in it. The latter are subsequently transformed in the carnal, or animal, soul, which is 'the world of the imagination', into a complex of ideas-images (makna, arti, isi), i.e., into the mental structure of an as yet potential work of literature.

In the second, agentive, phase of the creative process the poet establishes a proper correspondence (mematut) between the mental structure of the work (makna, arti, isi) and the totality of its material bearers, or words (lafaz, bunyi, kata), that is, its verbal structure. This results in the creation of a literary work as an actually existing thing (karangan, rencana, hikayat, syair, etc.). The most important properties of a literary work are:

- spiritual perfection (kamal), as perceived by the spiritual heart;
- benefit, or, to be more precise, a number of 'benefits' (manfaat; faedah), such as the didactic content lurking in the depths of the structure of the text and for that reason perceivable by the intellect;
- beauty (keindahan), i.e., the embodiment of Divine Beauty, as accessible to the senses and perceivable by the soul (carnal soul); sometimes this beauty is presented as a benefit of a lower order (for more details, see Braginsky 1993:76-91).

As a result of a proper creative process, a complex system of correspondences arose, namely between the incomprehensible Creator and the manifest Muhammad-Logos; between general ideas and ideas-images; between the mental structure of a literary work and its verbal structure; and between spiritual perfection/benefit/beauty and perception by the spiritual heart/intellect/soul. This system presented itself as a 'channel' sui generis connecting the author with God, the supplier of creative energy, on the one hand, and the reader, on whom this energy being 'poured forth' through the work of literature was intended to exercise an influence, effecting a transformation of his psychic-somatic structure in some way or other, on the other hand.
Both ascent to God and descent to the reader along this ‘channel’ were made possible by addressing the Creator in a prayer, as is testified by the following passage from the *Hikayat Isma Yatim* [The Romance of Isma Yatim]:

‘Some time later, at the will of the Most High, an idea occurred to him, and he said to himself, “It befits me to compose a tale by which rajahs might be instructed, to gain His Majesty’s favour”. Having thought this, Isma Yatim worshipped God the Most Glorious, asking Him to endow him with perfect reason in matters of government so that he might write these instructions. And, by the Mercy of Allah and with the intercession of the prophet Muhammad, he composed a perfect tale.’ (Roorda van Eysinga 1821:4.)

In its most concise and, incidentally, most common form, the prayer of a writer who was about to compose a literary work included two Arabic formulas. The first of these was ‘Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim’ (In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate). Considering the Sufi context of 17th-century Malay literature, this formula can be interpreted as the writer’s consecutive appeals to the Creator’s Names: *Allah*, which implies the indiscriminate potentiality of all creation; *Rahman*, which first endows individual entities with Being; and *Rahim*, which bestows Existence only on good and beautiful things – in this case a perfect work of literature (see Al-Attas 1970:255).

Scholars differ considerably on the interpretation of the second formula, ‘Wa bi-Hi nasta’inu bi-Llahi [al-?] ‘ala (or ‘aliya)’. This interpretation seems to be facilitated by the passage occurring immediately after this formula in *Hikayat Isma Yatim*, and in a way explaining it, viz.:

‘All praise be to Allah, God Most Holy and Most High ... He is the Perfect Lord, adept beyond measure in working many different miracles on His servants, and perfect in His deeds of wonder. He is a Lord who forgives His ignorant servants entreating Him for help in writing a

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10 The Malay text reads: ‘Maka beberapa lamanya dengan takdir Allah Ta’ala maka datang pikiran pada hatinya, "Baiklah aku mengarang suatu hikayat akan memberi nasihat akan bagi segala raja-raja supaya ada juga kurnianya akan daku". Setelah ia serta pikir demikian itu, maka Isma Yatim pun berbuat ibadat akan Tuhan Yang Mahamulia mohonkan akal yang sempurna pada mengarang nasihat itu supaya dianugerahkan Allah, Subhana-Hu wa Ta’ala, akal yang sempurna pada perintah segala raja-raja. Maka dengan anugerah Allah, Azza wa Jalla, dan berkat syafaat Muhammad Mustafa, sallaLlahu alaihi wa salam, maka hikayat itu pun sudahlah dikerangnya dengan sempurnanya.’

Thus, the writer appeals to the Lord, who creates perfect things ('miracles') and helps with the creation of a romance. This passage enables us to interpret the second formula in the following way: 'To Him we appeal, [because] thanks to Allah [all] the most sublime [here a perfect work of literature] comes into being'.

The two formulas examined were an invocation that the whole of the creative process might be successful: that the writer might be endowed with Divine Energy/Inspiration (the receptive phase) and that the Inspiration received be properly embodied in a perfect text (the agentive phase). A version of this prayer (in Arabic) in which the writer thanks God is found in the conclusion of the didactic work ('mirror') Taj as-Salatin [Crown of Sultans] by Bukhari al-Jauhari (1603), as follows:

‘Praise be to the Lord, Who has crowned this pious epistle with its completion! Praise be to the Lord, Who has ended this good discourse with its conclusion! All good deeds come from the Lord, Who has guided my breast [here symbolizing the organ receiving the Divine Inspiration – V.B.], my heart [the organ in which ideas - images are formed – V.B.], and my tongue [the organ of the fixation of images in words – V.B.] in the elucidation of these words and their arrangement in their position.’ (Roorda van Eysinga 1827:227.)

The aim of appealing to God in a prayer (= advancing along the ‘channel’ of the creative process) was the creation of a literary work of one of the three basic kinds, as is evidenced by the introductions to works of literature following these appeals.

Works of the first kind were designed through their spiritual perfection to prepare the spiritual heart for contemplation of the Supreme Reality. As the introduction to Hamzah Fansuri’s treatise Asrar al-Arifin [The Secrets of Gnostics] indicates, Hamzah intended by addressing a laudatory prayer to Allah, Who endows the spiritual hearts of Sufis with the power of gnosis,

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12 The Malay text reads: ‘Ini segala puji bagi Allah, Tuhan yang Mahasuci dan yang Mahatinggi ... Syahdan Ia jua Tuhan yang sempurna dan amat bijaksana pada melakukan bagai-bagai segala hikmat-Nya atas hamba-Nya dengan sempurna hikmat. Dan Ia jua Tuhan yang mengampuni segala hamba yang bebal dan memohonkan taufik kepada-Nya dan pada mengarang suatu hikayat.’

13 It is possible to translate the Arabic preposition bi- not only as Malay kepada (‘to’, ‘towards’), but also as an indicator of instrumentality, analogous to Malay dengan (‘thanks to’, ‘by means of’). I would also like to note that it is not the problem of the origin of this formula, but that of its interpretation (or reinterpretation) in a large number of Malay literary works, which has given rise to the unusual phrase bi-Llahi ‘ala, that is at issue here. For later, more elaborate forms of expression of the same ideas see Braginsky 1983:174-9, 1993:32-34.
to acquire the ability to write a book which might transmit this gnosis to its readers (Al-Attas 1970:233-4).

Works of the second kind were meant to form and perfect the intellect of the reader through certain ‘benefits’. I have already given an example of the creation of a romance affecting the intellect from *Hikayat Isma Yatim*. The purport of *Taj as-Salatin* was the same (see Roorda van Eysinga 1827:5).

Works of the third kind were intended, through their inherent beauty, which was orderly (*dikarang*) and harmonious (*merdu*), and was akin to the human soul by its nature and therefore capable of evoking love (*berahi*) in it, to soothe a distressed soul (i.e., a soul in the grip of passion), to console it (*menglipur hati*), entertain it (*menghibur hati*), revive it, and so on. This is the task set in, for instance, *Hikayat Cekel Wanengpati* [The Romance of Cekel Wanengpati], which says:

‘To Him we resort, [because] thanks to Allah [all] the most sublime comes into being! This is a Javanese romance translated into Malay ... and adapted from its stories, whose composition is most beautiful ..., so that [they] might entertain [or “console” – V.B.] the soul in the grip of boundless love’ (Van Ronkel 1909:35).14

A passage in *Hikayat Isma Yatim* following an elaborate ‘literary invocation’ and a reference to the ‘unspeakable beauty’ of the romance’s composition says: ‘... if it is heard by people in the grip of depression, their souls will rejoice; therefore [this work] is called a romance (*hikayat*)’ (Roorda van Eysinga 1821:1).

By offering a special kind of prayer to Allah with the aim of creating a work which might serve as a ‘conoler of souls’, or might endow the reader with ‘perfect intellect’, or ‘adorn his spiritual heart with Divine Mysteries’ (Al-Attas 1970:233), Malay writers and poets acquired the ability to ascend along the ‘channel’ of a proper creative process to the plane of the spiritual worlds which was appropriate to the particular task set. Thanks to this, so it was believed, their works acquired the necessary properties for exercising a corresponding influence on the reader.

Ascent to the lowest of these planes gave rise to works endowed with beauty in order to soothe the passions of the soul. Romances with tales of fantastical adventures (*hikayat*) and poems (*syair*) belonged to this category. Ascent to a higher level gave rise to texts calculated to perfect the intellect; these works comprised the entire range of didactic works, namely ‘mirrors’

14 The Malay text reads: ‘Wa bi-Hi nasta’inu bi-Llahi ‘ala. Ini cerita Jawa maka diurunkan oleh orang cara Melayu ..., maka dipatut dengan ceteranya yang amat indah-indah karangannya ... supaya dapat akan menghiburkan hati yang amat berahi itu.’
15 The Malay text reads: ‘... jikalau didengar [hikayat itu] oleh segala orang yang masyghul menjadi suka hatinya, [karena itu] hikayat namanya’.
framed or embedded romances, and didactic anthologies, as well as chronicles (sejarah, salasilah), which were historiosophic rather than historiographic in nature. Ascent to the highest plane resulted in texts calculated to deepen the reader's gnosis of God and prepare his spiritual heart for illumination. They included kitab literature, i.e., scholarly treatises on theology and Sufism, hagiographies, Sufi allegories, and so on.

It is noteworthy that a system displaying the same levels but realized within the framework of a single piece of literature is described in the introduction to Hikayat Syah Mardan, as follows:

'Whoever will read or listen to this romance will derive both benefit and instruction therefrom. Some of it has been taken from the hadis and revelations [i.e., the Qur'an – V.B.] and possesses four merits. If it is used for seeking knowledge of the Lord, then its merit should be called "spiritual perfection"; if it is used in connection with royal customs, then it should be called "perfect rule"; if it is used for the interpretation of the law of our chief, the prophet Muhammad ..., then its name should be "syariat"; if it is used for the amusement of young people, then call it "perfection of men".' (Hikayat Syah Mardan:1)

The first of the merits of the romance (kamal) relates, no doubt, to the plane of the spiritual heart. The second and third relate to the plane of the intellect regulating the social aspect of life by reference to both 'royal customs' (istiadat raja), i.e., secular law or adat, and Muslim law or syariat (on the intellect, 'perfect in matters of government', see above). The fourth merit, catering to 'the amusement of young people', i.e., in matters of love, relates to the plane of the soul (about the soothing of a soul in the grip of love by means of a romance see above).

The desire to affect a particular level of the reader's spiritual structure as well as the level of the writer's own spiritual ascent corresponding to this former level predetermined not only the genre, but also the poetic devices of the work created. Appropriate to the level of the soul were the 'poetics of emotionally active descriptions', which allowed 'extraction', as it were, of the necessary emotion for soothing psychic depression in its diverse manifestations and the subsequent projection of this emotion into the soul. Appropriate to the plane of the intellect were the 'poetics of intellectually active composition', which created the necessary conditions for focusing the attention on the basic unit of the didactic work, namely a short didactic story.

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in which a certain idea was dramatized, or, more correctly, embodied in the characters and actions of personages. Corresponding to the plane of the spiritual heart were the 'poetics of contemplative symbolic imagery' the self-contradictory structure of which contained within itself the 'seeds' of its own disintegration and extinction as achieved in the course of intensive meditation (for more details see Braginsky 1993:48-9, 56-7, 66-7).

To conclude, it may be reiterated that the system of Malay literature was understood by its creators as being a result of the spiritual ascent of authors through special prayer. This system was an integrated one by nature owing to the connections between all the levels of this ascent, with Muhammad-Logos, the source of and 'support' for all things created, endowing the finished product as a whole with orderliness, harmony and integrality. As an instrument of the proper formation (or transformation) of the human personality as a whole, the literary system turns out to be an exact replica of such paradigmatic phenomena of 17th-century Malay Sufism as the Sufi Path, prayer, and zikir, possessing the latter's properties.

Like the Path, prayer and zikir, the system of Malay literature was correlated with the macro- and the microcosm. As we will remember, *Hikayat Syah Mardan* and the poems by Hamzah Fansuri furnish testimony of the fact that the four stages of the Path (syariat, tarikat, hakikat, marifat) correspond on the one hand to the tongue (body), the soul, the intellect and the spiritual heart, and on the other to the ontological worlds nasut, malakut, jabarut, and lathut. Thus a parallelism is established between the four psychic-somatic levels of the microcosm and the four ontological worlds of the macrocosm. The system of Malay literature displays the same series of correspondences, namely the sphere of the soul, the sphere of the intellect, and the sphere of the spiritual heart. The only difference is that here the body and the soul (the carnal soul understood as a 'subtle body') are united as a single whole. However, there is nothing unusual about this. A similar threefold hierarchical division, in which the physical elements (jasmani - 'corporality', including carnal soul) are opposed to the spiritual ones (ruhani - 'spirituality', corresponding to the intellect) and to the Relational Spirit (ruh idafi, corresponding to the spiritual heart),

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17 It goes without saying that what is offered here is only a model (moreover, a reconstructed model) of the system of 17th-century classical Malay literature, with all the merits (explanatory potential, accessibility of a complex object, etc.) as well as all the inevitable weaknesses (simplification, schematic nature of representation, the ignoring of many important details, etc.) of models. I fully realize that the reality of Malay literature was much more rich, diverse, 'alive', and complex, and certainly was not so clear and neatly ordered. However, it is necessary to underline that I analysed the concept of literature (and not the literature itself) and to point out that all science, the science of literature included, works with models and that this, in fact, is one of its most important methods.
characterizes Syamsuddin as-Samatrani’s works (Van Nieuwenhuijze 1945:138-9). 18

Continuing the analogy, it is worth noting that, like the Path, prayer and zikir, the literary system not only displays anthropomorphic types of macro- and microcosmic correspondence, but also serves as a ‘mould’ for the proper ‘shaping’ of the human psychic-somatic structure, encompassing it entirely. In this respect, as is only natural, it presents itself as a macro-text (or, more correctly, inter-text), the reading of which is nothing other than ascent up the scale of spiritual perfection.

18 In a later work, Syair Dagang [The Poem of the Wanderer], which probably dates from the 19th century, it is said that a fit of passion affected both the soul and the body (see Doorenbos 1933:28-9). Evidently, both were ‘cured’, also simultaneously, by means of a work of literature.

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