

# The Translator of Desires

*Poems*

Muhyiddin  
Ibn 'Arabi

Translated by Michael Sells

# The Translator of Desires

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POEMS BY

MUHYIDDIN IBN ‘ARABI

TRANSLATED BY

*Michael Sells*

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To Janet, Ariela, and Maya



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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī tells us that he compiled his famous volume of love poems, *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* (“The Translator of Desires”), in 1214 CE during a visit to the Ka‘ba shrine in Mecca.<sup>1</sup>

Born in 1165 to a prosperous and politically connected family in al-Andalus, Ibn ‘Arabī benefited from an immersive education in religious, literary, and philosophical studies. At a young age, however, he chose to separate himself from court circles in favor of a life of itinerant learning. For the next two decades, he was constantly on the move through networks of Sufi mystics, religious scholars, and poets, with weeks- or monthslong stays in such Andalusian and North African cities as Seville, Fez, Marrakesh, and Tunis. After two decades of travel, study, and contemplation, he set out for Mecca—only to be marooned in Cairo because of a plague that left the city under quarantine.

After finally reaching Mecca in 1202, he began to experience visions that, by his own account, would inspire much of his vast literary production over the next four decades. It was while circling the Ka‘ba that he encountered the mystical youth (young man or boy, *fatā*) who inspired his monumental masterwork, *The Meccan Openings*, which he would compose over the next three decades. On another occasion, his encounter with the Ka‘ba, personified, prompted him to compose a series of love letters addressed to the shrine itself, titled *Diadem of Epistles*, in an intricate and elegant rhymed prose (*saj’*).<sup>2</sup> And it was at the Ka‘ba in 1202 that he encountered a young woman who fiercely critiqued each of the four verses of a love poem he was reciting—an experience that led him to compose sixty more poems during a subsequent stay in Mecca

and, eventually, to publish all sixty-one under the title *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*.

After his first stay in Mecca (from 1202 to 1204), he resumed his peripatetic life. His journeys would now take him through cultural centers within the Islamic East: Mosul, Baghdad, Damascus, Aleppo, and the Anatolian cities of Konya and Malatyā (Melitene). These journeys formed elliptical orbits around the Ka'ba, to which he returned time and again. His itinerancy notwithstanding, and despite the lack of formal institutional support, Ibn 'Arabī was prolific, and during the four decades following his first arrival in Mecca he produced dozens of books, treatises, and collections of poetry—the latter composed in a variety of genres and styles.

In the second and third decades of the thirteenth century, Ibn 'Arabī compiled a belletristic work, *Sessions of the Righteous*, into which he placed hundreds of love poems composed by himself and by earlier poets as well as remarks on the occasions during which he recited such verses in the company of other scholars and poets. *Sessions of the Righteous* includes most of the *Tarjumān* but places the poems in different sequences, and within different thematic, hermeneutical, and autobiographical settings.<sup>3</sup>

By the time he settled in Damascus in 1223, Ibn 'Arabī was surrounded by scholars and followers who were reading, editing, and disseminating his works. There he completed the second edition of the *Meccan Openings* as well as his classic work of mystical philosophy, *Ringstones of Wisdom*.<sup>4</sup> During the same period, he produced what is known as his “Great Diwān,” which brought together some 3,500 of his poetic compositions.<sup>5</sup> At the time of his death in 1240 (638 of the Islamic calendar), he was well on the way to being known as *al-shaykh al-akbar* or “the grand master” of Islamic mystical thought.<sup>6</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī’s notoriety throughout premodern Islamic civilizations ensured that many of his works—including the *Tarjumān*—would be preserved, disseminated, argued over, and passed on through the centuries. But that same notoriety at times overshadowed the writing itself with its various controversies over—for instance—his alleged monism or pantheism, the attacks on his character and his orthodoxy leveled by the fourteenth-century Damascene preacher and jurist Ibn Taymiyya, and more recent contentions relating to Sufism, colonialism, and modernity.

Ibn ‘Arabī himself offered contrasting accounts of the genesis and intent of the *Tarjumān* poems in the course of his own autobiographical and prefatory writings, and those accounts have been passed on by subsequent generations down to the present. We might call that metaliterature “The Tale of the *Tarjumān*,” with three interrelated aspects: “The Romance of the *Tarjumān*,” “The Trial of the *Tarjumān*,” and the “Allegory of the *Tarjumān*.”

### *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*

The first word of the title, which can be vocalized as either *Tarjumān* or *Turjumān*, might be rendered as translator, translation, interpreter, interpretation, discloser, disclosure, guide, or guidebook. The word is also closely related to the word for biography, *tarjama*.<sup>7</sup> For whom, we might ask, do these poems translate, and what might they disclose?

Arabic poetry employs more than two dozen words that in the lexicons are rendered as love, desire, passion, or longing. One of those words is *shawq* (plural *ashwāq* [*ash* as in “hush” + *wāq* as in English “walk”]). Ibn ‘Arabī’s *shawq* is analogous to classical Greek *eros* insofar as it was taken as a fundamental driving force within human life, art, and thought. In relationship to the finite human subject, *shawq* is infinite; and the poet-lover within the poems is

presented at once as the subject, victim, champion, and voice of *shawq*-conditioned human existence. The paradoxes of this condition—that love is both disease and cure, for example, or that the lover longs to be near the beloved, even though nearness only intensifies the longing—pervade love lyrics across many traditions. But within the broader context of Arabic poetry and song, and within the *Tarjumān* in particular, these paradoxes play on particularly acute and culturally specific associations.

In pre-Islamic and very early Islamic Arabic poetry of the sixth and seventh centuries CE, erotic themes were primarily expressed in the first movement of the classical Arabic ode (*qaṣīda*), a metrically rigorous, end-rhymed poem that began with the *nasib*, a movement centered on remembrance of a lost beloved. In the tripartite ode common in the pre-Islamic period, the *nasib* could then lead into a journey-quest and culminate in a galvanizing battle boast, praise of the tribe, or panegyric to a king. Later poets tended to compose bipartite odes consisting largely of *nasib* and journey or *nasib* and panegyric.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of the first century of Islam, a freestanding love poem, known as *ghazal*, was emerging. Early Arabian ghazals drew upon and intensified the *nasib*. The Arabic ghazal tradition could take on various voices, including the tragic mode known as ‘Udhrī (after the Arabian tribe that produced some of its famous poets) and associated most famously with the figures of Majnūn and Laylā. The poet, Qays, goes mad through his love of Laylā, a madness that gives him his nickname of Majnūn Laylā (mad or “jinned” for Laylā). In the legendary biographies of Majnūn, his mad love is both a cause and a result of his inability to be with her, and he ultimately perishes after love has emaciated him. He and other ghazal poet-lovers become “martyrs” to love, and early Sufi writings present them as models for the adepts who perish

and, by passing away from themselves, become one with the divine beloved.

The other major style of early ghazal takes on a more urbane voice. In this style or mode, known as ‘Umarite after its most important early master, ‘Umar bin abī Rabi‘a (who died ca. 700), the poet-lover not only mourns the loss of his beloved(s) but also boasts of his amatory adventures or turns his language into a form of flirtation. Yet even as the styles and subgenres of Arabic ghazal continued to evolve, one core nasib motif remained, explicitly or implicitly, at the heart of any love lyric: the poet’s encounter with the *atlāl*—the ruins or traces of the beloved’s abandoned campsite.

The act of *poesis* emerges from the poet’s decoding of the *atlāl* and his realization that these are not the traces of just any camp, but of the camp struck by the beloved in her journey away from him. With that moment of recognition, the poetic voice surges. Through contagion, other sites and features can take on the power of the *atlāl*: the mere mention of one of the stations of the beloved’s journey away from the poet; a scent of the Eastwind that carries news of the beloved’s location; the sight and scent of the moringa, a desert tree associated with the beauty and grace of the beloved; the verse of an earlier poet in memory of his lost beloved, a verse that might contain a fragment of a verse of a still earlier poet. The contagion extends across space through messengers like the Eastwind and its analogues, and across time through the resonance of a verse or phrase through poems of the past.

By the tenth century CE, court circles in urban centers like Baghdad were compiling collections of ghazal lyrics and the romantic legends associated with the early Arabian poet-lovers and their beloveds, collections that culminated with the *Great Book of Songs*, a massive collection of poetry and romance narratives. The author-compiler, Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī (d. 967), provided

descriptions of the musical modes employed in the performance of the verses he quoted. Even though his descriptive notation does not allow a modern reconstruction of the modes and melodies indicated, it offers clear indication of the mutual permeation of poetic verses and musical performance in high Abbasid culture.

This urban literature of ghazal poetry, song, and Bedouin romance emerged parallel with the development of a variety of odes and ghazals in which the ruins of a great city, palace, or civilization took the place of the Bedouin campsite as the site and source of longing (see appendix 4 for an example).<sup>9</sup> The various voices of love (tragic, triumphant, sorrowful, provocative, pious, and ribald in turn) continued to inflect the ghazal tradition. A stanzaic form known as the garland poem (*muwashshaha*), which flourished especially in the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, offered yet another mold for ghazal.<sup>10</sup> By the time of Ibn ‘Arabī, a Persian ghazal tradition was also ascendant, and later epochs would see the emergence of ghazal traditions in Ottoman, Urdu, Punjabi, and other languages. Each of these traditions shared major themes of the Arabic ghazal, but they were also bound more specifically to a particular poetic genre.<sup>11</sup>

The poetic imaginary embraced a correspondence between love and religion. Love poetry had its own version of *halāl* and *harām* (allowable and prohibited, in the vocabulary of religious observance) and its own *sunna* and *shari‘a* (sacred path and law, in the same). Love and fate served as judges and muftis (authors of legal religious opinions). The poets also performed a theology of love: just as the divine reality in its infinite depth exceeds all naming and description, so does the beloved or love itself.

No aspect of religious teachings and practice is more central to the *Tarjumān* than the hajj pilgrimage, which for those who are able to perform it marks the culmination of devotional life. At the

center of the hajj experience are three rituals that carry the pilgrim back in time to the origins of Islam and of the world itself and forward to meeting the creator on the day of judgment. Pilgrims ritually circle the Ka‘ba shrine that, according to Islamic tradition, was constructed by Abraham. At ‘Arafa, a plain and adjacent mount about twelve miles from Mecca from which the prophet Muḥammad delivered his farewell address, pilgrims stand throughout the day and chant the words “here I am for you” that all souls will recite as they meet their creator. At Minā, pilgrims cast pebbles at three stone pillars and, on the holiest day of the Muslim year, reenact Abraham’s sacrifice.<sup>12</sup> The *Tarjumān* returns time and again to these rites as it articulates the experiential dimensions of *shawq*. At the same time, it mixes the stations of the hajj and the stations of the beloved’s journey, tying together the poetic and religious solemnities of place, and establishing an implicit homology between the poet’s wandering from site to site in pursuit of the beloved and a pilgrim’s station-by-station movement during the pilgrimage.

Just as ritual reenactment can collapse time, bringing the pilgrim back to the origins of the faith and bringing those sacred origins into the present, so too does the practice of *hadith* transmission, which becomes a core element within the *Tarjumān*’s poetics. A hadith consists of a report of the words or actions of the prophet Muḥammad or his companions, along with the transmission genealogy (*isnād*): the chain of transmitters who passed the report, generation to generation, from the birth of Islam down to the time of the final individual in the chain. Islamic culture in the thirteenth century was both literate and oral, and hadith transmission linked the two modes. Although the written hadith compilations were considered authoritative by most Sunni Muslims, the pious still traveled widely to hear oral hadiths from a living transmitter who himself had heard them orally from a predecessor back to the time

of Muḥammad. Such a practice emphasized the vast temporal distance between the Prophet and the present but also, through nested levels of embedded quotation, collapsed it: at the moment of hearing a hadith transmitted, the hearer was hearing the words of the Prophet as if they were in a certain sense being spoken live. Early on, the *hadīth-isnād* model was appropriated by other literary (and not necessarily religious) genres. Poetry anthologists, historians, and storytellers would provide *isnāds* for the verses and stories they recounted. In the *Tarjumān*, the poet presents the words of the beloved or her companions as transmitted through a chain of natural phenomena or interior emotive states stretching back to the primordial moments of early Islam, or back further to the garden of Eden, or even to before the creation of the world.

Of the lyric mode of expression, literary theorist Northrop Frye wrote that the poet normally pretends to be talking to himself or to someone else: “a spirit of Nature, a muse, a personal friend, a lover, a god, a personified abstraction or a natural object.”<sup>13</sup> In the case of the *Tarjumān*, we might add to that list the critic or scold (*al-‘ādhil*) and note that in defending himself against the critic, the poet is also addressing himself, the critic within. Here Ibn ‘Arabī animates the conventional image of the scold in medieval Arabic poetry and brings us into its heart. The poems of the *Tarjumān* destabilize the notion of a single addressee, shifting from the beloved, to muse, to the personification of beauty, to friend, to critic, to the interiorized critic within the poet, to an element of nature, to all lovers everywhere, and through all of the above in either singular or plural, masculine or feminine. Both the Qur’ān and classical Arabic poetry (each in its own distinct way) contain radical shifts in voice, constantly engaging the reader in adjusting to apostrophic changes in addresser and addressee. Indeed, classical Arabic rhetoricians considered this feature, called *iltifāt* (turning, shift-

ing, wrapping), a distinctive and audacious aspect of Arabic expression. In the *Tarjumān*, the persona of the poet-lover also shifts. It presents itself conventionally as male but may speak in the first-person singular (I) or plural (we), even as it speaks *to* various personae, including itself (within self-address), or *of* various personae (including itself).

Take, for example, the first verses of the *Tarjumān* where the poet ponders where “they are,” what “they know,” and whether “they are safe.” Readers familiar with the Arabic tradition will easily infer that the verse evokes the beloved and the other women of her tribe traveling away from the poet, but will also understand that the plural serves as a metonym for the beloved. At the same time, an echo can be heard of the same question as addressed by poets of other beloveds and, more widely, within the world of *shawq* conjured by the poet, by other past and present star-crossed lovers.

In other poems the poet shifts from the singular to the plural in referring to himself. From early in the tradition, the singular/plural shifting was more than a movement between two synonyms. The “we” assumes a specific tonality that contrasts with the “I,” often taking on the possibility of speaking as lovers generally or the possibility of mutuality between lover and beloved (“we” were in love, “we” were separated against our will), though the poet’s effort to express or create such mutuality can be ironized or undermined by the poem itself. The “we” can also include the wider group of which the poet was, and poetically purports to still be, a part: family, tribe, nation, and civilization—that is, the group to which the poet once belonged, longs to still belong to, and poetically strives to belong to again.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the stations of the beloved in her journey away from the poet can spur longing for those sites of earlier happiness, for a homeland, a sense of belonging, and a lost youth.

The beloved can be male or female, pubescent or postpubescent, married or unmarried, slave or free, divine or human.

In the *Tarjumān*, the beloved is primarily imagined as female, but there are significant appearances of the beloved as male as well, and sometimes the gender switch can take place within a single poem. The *Tarjumān* consists of ever-repeated acts of reenchantment as the beloved is brought back to the present and the withered world is revived. But the poems are also fevered with the knowledge that such a rebirth can only last an instant and must be constantly repeated.

### The Tale of the *Tarjumān*

In what most scholars believe to be his first preface to the *Tarjumān*, Ibn ‘Arabī tells us that the poems were inspired by a young woman named Niżām, who was the daughter and niece, respectively, of two Persian scholars, a brother and sister, who had settled in Mecca. I’ve rendered the word *nizām*—which in Arabic means “ordered arrangement”—as “harmony” to reflect the wordplay within the poem and the ambiguity between its possible meanings as a common noun or a female name. Niżām’s reputed role in the inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s poetry has drawn comparisons to the role of Beatrice in Dante’s poetry and thought.<sup>15</sup>

The poems of the *Tarjumān* do indeed contain erotic dialectic between the Arab poet-lover persona, a “son of Yemen” as he refers to himself, and a beloved who represents for him the quintessential non-Arab (*‘ajamī*) civilization of Persia. In addition to the personal affection Ibn ‘Arabī may have had for Niżām, the *Tarjumān*’s Arabic-Persian dynamic may reflect the wider cultural symbiosis within thirteenth-century Islamic civilization. Although Ibn ‘Arabī never acknowledges knowing Persian or listening to Persian poetry, he was a man of profound linguistic gifts, someone who had

Persian poets and scholars among his companions and who spent considerable time in Anatolia where Persian flourished as an administrative and literary language. He would not have been impervious to contemporary developments in Persian ghazal and Persian-language Sufi literature.

In his other preface, Ibn ‘Arabī relates that while he was circumambulating the temple of the Ka‘ba, some poetry came to his mind. He left the paved central area around the Ka‘ba to avoid disturbing other pilgrims and recited the verses on the sandy periphery. Although they have been included as poem 1 in the *Tarjumān*, Ibn ‘Arabī does not claim authorship of them, leaving their author indeterminate.

No sooner had he begun reciting, Ibn ‘Arabī tells us, than he felt a jolt between his shoulders “from a hand softer than undyed silk.” When he turned around he found there before him a maiden (*jāriya*, an unmarried woman, usually a young female slave or freed slave). He tells us that she was from among the Rūm, meaning that she was from areas of Anatolia, which were or had been under the control of the Byzantine Roman Empire. At the time, the word could designate Christians specifically or (as was the case with the poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī who settled in Anatolia in the early thirteenth century) Muslims living in the former Christian territory. The *jāriya* fiercely criticizes each of the four verses, refuting each part of them and rebuking Ibn ‘Arabī for reciting verses unbecoming of a personage of his stature. When Ibn ‘Arabī asks her name, she responds that he could call her by the nickname Qurrat al-‘Ayn, an endearment that means “comfort for the eye.”

Interpreters and translators have commonly viewed Qurrat al-‘Ayn as being identical with Nizām. Indeed, Ibn ‘Arabī’s suggestion at the end of his Qurrat al-‘Ayn account that he would come to know the young woman well seems to support that reading, as does

the similarity in language in his homages to the young woman's beauty, artistry, and wisdom in both the *Nizām* and *Qurrat al-'Ayn* prefaces. However, Ibn 'Arabī defines *Nizām* emphatically as being of the finest Persian heritage but describes *Qurrat al-'Ayn* as of Christian or Muslim Anatolian background. Ibn 'Arabī's fascination with Christian cultic practices and theology runs throughout his writings, and allusions to Christian ritual and Trinitarian debate can be found in several poems of the *Tarjumān*, allusions that are expanded upon in his commentary. *Qurrat al-'Ayn*, though a *jāriya* of possible Christian background, might well have converted to Islam, and thus it would not be surprising to find her visiting the Ka'ba.<sup>16</sup>

Was *Nizām* a historical personage either as a cherished acquaintance or wife of the poet, or was she a personification of beauty? She may have been both. The social detail of her family of illustrious scholars was quite specific, and had Ibn 'Arabī invented the story, it would have been easily refuted by his contemporaries. Yet the depiction of her in the preface and the allusions to a *Nizām* figure in the poems place her within a visionary imaginary as beauty, eloquence, and grace par excellence. Similarly, was *Qurrat al-'Ayn* a historical personage, and if so, was she *Nizām*? Was she a visionary apparition? Or was she a development of a long literary history of *jāriya*-savants at the Ka'ba, a literary motif that makes a strong appearance in Ibn 'Arabī's own *Sessions of the Righteous*?<sup>17</sup> These choices may not be mutually exclusive. The romance of the *Tarjumān* is powerfully told, and because Ibn 'Arabī's writings about the *Tarjumān* are, like everything he wrote, brilliantly associative, elusive, and tied into everything else he has written, these questions are not likely to be resolved at the level of historical biography, any more than the accounts of Qays and Laylā and other famous lovers and poets gathered in the *Great Book of Songs*.

are amenable to distinctions between historicity and legend. However, while the compiler of the *Great Book of Songs* wove together traditions regarding the poets and lovers of the past to form romances, in the case of the *Tarjumān*, Ibn al-‘Arabī served as his own romancier.<sup>18</sup>

No sooner had it begun to circulate than the *Tarjumān* was confronted with controversy. A jurist in Aleppo had rebuked Ibn ‘Arabī’s claim made in the *Nizām* preface that the erotic homages to her reflected a realm of spiritual love and refined and intimate mystical knowledge or *connaissance* (*ma’rifa*). The critic suggested that Ibn ‘Arabī, who was known as a man of religion, was attempting to hide the true nature of the poems behind an allegorical façade. Two of Ibn ‘Arabī’s companions appealed to Ibn ‘Arabī to respond to the criticism, and he did so in the form of a short, versified apologia, followed by a lengthy verse-by-verse commentary on the poems that he titled *Priceless Treasures*.<sup>19</sup> An assembly of religious and literary notables convened to adjudicate the controversy over the poems, during which Ibn ‘Adīm (d. 1262)—another jurist, who would become one of the most important historical chroniclers of medieval Syria—recited a large part of the commentary in the presence of both the poet and his critic. Ibn ‘Arabī adds that after the event concluded, the critic declared himself persuaded that the poems were indeed allegorical expressions for the Sufi’s love for and journey toward the divine beloved.<sup>20</sup>

*Priceless Treasures* inaugurated a new tradition of extensive mystical commentaries on Arabic love poetry. That tradition bears similarities to Song of Songs commentaries in medieval Judaism and Christianity, and remarkable structural similarities to the Spanish poet John of the Cross’s commentary on his erotic poem “Canticle of the Soul,” which was modeled on the biblical Song of Songs (although there is little chance that John would have had access to

Ibn ‘Arabī’s work in either the original or translation).<sup>21</sup> Yet there is a twist, as there always seems to be in Ibn ‘Arabī’s accounts of the *Tarjumān*. While the Aleppan jurist criticized Ibn ‘Arabī for disavowing the erotic nature of his poems, the maiden at the Ka‘ba rebuked the first poem for not being extravagant enough in its expression of desire, that is, for not culminating in the complete passing away of the poet-lover in love for the beloved.

Ibn ‘Arabī may be best known for his mystical philosophy, which took shape around the notion of *wahdat al-wujūd* (“the unity of existence”), although he nowhere employed that phrase. The ontological and metaphysical aspects of such thought are not addressed explicitly in the *Tarjumān*. However, several of the poems do contain intimations of the Sufi notion of “mystical union.” In Sufi thought, God cannot be known as an object: the infinite existence of the divine reality exceeds the knower-known duality and cannot be described or even referenced in human language. The goal of the religious and mystical path is the annihilation or passing away (*fanā’*) of the ego-self in union with the divine beloved. For Ibn ‘Arabī, the key sacred source expounding such a union comes in the form of a “divine saying” (a hadith that, instead of reporting words or actions of Muhammad, reports words of God addressed to Muhammad). In this saying, the divine speaker states that nothing is dearer to him than his servant drawing near through devotions above and beyond those required of the believer. When the servant draws near, “I [the divine speaker] am the hearing with which he hears, the seeing with which he sees, the hands with which he holds, and the feet with which he walks.”<sup>22</sup>

In a famous opening passage from *Ringstones of Wisdom*, Ibn ‘Arabī presents the human being in its archetypal state, represented by the prelapsarian Adam, as the “polishing of the mirror” that is the world. Insofar as that mirror is polished, it reflects the image of

God, and in that image the divine and the human are one. For the human being in space and time, such polishing occurs at the moment of *fanā'*, when a person passes away from the ego-self. At that point the divine persona manifests itself in the polished mirror of the heart. Because God or “the Real” is infinite, beyond space and time, its manifestation in space and time lasts only for a moment. In every new moment the manifestation changes. Whoever attempts to hold onto the image locks himself into the dead husk of that manifestation and precludes himself from receiving new manifestations of the divine. The goal is to let go of the previous image in order to be receptive to the divine appearance the next moment within the polished mirror of the heart. A bittersweet dynamism haunts the *Tarjumān*: the beloved(s) or personified embodiments of beauty can never be possessed. The beloved appears to the poet and in her apparition he passes away, only to find himself cast back into the world of time and loss.<sup>23</sup>

\* \* \*

Was Ibn ‘Arabī a Sufi poet? He was certainly a contemplative mystic (*mu’tabir*, “one who observes and ponders”) and Sufi. He also composed a large number of Sufi poems, that is, poems that are imbued with the vocabulary of Sufi psychology, cosmology, and metaphysics. Yet the poems of the *Tarjumān* do not fit neatly into that category. Had Ibn ‘Arabī not been known as their author, they might not have been classified as Sufi poems, although they would have been appreciated by Sufis, who were steeped in the tradition of ghazal and nasib. Many cherished poems within the Islamic tradition—including the *Tarjumān* as well as poems by Ibn ‘Arabī’s younger contemporaries, al-Fārīd and al-Shushtarī, not to mention a treasury of Persian, Ottoman, and Urdu ghazals—tread a fine line between sacred and profane.<sup>24</sup> That phenomenon makes perfect

sense from the perspective of Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception of *shawq*. *Shawq*, eros, is infinite. It cannot be confined into mutually exclusive categories of human and divine. At the most basic level, the *shawq* at the heart of pre-Islamic and Islamic love poetry may carry within it an inherently mystical dimension. In *shawq*, the normal rules of logic are suspended, and the human being opens onto the unlimited, a force that cannot be contained in space or time. Like the divine reality, *shawq* kills and brings to life, exists without and within, is both beyond the world and deep in the heart of the lover.

Much of the reception to the *Tarjumān* has been driven by Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary, which is focused on tying the poetry to Sufi psychology and cosmology and which distracts attention from the poems as poetry.<sup>25</sup> Yet the mystical thought touched upon in the commentary emerged in fully developed form decades later with such works as the *Meccan Openings* and *Ringstones of Wisdom*. It may be more accurate to view that poetry as foreshadowing the later teachings. Far from being versified philosophy or attractive illustrations of his philosophical ideas arrived at independently, the poems of the *Tarjumān* were in a very real sense generative of Ibn ‘Arabī’s vision of existence as a *shawq*-driven process born of the tension between a creator’s longing to create and the paradoxical longing of the nonexistent creature’s to be and, once existent, to return to its source.

### Translating the *Tarjumān*

In 1911 the British scholar Reynold Nicholson published what was both the first translation of the *Tarjumān* as well as the first printed edition of it; a pioneering work that has been read and appreciated over the decades. The more recent history of *Tarjumān* translations

began with the 1977 Spanish rendition of Vicente Cantarino, and since that time the *Tarjumān* has received generous attention from Spanish, French, and German translators. (An account and appreciation of this translation history is found in appendix 7.) This volume constitutes the first edition and first complete English translation of the *Tarjumān* since Nicholson.

To translate classical Arabic poetry entails finding a balance between conservation and compensation. Each poem of the *Tarjumān*, as is the case with most classical Arabic poetry, follows one of about a dozen standard meters, and the poetry's pulse is quickened by the tension between the meter and the syntax.<sup>26</sup> When the syntactical pause falls in the middle of a metrical foot, it creates a tension; when it falls at the end of a foot it provides a release. Arabic meters, like those of classical Greek and Latin, are quantitative instead of accentual. (A syllable is long if it includes a long vowel or a short vowel followed by two consonants.) Arabic meters can employ metrical feet of two, three, four, or five syllables.<sup>27</sup> To offer one example, I present below the opening verse of poem 11 from the *Tarjumān*. It is in the meter known as *tawīl*, which is based on alternating three- and four-syllable feet. The three-syllable foot can follow one of two patterns:  $\text{^--}$  or  $\text{^-^}$ . The four-syllable foot can also follow one of two patterns:  $\text{^-^-}$  or  $\text{^-^-^-}$ ; and as with other meters, a line can end with a full foot or a shortened (catalectic) one.

The first verse of poem 11 reads as follows in my translation:

Gentle now, doves  
of the sprigberry and  
moringa, don't add your  
sighs to my heart-ache

Here below is a scansion, transliteration, and word-by-word gloss of the verse:

^ - - / ^ - - - - / ^ - ^ / ^	- - -
<i>alā yā hamāmāti l-arākati</i>	<i>wa l-bānī</i>
oh! O doves	of the sprigberry
	and moringa
^ - - - / ^ - ^ - / ^ - - - / ^	- - -
<i>taraffaqna lā tudi'fna bi-sh-shajwi</i>	<i>ashjānī</i>
be gentle don't increase by your lament	my sorrows

In addition, the classical Arabic poem, however long, follows a single end rhyme from beginning to end, another feature that is not amenable to modern English poetry. Equally impervious to direct translation is *jinās*, the combination of etymological play, punning, and repetitions of consonants that marked what was called the “new style” of poetry in ninth-century Baghdad and that recurs in several of the *Tarjumān* poems.<sup>28</sup>

Classical Arabic poetics is also based on the independent line of verse; enjambment is rare, and end rhymes provide a strong sense of closure to each verse. That verse-by-verse independence engages the reader in bridging the semantic and rhetorical gap between verses, a gap intensified by the *Tarjumān*'s frequent if not incessant apostrophic turning. I employ punctuation sparingly to preserve this critical aspect of Ibn ‘Arabī's poetic voice. I have eschewed end-stops altogether, with line breaks, capitalization, and spacing serving as guides where needed.

I have used stanzas of two, three, or four lines, depending on the poem, to correspond to an Arabic verse. I have numbered the Arabic verses and their parallel English stanzas at intervals of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30. On rare occasions I have found it necessary to condense the translation of two Arabic verses into one stanza or to

expand the translation of one verse into two stanzas. In those cases the design of the facing-page text has been adjusted to make these adjustments transparent. The verse numbers in the English correspond to their numbered Arabic counterparts in those cases as well, in order to clarify the relationship between the two pages.

The poems of the *Tarjumān* redound with place-names and the names of various trees, bushes, and herbs that have no direct equivalent in anglophone lands. Each specific place and plant is embedded in a web of literary, cultural, and religious associations that reflect topography and botany but extend them mythopoetically. For the Bedouin, or for the pilgrim traveling through the arid regions of central and northern Arabia, the herbs, shrubs, flowers, and trees they encountered took on a sensual impact that those of us from moderate climes can scarcely imagine.<sup>29</sup> To approach an oasis, even an oasis consisting of little more than a few trees and shrubs, is to be overcome with the intense fragrance of wet earth and of the flora that grow there. I have resisted simplifying matters by removing the specific plant names, a simplification that would strip the poetry of a core element. However, in order to fit those names naturally within the English cadence of the translation, I employ an adapted and flexible transliteration that allows the Arabic words to fit within an English accentual rhythm and acoustics, without making the name in question unrecognizable to Arabic speakers. In some cases, I translate place-names on the basis of their root meanings (Sand Hill), and plant names where there is an appropriate English equivalent (tamarisk, lote, and artemisia).

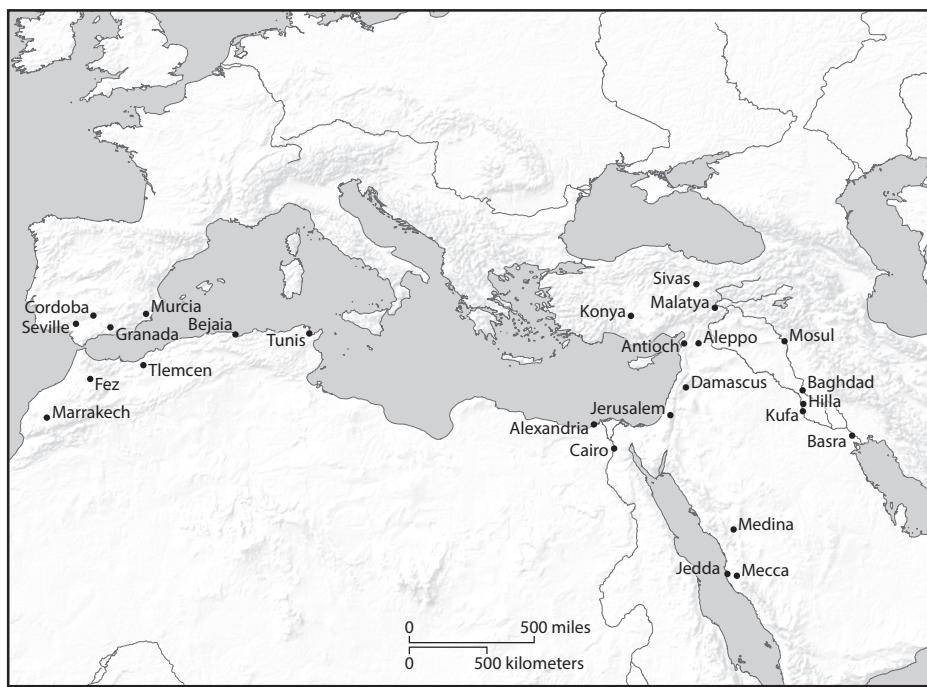
A similar rationale guides the approach to prophets mentioned in the Qur'an, many of whom have biblical analogues. I employ the Arabic, Qur'anic names rather than the common English versions of the biblical names. Mūsā rather than Moses, Sulaymān rather than Solomon, Īsā rather than Jesus, and Idrīs, the Qur'anic prophet

who was associated with the biblical Enoch by Islamic tradition. Preserving the Arabic allows those names to fit into a translation that includes many names of Arabic lovers and beloveds as well (such as Qays, Laylā, Mayya, and Ghaylān), and, in the natural flow of the verse, it gives readers a palpable sense of the power these words hold for readers, or listeners, in Arabic. It also serves to mark the distinctiveness of Qur’anic prophetic figures vis-à-vis their biblical counterparts. While the Qur’anic and biblical accounts can overlap in substance, they can also diverge, sometimes starkly. The Qur’anic ‘Isā, like the biblical Jesus, is the messiah (*masīh*) and, according to hadith accounts, will return at the end of times. Like his biblical counterpart, he was born of a virgin mother and raised the dead to life. In contrast to his biblical counterpart, however, he is not considered the Son of God.

\* \* \*

In a short introductory remark to a poem that he presents in *Sessions of the Righteous*, Ibn ‘Arabī provides a key to his own understanding of himself as a translator of desires. Eros (*shawq, ashwāq*) comes in two forms or “languages”: longing for what is in the past, or distant; and longing for what is near, or at hand, or for what one already has, which Ibn ‘Arabī calls *ishtiyāq*. The introduction presents the poem as, in fact, authored by the fully personified Ashwāq: “Among the poems that the Ashwāq composed (*nazamat*) in the language of *ishtiyāq* are what I said regarding Nizām. . . .”<sup>30</sup> Nizām emerges here not only as the subject of the poem that follows but as the very act of composing it. In theological terms, she transcends the poem that is about her, but she is also immanent within it. As a muse, Nizām is not only the beloved who inspires the poet’s verses but the creative spark within them.

Meaning in *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* is in constant movement—like beings, like the longings that “come upon” us as voices, apparitions, and emotions; like the beloved in her journey from station to station; like the mystic’s heart being transformed each moment; like the ever-changing manifestations of the beloved in the mirror of a human heart. To be is to be moved from site to site, from word to word, from self to self, ever lost and ever regained—always in translation. Poet, lover, and beauty itself are in a state of constant bewilderment, which forms the subject of the first poem of the *Tarjumān*, recurs throughout it, and culminates in the final poem of the collection.



Map of Ibn 'Arabī's World

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*Chicago*

May 5, 2020

## NOTE ON ARABIC NAMES

In order to facilitate focus and flow, Arabic terms and names within the translation in this volume follow a modified and flexible transliteration system. Outside of the translation, the standardized transliteration protocol is employed. In the glossary, both the poetically modified and the standard transliteration are provided.

The following signs are employed in the translation:

- \* An acute accent indicates the stress accent of a syllable, as in Khawárnaq, the name of an ancient monument in the area between Arabia and Iraq.
- \* The vocable *â* takes a stress accent within the English rendition of the poetry and is pronounced like the “a” in “llama”; as in Râma, the name of a relay station in Arabia associated by Arabic poets with the lost beloved.
- \* The vocable *ā* takes a stress accent within the English rendition of the poetry and is pronounced like the “a” in “badger”; as in Hâjir, a relay station on the pilgrimage route from Iraq to Medina and Mecca.
- \* The vocable *ū* takes a stress accent within the English rendition of the poetry and is pronounced like the “oo” in “mood”; as with Zarûd, a way station south of the Nefûd desert in north-central Arabia.
- \* The vocable *î* takes a stress accent within the English rendition of the poetry and is pronounced like the “ee” in

“free”; as with Hadītha, a city on the Euphrates River in Iraq.

\* The markers ‘ for the letter ‘ayn and ’ for the letter *hamza* indicate two sounds that to the non-Arabic speaker are indistinguishable and can best be thought of a short catch in the breath, as in Shi‘ite and Qur‘an. For Arabic speakers the ‘ayn is a deep guttural and the *hamza* a glottal stop.

# The Translator of Desires

لَيْتَ شِعْرِي هَلْنَ دَرَوْا  
أَيَّ قَلْبٍ مَلَكُوا

وَقُوَادِي لَفْ دَرَى  
أَيَّ شِعْبٍ سَلَكُوا

أَنْرَاهُمْ سَلِمُوا  
أَمْ تُرَاهُمْ هَلَكُوا

حَارَ أَرْسَابُ الْهَوَى  
فِي الْهَوَى وَأَرْتَبُوكُوا

## **Bewildered**

I wish I knew if they knew  
whose heart they've taken

Or my heart knew which  
high-ridge track they follow

Do you see them safe  
or perishing?

The lords of love are in love  
ensnared, bewildered

مَا رَحَلُوا يَوْمَ بَاثُوا أُلْبِرَلْ أَعْيَسَا  
إِلَّا وَقَدْ حَمَلُوا فِيهَا أَطْوَأْوِيسَا

مِنْ كُلِّ فَاتِكَةٍ أَلَّا حَاظِ مَالِكَةٍ  
نَحَالُمَا فَوْقَ عَرْشِ الْدُّرِّ بِلْقِيسَا

إِذَا تَمَسَّتْ عَلَى صَرْحِ الْزُّجَاجِ تَرَى  
سَمِسَا عَلَى قَلْكِ فِي حِجْرِ إِذْرِيسَا

يُخْيِي إِذَا قَتَلَتْ بِاللَّهُظِ مَنْطَفِهَا  
كَأَنَّهَا عِنْدَمَا تُخْيِي بِهِ عِيسَى

[5] تَوْرَاثَهَا لَرْخُ سَاقِيَهَا سَنَا وَأَنَا  
أَشْلُو وَأَدْرُسَهَا كَأَنَّنِي مُوسَى

## **Release**

They led the red-roans  
away the day  
of departure, with peacocks  
high in howdahs

Who take possession  
with glances that kill  
like Bilqīs of Sheba  
on her throne of pearl

She crosses the polished  
glass and you see  
the sun circling  
in Idrīs's sphere

What her glance kills  
her speech revives,  
bringing the dead  
to life, like 'Isā

Like Torah's tablets  
her legs in splendor  
I follow, learn  
and recite like Mūsā

[5]

أَسْفَقَةٌ مِنْ بَنَاتِ الْرُّومِ عَاطِلَةٌ  
تَرَى عَلَيْهَا مِنْ أَلْأَثَوَارِ نَامُوسًا

وَحْشِيَّةٌ مَا بِكَا أُنْسٌ قَدْ أَخْذَتْ  
فِي بَيْتِ خَلْوَتِهَا لِلذِّكْرِ نَاؤُوسًا

قَدْ أَعْجَزْتُ كُلَّ عَالَمٍ يُلْتَبِّسًا  
وَدَاؤِدِيَا وَحِبْرًا ثُمَّ قِسْسِيَا

إِنْ أَوْمَأْتُ تَطْلُبُ أُلْبِجِيلَ تَحْسِبُنَا  
أَقِسَّةً أَوْ بَطَارِيقًا شَمَامِيسَا

[10] نَادِيْثُ إِذْ رَحَلْتُ لِلْبَيْنِ نَاقَتْهَا  
يَا حَادِيْ أَلْعِيسِ لَا تَخْدُو بِكَا أَلْعِيسَا

عَيْبَتُ أَجْنَادَ صَبِّرِي يَوْمَ بَيْنَهُمْ  
عَلَى أَطْرِيقِ كَرَادِيسَا كَرَادِيسَا

A bishop, she is,  
Byzantium's child  
bathed in the light  
of the Holy Ghost

Wild, lone,  
she takes a tomb  
as her retreat  
to remember and pray

She has baffled  
all our sages  
as well as psalmists,  
rabbis and priests

Were she to beckon  
toward the gospel  
you'd see us as vicars,  
deacons or priests

Driver, I cried, [10]  
as she saddled to leave,  
don't carry her  
away in your train!

The day she left me  
I set loose squadrons  
along the path,  
armies of patience

سَأَلْتُ إِذْ بَلَغْتُ تَفْسِيْيَ تِرَاقيَهَا  
ذَاكَ الْجَمَالَ وَذَاكَ الْلُّطْفَ تَنْفِيْسَا

فَأَسْلَمْتُ وَوَقَانَا اللَّهُ شَرَّتَهَا  
وَزَحَرَخَ الْمِلِكُ الْمَنْصُورُ إِبْلِيسَا

With soul in throat  
slipping away  
I implored that gracious  
beauty for release

She yielded God  
spared us her fury  
May salvation's angel  
steal Iblīs away

خَلِيلَيْ عُوجَا بِالْكَثِيرِ وَعَرْجَا  
عَلَى لَعْنٍ وَاطْلُبْ مِيَاهَ يَلْمَلِمِ

فَإِنْ بِهَا مَنْ قَدْ عَلِمْتَ وَمَنْ لَمْ  
صِيَامِي وَحَجَّيْ وَاعْتِمَارِي وَمُؤْسِي

فَلَا أَنْسَ يَوْمًا بِالْمُحَصَّبِ مِنْ مِنْ  
وَبِالْمَنْحَرِ الْأَعْلَى أُمُورًا وَرَمَرَمِي

مُحَصَّبُهُمْ قَلْبِي لَرْمَيْ جَهَارِهِمْ  
وَمَنْحُرُهُمْ تَفْسِي وَمَشْرُبُهُمْ دَمِي

[5] فَيَا حَادِي الْأَجْهَالِ إِنْ حَجْتَ حَاجِرًا  
فَقِيفُ بِالْمَطَايَا سَاعَةً ثُمَّ سَلَمِ

## The Offering

Turn at al-Kathīb,  
friends, then pass  
by Lá'la'i, in search  
of Yalámlam's waters

There you'll find  
those you'd known  
My hajj is for them,  
my fast and feast

I'll never forget  
Muhássab near Mína,  
the field of sacrifice,  
or Zámzam's spring

As if they cast  
live coals from my heart,  
offered my soul,  
drank my blood!

When you come to Hājir,  
driver, halt  
the camels there,  
shout forth a greeting

[5]

وَنَادَ الْقَبَابَ الْحُمْرَ مِنْ حَانِبِ الْحَمَى  
نَحِيَّةً مُشْتَاقٍ إِلَيْكُمْ مُتَيَّمْ

فِيَانْ سَلَّمُوا فَأَهْدِ الْسَّلَامَ مَعَ الْصَّبَا<sup>١</sup>  
وَإِنْ سَكَّتُوا فَأُرْجِلْنَ بِهَا وَتَقَدَّمْ

إِلَى تَهْرِ عِيسَى حَيْثُ حَلَّتْ رِكَابُهُمْ  
وَحَيْثُ الْخِيَامُ الْبِيْضُ مِنْ حَانِبِ الْعِمْ

وَنَادِ بَدَاعِدِ وَالرَّبَابِ وَرَبِّنِ  
وَهَنْدِ وَلْبَنِ ثُمَّ سَلَمَى وَزَمَرَمْ

[10] وَسَلْهُنَّ هَلْ بِالْحُلْبَةِ الْعَادَةُ الَّتِي  
تُرِيكَ سَنَا الْبِيْضَاءِ عِنْدَ الْتَّبَسْمِ

And call toward the red  
pavilions of Híma,  
call out a greeting  
of longing and loss

If you hear back  
bear them blessings  
and fond regards  
If not, journey on

To the river of 'Isā  
where their camels graze  
and white tents nestle  
by the stream

Ring forth the names  
of Da'd and Rabáb,  
Záynab and Hind,  
Lúbna then Sálma

Then ask if there's  
a girl at Hálba  
who shows the sun  
in her smile

[10]

سَلَامٌ عَلَى سَلْمَى وَمَنْ حَلَّ بِالْجَمَى  
وَحُقْقَ لِمِثْلِي رِفْقًا أَنْ يُسَلِّمَا

وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهَا أَنْ تَرُدَّ تَحِيَّةً  
عَلَيْنَا وَلَكِنْ لَا أَحْتِكَامَ عَلَى الْدُّمَى

سَرَوْا وَظَلَامُ الْلَّيْلِ أَزْخَى سُدُولَهُ  
فَقُلْتُ لَهَا صَبَّا غَرِيبًا مُتَيَّمًا

أَحْاطَتْ بِهِ الْأَشْوَاقُ شَوْقًا وَأَرْصَادُ  
لَهُ رَاشِقَاتُ الْنَّبْلِ أَيَّانَ يَمَّا

[5] فَأَبْدَتْ ثَنَائِيَاهَا وَأَوْمَضَ بَارِقُ  
فَلَمْ أَذِرْ مَنْ شَقَّ الْحَنَادِيسَ مِنْهُمَا

## **As Night Let Down Its Curtain**

Peace, Sálma  
and peace to those  
who halt at al-Híma  
It's right I greet you

Would it have hurt  
to return the greeting?  
A lady of stone  
never responds

They left as night  
let down its curtain  
Pity a lad, I said,  
dazed and forsaken

Hemmed in by longings,  
pierced by their arrows  
on target always  
wherever he goes

She smiled, lightning  
flashed, and I couldn't  
tell what it was  
that split the night

[5]

وَقَالَتْ أَمَّا يَكْفِيهِ أَيْ بِعَلْيٍ  
يُشَاهِدُنِي فِي كُلِّ وَقْتٍ أَمَّا أَمَا

*Each moment he  
beholds me anew  
in his heart, she said  
What more can he ask?*

أَبْحَدُ الشَّوْقَ وَأَشَهَمُ الْعَرَا  
فَأَنَا مَا بَيْنَ بَحْرٍ وَقَهَامٍ

وَهُمَا ضِدَانٌ لَنْ يَجْتَمِعَا  
فَشَتَاتٍ مَا لَهُ الْدَّهْرُ نِظَامٌ

مَا صَنَعْتِي مَا أَخْتَيَالِي دُلُونِي  
يَا عَذُولِي لَا تُرْغِنِي بِالْمَلَامِ

رَقَرَاتٌ قَدْ تَعَالَتْ صُعْدًا  
وَدُمُوعٌ فَوْقَ خَدَّي سِحَامٌ

[5] حَنَّتِ الْعِيسُ إِلَى أَوْطَانِهَا  
مِنْ وَجْهِ الْسَّيِّرِ حَيْنَ الْمُسْتَهَامِ

## **Harmony Gone**

Yearning sought the highlands,  
consolation the plain  
and here I'm stranded  
between Najd and Tihām

Opposites never  
to be joined—  
Undone, unstrung  
Harmony gone

Where is my craft?  
What can I do?  
Guide me, scold—don't  
crush me with blame

Sighs ascend  
to the highest heavens,  
tears streaming  
from my eyes

The red-roans yearned  
for the meadows of home,  
on cracked hooves racing  
like a crazed lover

[5]

مَا حَيَّا بِنَا بَعْدَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْفَأَنَا  
فَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الصَّابِرِ الْسَّلَامُ

I live on and  
in living die  
Farewell to her, then,  
and to patience, farewell

بَانَ الْعَزَاءُ وَبَانَ الْصَّبْرُ إِذْ بَانُوا  
بَانُوا وَهُمْ فِي سَوَادِ الْقُلُبِ سُكَّانُ

سَأَلْتُهُمْ عَنْ مَقِيلِ الرَّكْبِ قِيلَ لَنَا  
مَقِيلُهُمْ حِيثُ فَاحَ الشَّيْخُ وَالْبَانُ

فَعْلَتُ لِلرَّيْحِ سِيرِي وَالْحَقِيْقِي بِهِمْ  
فَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَ طَلَّ الْأَلَيْكِ قُطَّانُ

وَبَلَغَيْهِمْ سَلَامًا مِنْ أَحِي شَجَنِ  
فِي قُلْبِهِ مِنْ فِرَاقِ الْقَوْمِ أَشْجَانُ

## **Artemisia and Moringa**

Patience and solace are gone—  
gone with those  
who live within  
my heart's dark core

I asked where they'd kneel  
their camels at noon  
By the artemisia,  
I heard, and moringa

I asked the wind  
to track them to  
the thicket's shade  
where their tent wings spread

To bring them greetings  
from the slave of grief  
His heart was torn  
when the tribe dispersed

وَزَاهَمَنِي عِنْدَ اُسْتِلَامِي أَوَانِسُ  
أَتَيْنَ إِلَى الْتَّطْوَافِ مُعْتَجِرًا

حَسْرَنَ عَنِ اُثْوَارِ الْشُّمُوسِ وَقُلْنَ لِي  
تَوَرَّعْ فَمُؤْتُ اُنْفَسِي فِي الْلَّهَظَاتِ

فَكُمْ قَدْ قَتَلْنَا بِالْمُحَصَّبِ مِنْ مِنِي  
نُفُوسًا أَبِيَّاتٍ لَدَى أَجْمَرَاتِ

وَفِي سَرْخَةِ الْوَادِي وَأَعْلَامِ رَامِةٍ  
وَجَمِيعٌ وَعِنْدَ النَّفْرِ مِنْ عَرَفَاتِ

[5] أَمْ تَدِيرِ أَنَّ الْحُسْنَ يَسْلُبُ مَنْ لَهُ  
عَفَافٌ فَيُدْعَى سَالِبَ الْحُسْنَاتِ

## Gowns of Dark

I touched the stone  
through a whirl of young women  
circling the Ká'ba,  
faces veiled

They lowered their veils,  
revealing the sun  
Death stalks the  
gaze, they warned

Many's the proud  
soul we've taken  
questing at the threshold  
of Mína's cairns

In the wádi courts,  
near the heights of Râm  
and Jem, through the throngs  
on 'Árafa plain

See how beauty [5]  
plunders the chaste  
“Spoiler of virtue”—  
so aptly named

فَمَوْعِدُنَا بَعْدَ الْطَّوَافِ بِرَمَّةٍ  
لَدَى الْقُبَّةِ الْوُسْطَى لَدَى الصَّخْرَاتِ

هُنَالِكَ مَنْ فَدَ شَفَّةً أُلْوَجْدُ بَشْتَنَيِ  
إِمَّا شَافَةً مِنْ نِسْوَةٍ عَطِيرَاتِ

إِذَا خَفَنَ أَسْدَلَنَ الْشُّعُورَ فَهُنَّ مِنْ  
غَدَائِهَا فِي الْحَفِظِ الظُّلْمَاتِ

We'll meet at Zámzam  
after the circling,  
by the middle tent,  
near the boulders

There a man starved  
by love's fever  
is cured by the scent  
of those who lured him

Roused, they loosen  
their hair and let it  
fall, enfolding them-  
selves in dark

دَرَسْتُ رُبُوعَهُمْ وَأَنَّ هَوَاهُمْ  
أَبَدًا حَدِيدٌ بِالْحَشَّا مَا يَدْرُسُ

هَذِي طُلُوهُمْ وَهَذِي الْأَدْمَعُ  
وَلِذِكْرِهَا أَبَدًا تَذُوبُ الْأَنْفُسُ

نَادَيْتُ خَلْفَ رِكَابِهِمْ مِنْ حُبِّهِمْ  
يَا مَنْ غَنَاهُ الْحُسْنُ هَا أَنَا مُفْلِسٌ

مَرَغْتُ خَدِي رِقَّةً وَصَبَابَةً  
فِي حَقٍّ هَوَاكُمْ لَا تُؤْسِسُوا

[5] مَنْ ظَلَّ فِي عَبَرَاتِهِ عَرِيقًا وَفِي  
نَارٍ الْأَلَّاسِي حَرِيقًا وَلَا مُتَنَقَّسُ

## Who Forever

Their spring meadows  
are desolate now  
but desire for them  
lives on in the heart

These are their ruins  
tears in memory  
of those who melt  
the soul forever

I called out, following,  
love-dazed, after  
You so full with  
beauty—I've nothing

With desire maddened,  
I rubbed my face  
in the dust    By the  
right of true love

Don't crush a man  
drowned in tears  
yet aflame  
with ceaseless sorrow

[5]

يَا مُوقَدَ النَّارِ الْرُّؤْبَدَا هَذِه  
نَارُ الصَّبَابَةِ شَانِكُمْ فَلْتَقْبِسُوا

Put down your flint,

fire-striker

Here is passion's fire

Take an ember

لَمَعْتُ لَنَا بِالْأَبْرَقِينِ بُرُوقُ  
فَصَافَتْ لَهَا بَيْنَ الْأَضْلُوعِ رُعُودُ

وَهَمْتُ سَحَابِهَا بِكُلِّ حَمِيلَةٍ  
وَبِكُلِّ مَيَادٍ عَلَيْكَ بَمِيدُ

فَجَرَثُ مَذَانِبُهَا وَفَاحَ نَسِيمُهَا  
وَهَفَتُ مُطَوَّقَةً وَأَوْرَقَ عُودُ

نَصَبُوا أَلْقَابَ الْحُمْرَ بَيْنَ جَدَارِلِ  
مِثْلِ الْأَسَادِ بَيْنُهُنَّ قَعْدُ

[5] بِيَضٌ أَوَانِسُ كَالشُّمُوسِ طَوَالِعُ  
عَيْنٌ كَرِيمَاتٌ عَقَائِلٌ غِيدُ

## Soft-Eyed Graces

Lightning flashed

    in Abraqáyn

Thunder roared

    within our ribs

A fine rain fell

    on sand-slipped hills,

quivering branches

    bending toward you

Streams gushing,

    soft winds fragrant,

doves in the boughs,

    tender new sprigs

They pitched their red

    tents between rivers

winding like snakes—

    and there they stood

Splendid as rising

[5]

    suns, they were

Soft-eyed graces

    Beyond compare

قَالْتُ عَجِّبْتُ لِصَبْ مِنْ حَاسِبِهِ  
يَخْتَالُ مَا بَيْنَ أَرْهَارٍ بِسْتَانِ

فَعْلُتُ لَا تَعْجِي مَمَا تَرِينَ فَقَدْ  
أَبْصَرْتِ نَفْسَكِ فِي مِرْأَةِ إِنْسَانِ

## Mirror

I wonder at a love  
that flaunts its glory  
among the garden  
flowers, she said

Don't, I said  
You're seeing yourself  
in the mirror  
of humankind

أَلَا يَا حَمَامَاتِ الْأَرَاكَةِ وَالْبَانِ  
تَرْقَفُنَ لَا تُصْعِفُنَ بِالشَّجْوِ أَشْجَانِي

تَرْقَفُنَ لَا تُظْهِرْنَ بِالنَّوْحِ وَالْبُكَّا  
خَفِيَّ صَبَابَاتِي وَمَكْنُونَ أَحْزَانِي

أُطَارِخُهَا عِنْدَ أَلْأَصِيلِ وَبِالضُّخَى  
بِخَنَّةِ مُشْتَاقِ وَأَنَّةِ هَيْمَانِ

تَنَاؤحْتِ أَلْأَرْواحُ فِي عَيْضَةِ الْعَصَى  
فَمَالَثِ بِأَقْنَانِ عَلَيَّ فَأَقْنَانِي

[5] وَجَاءَتْ مِنَ الشَّوْقِ الْمُبَرِّحِ وَالْجُنُوِيِّ  
وَمِنْ طُرْفِ الْبَلْوَى إِلَيَّ بِأَقْنَانِ

## Gentle Now, Doves

Gentle now, doves  
of the sprigberry and  
moringa, don't add your  
sighs to my heart-ache

Gentle now, lest  
your sad cooing show  
the love I hide,  
the sorrow I seal

In the evening I echo  
back, in the morning  
echo the longing  
of the lovesick and lost

Spirits moan  
in the Gháda trees  
bending branches over me  
as I pass away

Bringing yearning,  
heartbreak and ever  
new twists of pain  
to try me

[5]

فَمَنْ لِي بِجَمِيعٍ وَالْمُحَصَّبِ مِنْ مِنْ  
وَمَنْ لِي بِدَاتِ الْأَئْلِ مِنْ لِي بِنَعْمَانِ

تَطْوُفُ بِقُلْبِي سَاعَةً بَعْدَ سَاعَةً  
لِوْجْدٍ وَتَبْرِيْحٍ وَتَلْشِيمُ أَزْكَانِي

وَكُمْ عَهَدْتُ أَنْ لَا تَخُولَ وَأَقْسَمْتُ  
وَلَيْسَ لِمَخْضُوبٍ وَفَاءُ بِأَيْمَانِ

وَمِنْ أَعْجَبِ الْأَشْيَاءِ ظَبْيٌ مُبْرَقْعٌ  
يُشِيرُ بِعُنَانِ وَيُوْمِي بِأَجْفَانِ

[10] مَا بَيْنَ الْتَّرَائِبِ وَالْحَشَى  
وَبَا عَجَبًا مِنْ رَوْضَةٍ وَسْطَ نِيرَانِ

لَقَدْ صَارَ قَلْبِي قَابِلًا كُلَّ صُورَةٍ  
فَمَرْعَى لِغِرْلَانِ وَدَيْرُ لِرْهَبَانِ

Who's here for me  
in Jem and Muhássab,  
at Tamarisk and  
camp Na'mān?

Hour by hour they  
circle my heart  
in rapture and graze  
each corner with a kiss

They swore they'd never  
change and vowed  
Who dyes herself  
with henna's unfaithful

A veiled gazelle's  
an amazing sight,  
her henna hinting,  
eyelids signaling

A pasture between  
breastbone and spine  
Marvel, a garden  
among the flames!

My heart can take on  
any form  
For gazelles a meadow  
A cloister for monks

[10]

وَبَيْتُ لَأَوْنَانِ وَكَعْبَةُ طَائِفٍ  
وَأَلْوَاحُ تَوْرَاهُ وَمُصْحَفُ قُرْآنِ

أَدِينُ بِدِينِ الْحُبِّ أَنِّي تَوَجَّهْتُ  
رَكَائِبُهُ فَالْدِينُ دِينِي وَإِيمَانِي

لَنَا أُسْوَةٌ فِي بِشْرٍ هَنْدِي وَأَخْتِهَا  
وَقَيْسٌ وَلَيْلَى ثُمَّ مَيْ وَغَيْلَانِ

A temple for idols,  
pilgrim's Ka`ba,  
tablets of Torah,  
scrolls of the Qur'ân

I profess the religion  
of love    Wherever  
its camels turn, there  
lives my faith

Like Bishr and Hind,  
love-mad Qays  
and his lost Láyla  
Máyya and stricken Ghaylān

بِذِي سَلَمٍ وَالْدَّيْرِ مِنْ حَاضِرِ الْجَمَى  
ظِبَاعُ ثُرِيكَ الْشَّمْسَ فِي صُورِ الْدُّمَى

فَأَرْقُبُ أَفَلَاكًا وَأَخْدُمُ بَيْعَةً  
وَأَخْرُسُ رُوضًا بِالرَّبِيعِ مُنْمَنَمًا

فَوَتَّا أَسَمَى رَاعِي الْفَطْيِ بِالْفَلَى  
وَوَقَّتا أَسَمَى رَاهِبًا وَمُنَجَّما

تَهَلَّتْ مُحْبُوبِي وَقَدْ كَانَ وَاحِدًا  
كَمَا صَيَّرُوا أَلْأَقْتُومَ بِالذَّاتِ أَقْتُومًا

[5] فَلَا تُنْكِرُنْ يَا صَاحِ قَوْلِي عَرَالَةً  
ثُضِّيُّ لِغَرْلَانِ يَطْفَنَ عَلَى الْدُّمَى

## Sunblaze

At Sálam and Híma's  
cloister, gazelles  
reveal the sun  
as marble statues

I observe the spheres,  
serve a basilica,  
guard a garden  
jeweled with spring

Gazelle-minder  
of the empty quarter,  
astrologer, monk—  
is what they call me

The one I love is  
three though one  
like the three they call  
a single being

Believe what I tell you,  
friend, about Sunblaze  
guiding gazelles  
circling the statues

[5]

فِلَلَظْبِيْ أَحْيَا دَا وَلِلشَّمْسِ أَوْحَدَهَا  
وَلِلدُّمْيَةِ الْبَيْضَاءِ صَدْرًا وَمَعْصَمًا

كَمَا قَدْ أَعْرَنَا لِلْعُصُونِ مَلَابِسًا  
وَلِلرَّوْضِ أَخْلَاقًا وَلِلْبَرْقِ مَبِيسًا

A gazelle with a neck  
a sun with a face  
a blood-marbled statue  
with wrist and breast

As we lend raiment  
to branches, virtues  
to a garden and  
to lightning—a smile

نَاحَتْ مُطَوَّقَةً فَخَنَ حَزِينُ  
وَشَجَاهٌ تَرْجِيْعٌ لَهَا وَخَنِينُ

جَرَبَتْ الْدُّمُوعُ مِنْ أَعْيُونَ تَقْجُعاً  
لِخَنِينِهَا فَكَانَتْهُنَّ عُيُونُ

طَارَخْتُهَا نَكْلَى بِقَفْدٍ وَحِيدِهَا  
وَالثُّكْلُ مِنْ قَفْدِ الْوَحِيدِ يَكُونُ

طَارَخْتُهَا وَالشَّجُورُ يَمْشِي بَيْنَنَا  
مَا إِنْ تَبِينُ وَإِلَّا نِي لَأُبِينُ

[5] يِ لَأَعِجْ مِنْ حُبٌ رَمْلَةٌ عَالِجٌ  
حَيْثُ الْجَيَامُ بِهَا وَحَيْثُ الْعِينُ

## Grief Between

A ringdove cooed  
A sad man yearned,  
stirred by the echoing  
yearning and grief

At the sound of her cry,  
his eyes welled  
like pools filling  
above a spring

She mourns her one  
and only: how deep  
the loss of the only!  
I called

Back, as grief  
passed between us  
I, revealed,  
she still hidden

At the sands of Ālij  
I felt love's sting—  
white tents on slopes  
Eyes wide open

[5]

مِنْ كُلِّ فَاتِكَةِ الْلَّاحَاظِ مَرِيضَةٌ  
أَجْفَاثَهَا لِظَّبِي الْلَّاحَاظِ جُهُونُ

مَا زِلْتُ أَجْرَعُ دَمْعَيِي مِنْ عَلَيَّ  
أَخْفَى الْهُوَى عَنْ عَادِلٍ وَأَصْوُنُ

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا صَاحَ الْعُرَابُ بِبَيْنِهِمْ  
فَضَّحَ الْفِرَاقُ صَبَابَةً الْمَخْزُونِ

وَصَلُوا السُّرَى قَطَّعُوا الْبُرَى فَلَعِيَسِهِمْ  
لَحْتَ الْمَحَامِلَ رَزَّةً وَأَنِينُ

[10] عَايَنْتُ أَسْبَابَ الْمَبْنِيَّةِ عِنْدَمَا  
أَرْخَوْا أَزْمَتَهَا وَشُدَّ وَضِيُّ

إِنَّ الْفِرَاقَ مَعَ الْعَرَامِ لَقَاتِلٌ  
صَعْبُ الْعَرَامِ مَعَ الْلَّقَاءِ يَهُونُ

Gazes languid  
glances fatal  
eyelids sheaths  
of glistening swords

I held back tears  
at the ache within,  
hiding love from  
blame, acting

Till the crow cawed  
*gone!* exposing  
the wild love of a  
man in sorrow

The riders pressed,  
spurring the camels,  
red-roans beneath  
the howdahs, groaning

As they cinched  
the saddles and loosened  
the reins, I beheld  
death's cords before me

In love's fever  
distance is mortal  
Finding her would  
ease the pain

[10]

مَا لِي عَذُولٌ فِي هَوَاهَا إِنَّهَا  
مَعْشُوقَةٌ حَسْنَاءٌ حَيْثُ تَكُونُ

What do I care if  
they blame my loving?  
She is loved where-  
ever she turns

رَأَى الْبَرْقَ شَرْقِيًّا فَحَنَّ إِلَى الْشَّرْقِ  
وَلَوْ لَا هُنْ عَرْبِيًّا حَنَّ إِلَى الْعَرْبِ

فَإِنَّ غَرَامِي بِالْبَرِيقِ وَلَمْحِهِ  
وَلَيْسَ غَرَامِي بِالْأَمَاكِنِ وَالثُّرُبِ

رَوَتْ لِي الصَّبَابَا عَنْهُمْ حَدِيثًا مُعَنْعَنًا  
عَنِ الْبَيْثِ عَنْ وَجْدِي عَنِ الْخُزْنِ عَنْ كَرْبِي

عَنِ السُّكْرِ عَنْ عَقْلِي عَنِ الشَّوْقِ عَنْ حَوَى  
عَنِ الدَّمْعِ عَنْ جَفْنِي عَنِ الْنَّارِ عَنْ قَلْبِي

[5]

بِأَنَّ الْلَّذِي تَهْوَاهُ بَيْنَ صُلُوعِكُمْ  
تُقَلِّبُهُ أَلَا تَفَاسُ حَنْبًا إِلَى حَنْبٍ

## Hadith of Love

Lightning flashed  
and he yearned for the East  
Had it flashed from the West  
there he'd have turned

I burn for the lightning,  
the flash, not for this  
or for some other  
piece of ground

The Eastwind brought us  
the word—from distraction  
from rapture and sorrow  
from my disarray

From drunkenness, reason,  
longing and grief,  
from the fire  
from my heart

*The one you seek  
is within your ribs  
turned in each breath  
from side to side*

[5]

فَقُلْتُ لَهَا بَلَّغْ إِلَيْهِ بِأَنَّهُ  
هُوَ الْمُوْقِدُ النَّارُ الْأَلَّيِ دَاخِلَ الْقَلْبِ

فِإِنْ كَانَ إِطْفَاءُ فَوَصْلٍ مُحْكَلَّدُ  
وَإِنْ كَانَ إِحْرَاقٌ فَلَا ذَبْ لَلصَّبَّ

Tell him (I told them)  
he's the one  
who lit the fire  
within my heart

To be with you now  
alone would quench it  
If it rages, why  
blame my love?

غَادَرُونِي بِالْأَشْيَلِ وَالنَّفَّا  
أَسْكُبُ الْدَّمْعَ وَأَشْكُوُ الْحَرَقَا

بِأَيِّ مَنْ دُبْتُ فِيهِ كَمَدًا  
بِأَيِّ مَنْ مِتْ مِنْهُ قَرَقاً

حُمَرَةُ الْخَجْلَةِ فِي وَجْنَتِهِ  
وَضَخُّ الْصُّبْحِ يُنَاغِي الشَّفَقَةَا

قَوْضَ الصَّبَرِ وَطَبَبَ الْأَسَى  
وَأَنَا مَا بَيْنَ هَذَيْنِ لِقَا

[5] مَنْ لِبَثَّيْ مَنْ لِوَحْدِي دُلَّنِي  
مَنْ لَجَرَنِي مَنْ لِصَبَّ عَشِقَا

## Just a Flash

They left me between  
Utháyl and White Dune,  
scattering tears  
and shouting *fire!*

My father's life  
for the one I mourn,  
in whom I disap-  
peared parting

On his cheek a tinge  
of shyness, dawn  
light whispering  
into dusk

Patience decamps,  
sorrow pitches  
its tent and I am  
frozen in place

Who will guide me  
through the thrall  
and throes of this  
unending love?

[5]

كُلَّمَا صُنْثٌ تَبَارِيْحَ الْمُؤْمِنِ  
فَضَّحَ الْدَّمْعُ الْجَوَى وَالْأَرْقَا

فَإِذَا قُلْتُ هَبُوا لِي نَظَرَةً  
قِيلَ مَا تُمْنَعُ إِلَّا شَفَقًا

مَا عَسَى تُعْنِيْكَ مِنْهُمْ نَظَرَةً  
هِيَ إِلَّا لَمْحٌ بَرْقٍ بَرَقًا

لَسْتُ أَنْسَى إِذْ حَدَّا الْخَادِي بِهِمْ  
يَطْلُبُ الْبَيْنَ وَيَبْغِي الْأَبْرَقَا

[10]

تَعَقَّثْ أَغْرِيْهُ الْبَيْنِ بِهِمْ  
لَا رَعَى اللَّهُ غُرَابًا تَعَقَّا

مَا غُرَابُ الْبَيْنِ إِلَّا جَمَلٌ  
سَارٌ بِالْأَحْبَابِ نَصًا عَنَّقًا

I'd 've concealed  
the anguish but tears  
and bleary eyes  
gave me away

Just a glance?  
I ask but they say,  
we hold back only  
out of compassion

Never will  
a glance release you  
It's only a flash  
crackling the night

I'll never forget  
how they left for Ábraq  
to the chants of guides  
chanting them on their way

*Gone!* cawed [10]  
the crows of departure  
God curse every  
crow that caws!

Parting's crow  
is but a camel  
bearing your love  
swiftly away

حَمْلَنَ عَلَى الْيَعْمَلَاتِ الْخُدُورًا  
وَأَوْدَعْنَ فِيهَا الْدُّمَى وَالْبُدُورًا

وَوَاعَدْنَ قُلْيَ أَنْ يَرْجِعُوا  
وَهَلْنَ تَعِدُ الْخُودُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا

وَحَيَّتْ بِعْنَائِكَا لِلْوَدَاعِ  
فَأَذْرَتْ دُمُوعًا كُثِيجُ الْسَّعِيرَا

فَلَمَّا تَوَلَّتْ وَقَدْ يَمْتَ  
ثُرِيدُ الْخَوْرَقَ ثُمَّ الْسَّدِيرَا

[5] دَعَوْتُ شُبُورًا عَلَى إِثْرِهِمْ  
فَرَدَثْ وَقَالَتْ أَتَدْعُوا شُبُورًا

## **Star Shepherd**

They placed the howdahs  
on long-stride camels,  
full moons within curtains,  
statues of stone

O they'd return!  
or so they vowed  
Beauty's promise,  
delusion

They bid farewell  
with henna-tipped fingers,  
unloosed their tears  
yet stoked a fire

They set off for Yemen  
then turned toward  
Khawárnaq then  
toward Sadīr

Damn it! I cried [5]  
as they departed  
If you want to cry  
damn it, they said

فَلَا تَدْعُونَ هَمَا وَاحِدًا  
وَلِكِنَّمَا أَذْعُ ثُبُورًا كَثِيرًا

أَلَا بِا حَمَامَ أَلْأَرَاكَ قَلِيلًا  
فَمَا زَادَكَ أُلْبَيْنُ إِلَّا هَدِيرًا

وَتَوْحِلَكَ يَا أَيُّهَا ذَا أَلْحَمَامُ  
يُشِيرُ أَلْمَشْوَقَ يُهْبِيْغُ أَلْعَيُورَا

يُذَيِّبُ أَلْثَوَادَ يَذُودُ الرُّفَادَ  
يُضَاعِفُ أَشْوَاقَنَا وَالزَّفِيرَا

[10] يَجْهُومُ الْجِمَامُ لِسُوحُ الْحَمَامُ  
فَتَسْنَأْلُ مِنْهُ أَلْبَقَاءَ يَسِيرَا

عَسَى تَفْحَّةٌ مِنْ صَبَا حَاجِرٌ  
تَسْوُقُ إِلَيْنَا سَحَابًا مَطِيرَا

Why this single  
cry of damnation?

Damn it, damn it,  
damn it again!

Easy now, dove  
of the persica  
thicket, departure  
has sharpened your cry

Your cooing stirs  
this lover,  
inflaming a man  
already afire

It melts the heart,  
drives off sleep,  
whets our longing,  
compounds our sighs

Death hovers  
in a dove's cry  
I ask remission  
if just for a time

May the Eastwind  
as it hails from Hājir  
soothe us with  
a cooling rain

[10]

ثُرَوْيٍ هَا أَنْفُسًا قَدْ ظَمِئَ  
فَمَا أَزْدَادَ سُخْبُكَ إِلَّا ثُفُورًا

فَيَا رَاعِي النَّحْمِ كُنْ لِي نَوِيْهًا  
وَيَا سَاهِرَ الْبَرْقِ كُنْ لِي سَهِيْرًا

وَيَا رَاقِدَ اللَّيْلِ هُنْفَتَهُ  
فَقَبْلَ الْمَمَاتِ عَمْرَتَ الْقُبُورَا

[15] فَلَوْ كُنْتَ تَهْوِي أَلْفَنَاهَ الْعُرُوبَا  
لَنِلْتَ أَنْنَعِيمَ إِكَا وَالسُّرُورَا

شَعَاطِي الْجِسَانَ حُمُورَ الْحُمَارِ  
شَنَاجِي الْشَّمُوسَ شَنَاغِي الْبَدُورَا

And quench each  
parched soul  
Yet your rain clouds  
fly further away

You, star shepherd,  
let's drink by night  
and you, lightning-gazer,  
be my companion

And you, who  
sleep the night away  
self-entombed  
before you die

If only you'd loved  
a brave beauty  
you'd have found  
what you desired

[15]

You'd be sharing wine  
with the ladies,  
confiding in the sun,  
whispering with the moon

يَا حَادِي الْعِيسِ لَا تَعْجَلْ بِهَا وَقِئَا  
فَإِنِّي زَمْنٌ فِي إِثْرِهَا عَادِ

قِفْ بِالْمَطَايَا وَشَكَرْ مِنْ أَزْمَتِهَا  
بِاللَّهِ بِالْوَجْدِ بِالتَّبْرِيجِ يَا حَادِي

تَفْسِي ثُرِيدُ وَلِكِنْ لَا تُسَاعِدُهَا  
رِجْلِي فَمَنْ لِي بِإِشْفَاقٍ وَإِسْعَادِ

مَا يَقْعَلُ الْصَّنْعُ النَّخْرِيرُ فِي شُعْلِ  
آلَاهُ آذَكْ فِيهِ بِإِفْسَادِ

[5] عَرْجُ فَفِي أَيْمَنِ الْوَادِي خِيَامُهُمْ  
لِلَّهِ دَرْكَ مَا تَخُوِيهِ يَا وَادِي

## **God Curse My Love**

Slow down, red-roan  
drivers, stop—  
I'm worn out, broken,  
fallen behind

Whoa, stop,  
pull in the reins,  
by God and by the  
pain and passion!

My spirit is willing  
but my legs are weak  
Who's here for me now  
with help and cheer?

When the skilled craftsman  
finds his tools  
of no avail—  
what can he do?

Look! Their tents  
are on the right  
God bless you, wádi,  
for what you hold

[5]

جَمِعْتَ قَوْمًا هُمْ نَفْسِي وَهُمْ نَفْسِي  
وَهُمْ سَوَادٌ سُوَادًا بِحَلْبٍ أَكْبَادِي

لَا دَرْ دَرُّ الْهَوَى إِنْ مَأْمُوتْ كَمَدًا  
بِخَاجِرٍ أَوْ بِسَلْعٍ أَوْ بِأَجْيَادٍ

You hold a people  
    who are my soul,  
my breath and the dark  
    of my liver's caul

God curse my love  
    if grief doesn't take me  
at Hājir, at Sal<sup>c</sup>  
    or in Ajyâdî

قِفْ بِالْمَنَازِلِ وَأَنْدُبِ الْأَطْلَالَ  
وَسَلِ الْرُّبُوعَ الْدَّارِسَاتِ سُؤَالَ

أَيْنَ الْأَحَبَّةُ أَيْنَ سَارَتْ عِصْمُهُمْ  
هَا تِيكَ تَقْطُعُ فِي الْأَيَّابِ الْأَلَاءِ

مِثْلُ الْحَدَائِقِ فِي السَّرَابِ تَرَاهُمُ  
أَلَاءُ يُعْظِمُ فِي الْعُيُونِ الْأَلَاءِ

سَارُوا يُرِيدُونَ الْعَدَيْبَ لِيَشْرُبُوا  
مَاءً بِهِ مِثْلُ الْحَيَاةِ زُلَاءِ

[5] فَفَقَوْتُ أَشَأْلُ عَنْهُمْ رِيحَ الصَّبَّا  
هَلْ حَيَّمُوا أَوْ أَسْتَظْلُوا الصَّبَّا

## As Cool as Life

Halt at the stations,  
grieve at the ruins,  
then ask the meadows  
so desolate now

Where are those  
we loved and their roans?  
Over there, cutting  
through the desert haze

They loom before you  
like a garden mirage—  
large silhouettes  
in the mist

They've gone in search  
of al-'Udháyb  
to drink at its waters  
cool as life

I tracked after them,  
asking the Eastwind  
Did they pitch their tents  
or find loté's shade?

[5]

فَالْتَّ تَرْكُثُ عَلَى رَزْوَدِ قِبَابِهِمْ  
وَأَعْيَسُ تَشْكُو مِنْ سُرَادَ كَلَالَا

قَدْ أَسْدَلُوا فُوقَ الْقِبَابِ مَصَاوِنًا  
يَسْتَرُونَ مِنْ حَرَّ الْمُحِيطِ جَمَالًا

فَأَنْهَضْ إِلَيْهِمْ طَالِبًا آثَارَهُمْ  
وَأَرْقَلْ بِعِسَكَ نَحْوَهُمْ إِرْفَالًا

فَإِذَا وَقْتَ عَلَى مَعَالِمِ حَاجِرٍ  
وَقَطَعْتَ أَغْوَازِيَّا بِهَا وَجَبَالًا

[10] قَرُبْتَ مَنَازِلُهُمْ وَلَا حَتْ تَأْرُهُمْ  
تَأْرَ قَدْ أَشْعَلْتِ الْمُؤْيِ إِشْعَالًا

فَأَنْجِيَّهَا لَا يُرْهِبَنَكَ أَسْدُهَا  
فَالْأَلْشْتِيَاقُ يُرِيكَهَا أَشْبَالًا

She said she left them  
at Drifting Sands,  
their camels groaning  
through the night journey

They lowered a curtain  
over the flaps  
of their tents, sheltering  
beauty from the sun

So set off, friends,  
in their tracks  
on amber camels  
pacing in pursuit

Halt near the waymarks  
of Hājir, then  
cross its canyons  
and ascend its ridge

As you near them  
a fire will flare  
before you and  
ignite your longing

Kneel your camels  
Don't fear their lions  
In desire's fire  
they'll look like cubs

[10]

يَا طَلَّا عِنْدَ الْأَشْيَلِ دَارِسَا  
لَاعْبُثُ فِيهِ خَرَّدًا أَوَانِسَا

بِالْأَمْسِ كَانَ مُؤْنِسًا وَضَاحِكًا  
وَالْيَوْمَ أَضْحَى مُوْحِشًا وَعَاسِسَا

نَأْوَا وَمَأْشُعْرُهُمْ فَمَا دَرَوا  
أَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ ضَمِيرِي حَارِسَا

يَتَبَعُهُمْ حَيْثُ نَأْوَا وَخَيَّمُوا  
وَقَدْ يَكُونُ لِلْمَطَايَا سَائِسَا

[5] حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَلُوا بِقَفْرٍ بَلْقَعٍ  
وَخَيَّمُوا وَاقْتَرَسُوا الْطَنَافِسَا

## The Tombs of Those Who Loved Them

O windswept ruin at Utháyl  
where I would play  
with lissome girls  
who knew discretion

Yesterday, it embraced us  
laughing   Today  
it frowns  
in desolation

They left as if  
I'd no clue  
Little did they know  
my eye within

Could see and follow them  
to their encampment—  
it might've been me  
leading their camels—

Until they halted  
in the Barrenlands  
spread their tents  
and unfurled their carpets

[5]

عَادَ إِلَيْهِمْ رَوْضًا أَغْنَى يَانِعًا  
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا قَدْ كَانَ قَمْرًا يَا يِسَّا

مَا تَرَلُوا مِنْ مَنْزِلٍ إِلَّا حَوَى  
مِنْ الْحِسَانِ رَوْضَةً طَوَّوسًا

وَلَا نَأْوِا عَنْ مَنْزِلٍ إِلَّا حَوَتْ  
مِنْ عَائِشِقِيهِمْ أَرْضَهُ تَوَاوِسًا

Brought back to a garden  
moist colors  
singing  
on drought-cracked ground

Wherever they stopped  
for midday rest  
blossomed into  
peacock splendor

When they struck camp  
they left a land  
bearing the tombs  
of those who loved them

مَرْضِيٌ مِنْ مَرِيضَةِ الْأَجْفَانِ  
عَلَّالِيٌ بِذِكْرِهَا عَلَّالِيٌ

هَفَتِ الْوُرْقُ بِالرِّيَاضِ وَنَاحْتُ  
شَجُونُ هَذَا الْحَمَامِ مِمَّا شَحَانِي

بِأَيِ طَفْلَةٍ لَعْوبٍ تَهَادَى  
مِنْ بَنَاتِ الْخُدُورِ بَيْنَ الْعَوَانِي

طَلَعْتُ فِي الْعِيَانِ شَمْسًا قَلَمًا  
أَقْلَتُ أَشْرَقَتُ بِأَفْقِ جَنَانِي

## In a Bad Way

I'm in a bad  
way, lost  
in the languor  
of her eyes

Say her name  
and heal me—  
Recalling her's  
my only cure

Doves rustled  
in the green, cooing,  
sad with the same  
sadness that's mine

My father's life!  
His life for a girl  
walking proud  
among the wives

In my eyes she  
rose like the sun  
then set aglow  
on my heart's horizon

[5] يَا طُلُولًا بِرَامَةٍ دَارِسَاتٍ  
كَمْ رَأَتْ مِنْ كَوَاعِبٍ وَجِسَانٍ

يَا إِبْيَمْ بِي غَرَّالْ رَيْبُ  
يَرْتَعِي بَيْنَ أَضْلُعِي فِي أَمَانٍ

مَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ نَارِهَا فَهُوَ نُورٌ  
لَهُكَدَا النُّورُ مُحَمَّدُ الْنَّبِيَّانِ

يَا خَلِيلَيَ عَرِّجاً بِعَنَانِي  
لِأَرْزِي رَسْمَ دَارِهَا بِعِيَانِي

فَإِذَا مَا بَلَغْتُمَا الدَّارَ حُطَّاً  
وَهَا صَاحِيَ قَلْسَبِكِيَانِي

[10] وَقَفَا بِي عَلَى الْطُّلُولِ قَلِيلًا  
تَبَّاكَى بَلْ أَبْكَ مِمَّا دَهَانِي

O ruins in Râma,  
wasted now—  
what splendor  
you once beheld!

[5]

My father's life  
my own! for  
a gazelle browsing  
within my ribs

What burns for her  
there is light  
and only light  
can quell this fire

Take the reins,  
friends, as traces  
of her camp emerge  
before my eyes

When we arrive  
at that place  
dismount and weep  
for me there

Support me then  
or try, even  
as I face mis-  
fortune alone

[10]

أَهْوَى رَاشْقِي بِعَيْرٍ سَهَامٍ  
أَهْوَى قَاتِلِي بِعَيْرٍ سَنَانٍ

عَرْفَانِي إِذَا بَكَيْتُ لَدَبْهَا  
تُسْعِدَانِي عَلَى أَلْبُكَا تُسْعِدَانِي

وَأَذْكُرَا لِي حَدِيثَ هِنْدٍ وَلُبْنِي  
وَسُلَيْمَى وَزَيْنَبِ وَعِنَانِ

ثُمَّ زِيدَا مِنْ حَاجِرٍ وَرَزُودٍ  
خَبْرًا عَنْ مَرَاتِعِ الْغِزَّلَانِ

[15] وَأَنْدُبَانِي بِشَعْرٍ فَيْسٍ وَلِيلَى  
وَهَمَى وَالْمُبْتَلَى غَيْلَانِ

طَالَ شَرْقِي لِطِفْلَةٍ ذَاتِ تَشْرِ  
وَنِظَامٍ وَمُنْبَرٍ وَبَيَانِ

Love struck—  
without an arrow,  
without a spear  
she put me away

Tell me again  
as I stand there weeping  
will you stay  
by my side?

Remind me of Hind  
and of Lúbna,  
Suláyma, Záynab  
and 'Inān

And what transpired  
at Zarūd and Hājir  
and out in the wilds  
among gazelles

Then sing my loss [15]  
with the verse of Qays  
and Láyla, Máyya  
and stricken Ghaylān

Long is my longing  
for a young girl—  
harmony in verse,  
in prose, in oration

مِنْ بَنَاتِ الْمُلُوكِ مِنْ دَارِ فُرْسٍ  
مِنْ أَجَلٍ أَلْبَادٍ مِنْ إِصْبَهَانِ

هِيَ بِنْتُ الْعَرَاقِ بِنْتُ إِمَامِي  
وَأَنَا ضِدُّهَا سَلِيلُ يَمَانِ

هَلْ رَأَيْتُمْ يَا سَادِيَ أَوْ سَيْعُثُمْ  
أَنَّ ضِدَّيْنِ قَطُّ يَجْتَمِعَانِ

[20] لَوْ تَرَأَى بِرَامَةً تَسْعَاطَ  
أَكْفُوسًا لِلْهَوَى بِعَيْرِ بَنَانِ

وَأَهْوَى بَيْنَنَا يَسُوقُ حَدِيثًا  
طَيْبًا مُطْرِبًا بِعَيْرِ لِسَانِ

لَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا يَذْهَبُ الْعَهْلُ فِيهِ  
يَمَنُ وَالْعِرَاقُ مُعْتَبِقَانِ

For the daughter of kings,  
of Persian shahs,  
of the city of cities,  
Isfahân

For a daughter of Irâq,  
my master's child  
and I, of Yemen,  
her foil

Did you know, my lords,  
have you heard  
that contraries could  
ever be joined?

Had you only seen us  
in Râma trading  
passion's chalice—  
not moving a hand

[20]

As love sang  
a rapture song  
between us  
without a sound

You'd have seen  
what melts the mind—  
Irâq and Yemen  
intertwined!

كَذَبَ الشَّاعِرُ الْذِي قَالَ قَبْلِي  
وَبِأَحْجَارٍ عَقْلِهِ قَدْ رَمَانِي

أَبُوهَا الْمُنْكَحُ الْتُرَى سُهْيَلًا  
عَمْرَكَ اللَّهُ كَيْفَ يَلْتَقِيَانِ

[25]

هَيِ شَامِيَّةٌ إِذَا مَا أَسْتَقَلْتُ  
وَسُهْيَلٌ إِذَا أَسْتَقَلَ يَمَانِ

The poet who  
coined these verses  
lied, pelting me  
with logic's stones

*O you who'd match  
Suháyl with the Pleiades  
God grant you life,  
how can they meet?*

*As the Pleiades ascend  
in the Syrian East  
Suháyl rises south  
southwest, in Yemen*

[25]

أَيَا رَوْضَةُ الْوَادِي أَجَبْ رَيْتَهُ الْجَمَعِي  
وَذَاتُ النَّايَا الْعَرَبِيَا رَوْضَةُ الْوَادِي

وَظَلَّلْ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ ظِلَالِكَ سَاعَةً  
قَلِيلًا إِلَى أَنْ يَسْتَقِرَّ بِهَا النَّادِي

وَتُنْصَبَ بِالْأَجْوَازِ مِنْكَ خِيَامُهَا  
فَمَا شِئْتَ مِنْ طَلَّ غِذَاءً لِمُنْآدِ

وَمَا شِئْتَ مِنْ وَبْلٍ وَمَا شِئْتَ مِنْ نَدَى  
سَحَابٌ عَلَى بَانَاتِهَا رَائِئُ غَادِ

[5] وَمَا شِئْتَ مِنْ ظِلٌّ ظَلِيلٌ وَمِنْ جَنِي  
شَهِيٌّ لَدَى أَجْنَانِ يَمِيسُ يَمِيَادِ

## Your Wish

O garden of the riverbed  
respond to the lady  
of this hallowed ground,  
she with the flashing

Smile    Cover her  
in shade for a while  
until the assembly  
gathers by her side

And their tents nestle  
along the banks  
Then dew and rain  
will moisten branches

As they sway  
Mists will shroud  
the moringa tree  
at dawn and eve

Then the shade  
will start to deepen  
from boughs laden  
low with fruits

[5]

وَمِنْ نَاسٍ شِدٌ فِيهَا رَزُودٌ وَرَمَلٌ  
وَمِنْ مُنْشِدٍ حَادٍ وَمِنْ مُنْشِدٍ هَادٍ

For pilgrims seeking  
the sands of Zarūd,  
flanked by the chants  
of drivers and guides

عُجْ بِالرَّكَابِ حَوْ بُرْقَةِ ثَهْمَدِ  
حَيْثُ الْقَضِيبُ الْرَّطْبُ وَالرَّوْضُ النَّدِي

حَيْثُ الْبُرُوقُ هَا تُرِيكَ وَمِيقَهَا  
حَيْثُ الْسَّحَابُ هَا بَرُوكَ وَيَعْتَدِي

وَأَرْفَعْ صُوَيْتَكَ بِالسُّخْيِرِ مُنَادِيَا  
بِالْبِيْضِ وَالْغِيْدِ الْجِسَانِ الشَّهَدِ

مِنْ كُلِّ فَاتِكَةٍ بِطَرْفِ أَخْوَرِ  
مِنْ كُلِّ لَافِتَةٍ بِجِيدِ أَغْيَدِ

[5] تَهْوِي فَتْفَصِيدُ كُلَّ قُلْبٍ هَائِمٍ  
يَهْوِي الْجِسَانَ بِرَاشِقٍ وَمُهَنَّدِ

## **Blacksilver**

Turn toward the hard  
rock plain of Tháhmad  
where willows and meadows  
are moist with dew

Where lightning flickers  
before you and clouds  
come early and  
by dusk are gone

Lift your voice  
at the break of dawn  
and call to each radiant  
lissome girl

Fatal the blacksilver  
flash of her eyes,  
gentle the bend  
of her neck as she turns

She hunts after  
the heart-dazed lover  
laying him low  
with a glance of steel

[5]

تَعْطُو بِرَّ خُصٍّ كَالْمَفْسِ مُنْتَعِ  
بِالنَّدٌ وَالْمِسْكِ الْفَتِيقِ مُقْرَمٌ

تَرُو إِذَا لَحِظَتْ بُمْقَلَةٍ شَادِينٍ  
يُغَرِّي لِمُمْقَلَتِهَا سَوَادُ الْأَنْمَدِ

بِالْعُجَّجِ وَالسَّخْرِ الْقَوْلُ مُكَحَّلٌ  
بِالْتَّيِّهِ وَالْخَسْنِ الْبَدِيعِ مُقَلَّلٌ

هَيْقَاءُ مَا تَهْوِي أَلَّذِي أَهْوَى وَلَا  
نَفِ لِلَّذِي وَعَدْتِ بِصِدْقِ الْمَوْعِدِ

[10] سَحَبَتْ غَدِيرَتِهَا شُجَاعًا أَسْوَدًا  
لِتُخِيفَ مَنْ يَقْفُو بِذَاكَ الْأَسْوَدِ

وَاللَّهِ مَا حِفْتُ الْمَنْوَنَ وَإِنَّمَا  
خَوْفِي أَمْوَثُ فَلَا أَرَاهَا فِي عَدِ

She extends you a hand  
soft as undyed silk  
anointed with  
ambergris and musk

She casts you the gaze  
of a fawn gazelle  
a glint of obsidian  
in her eyes

A collyrium of spells  
across her brow,  
neckline ablaze  
with beauty unheard

How slender she is,  
not loving as I  
do, nor true  
to her vow

She lets down her hair's  
black coils to  
fix with dread  
one who'd track her

[10]

It isn't by God  
my death I fear  
but to die and  
never see her

سُخِيرًا أَنَا خُوا بِرَادِي الْعَقِيقِ  
وَقَدْ قَطَعُوا كُلَّ فَجٌ عَمِيقِ

فَمَا طَلَعَ الْفَجْرُ إِلَّا وَقَدْ  
رَأَوْا عَلَمًا لَا إِحَادًا فَوْقَ نِيَقِ

إِذَا رَأَمْهُ النَّسْرُ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ  
فَمِنْ دُونِهِ كَانَ بِيَضْ أَلَّا يُوقِ

عَلَيْهِ زَحَارِفُ مَنْفُوشَةُ  
وَثِيقُ الْقَوَاعِدِ مِثْلُ الْعَقُوقِ

[5] وَقَدْ كَتَبُوا أَسْطُرًا أَوْدَعُوهَا  
أَلَا مَنْ لِصَبَّ غَرِيبٍ مَشْوِقِ

## Blaze

By dawn's edge they'd cut  
through every ravine  
to kneel their camels  
in Wādilaqīq

At first pale light  
it appeared  
high above them  
on a mountain peak

It towers beyond  
the eagle's glide,  
cliff-buzzard's eggs  
nestled in its shadows

On great foundations  
it rises heavenward,  
decked and blazoned  
like Castle 'Aqūq

On its walls they carved  
a tale for the telling  
and left it: Pity  
the love-lost stranger

[5]

لَهُ هَمَّةٌ فَوْقَ هَذَا الْسَّمَاكِ  
وَبُيوطًا بِالْحُفَّ وَطْءَ الْحَرِيقِ

وَمَسْكُنَتُهُ عِنْدَ هَذَا الْعَقَابِ  
وَقَدْ مَاتَ فِي الدَّمْعِ مَوْتَ الْغَرِيقِ

قَدْ أُسْلَمَهُ الْحُبُّ لِلْحَادِثَاتِ  
إِلَّا الْمَكَانِ بِغَيْرِ شَقِيقِ

فَيَا وَارِدِينَ مِيَاهَ الْقَلِيلِ  
وَبَيَا سَاكِنِينَ بِوَادِي الْعَقِيقِ

[10]  
وَبَيَا طَالِبًا طَيْبَةً رَائِرًا  
وَبَيَا سَالِكِينَ إِلَّا الْطَّرِيقِ

أَفِيقُوا عَلَيْنَا فَإِنَّا رُزِينَا  
بُعْيَدَ الْسُّخْيِرِ قُبَيْلَ الْشُّرُوقِ

بِبَيْضَاءِ غَيْدَاءِ بَهْنَانَةِ  
تَضَعُّ نَشْرًا كَمِسْلِ فَتِيقِ

Who reached past Arcturus  
then was ground  
underfoot like  
an ember

Who staked his home  
in Aquila's stars,  
then sank drowning  
through his tears

Here in this place  
love turned him over  
without a friend  
to the twisting fates

You who come down  
to Old Well,  
you who find home  
in Wādilaqīq

You who search  
for sweet Medina,  
you treading this  
same hard ground

Revive me! Dawn  
then dusk and I  
was robbed of a tender  
fragrant beauty

[10]

تَمَاهِيْل سَكُرْتِي كَمِثْلِ اُلْعُصُبُونِ  
شَنَّهَا اُلْرِيَاخ كَمِثْلِ اُلْشَقِيقِ

بِرِدْفِ مَهْوِل كَدِعْصِ اُلْنَقَّا  
تَرْجُرْجُ مِثْل سَنَام اُلْفَنِيقِ

[15]

فَمَا لَامَنِي في هَوَاهَا عَذُولٌ  
وَلَا لَامَنِي في هَوَاهَا صَدِيقٌ

وَلَوْ لَامَنِي في هَوَاهَا عَذُولٌ  
لَكَانَ جَوَابِي إِلَيْهِ شَهِيقٌ

فَشَوْقِي رِكَابِي وَحُزْنِي لِيَاسِي  
وَوَجْدِي صَبُوحِي وَدَمْعِي غَبُوقٌ

She sways tipsy  
as a willow touched  
by the wind, as anemone  
petals part silken

With a sway of the hips  
like the sway of a dune  
or the hump of a camel mare  
ambling in the haze

If you shame me, scold,  
for loving her,

[15]

if you shame me, friend,  
I'll answer with a gasp

Longing's my mount  
solitude's my mantle,  
my dawn wine's delirium,  
tears are for dusk

وَقَالَ وَأَنْشَدَنِي بَعْضُ الْفُقَرَاءِ بَيْتًا لَا أَعْرِفُ لَهُ أَخَاً وَهُوَ هَذَا

عَهْدِي إِمْثُلِي عِنْدَ بَانِيكَ قَاطِفًا  
ثُمَّ أَلْقَدُوْدَ وَوَرْدَ رَوْضِ أَيْنَعِ

فَأَعْجَبَنِي وَقَفَوْتُ مَعْنَاهُ فَعَمِلْتُ أَبْيَاتًا فِي هَذَا الْرَّوْيِّ وَضَمَّنْتُهَا  
هَذَا أَلْبَيْتَ بِكَمَالِهِ إِحْبَابَةً لِذِلِّكَ الْفَقِيرِ رَحْمَةً أَللَّهُ فَقُلْتُ:

فِفْ بِالْطُّلُولِ الْلَّادِرَسَاتِ بِلَعْلَعِ  
وَأَنْدَبْ أَحِبَّنَا بِدَاكَ الْبَلْعَعِ

فِفْ بِالْدَّيَارِ وَنَادِهَا مُتَعَجَّبًا  
مِنْهَا بِخُسْنِ تَلَطُّفٍ بِتَنَجُّعِ

عَهْدِي إِمْثُلِي عِنْدَ بَانِيكَ قَاطِفًا  
ثُمَّ أَلْقَدُوْدَ وَوَرْدَ رَوْضِ أَيْنَعِ

## Stay Now

*A dervish recited a verse to me, the likes of which I'd never heard.*

All who sought you  
you showered with graces  
Only for me did your  
lightning flash faithless

*It struck me and I followed its trail. I've composed verses using his rhyme, quoting his verse in full, as a response to that dervish, God rest his soul.*

Stay at the ruins  
in Lá'la'i fading,  
and in that wilderness  
grieve for those we loved

And at that campsite  
call out her name,  
your heart softly  
torn away

O for the times  
passed near her moringa,  
picking her fruit,  
her garden's red rose

كُلُّ الَّذِي يَرْجُو تَوَالِكِ أَمْطَرُوا  
مَا كَانَ بَرْقُكِ خُلْبًا إِلَّا مَعِي

[5] فَأَلْتُ تَعْمَ قَدْ كَانَ ذَاكَ الْمُلْتَقَى  
فِي ظِلِّ الْأَنْتَابِي بِالْخَصَبِ مَوْضِعٍ

إِذْ كَانَ بَرْقِي مِنْ بُرُوقِ مَبَاسِمِ  
وَالْيَوْمِ بَرْقِي لَمْعُ هَذَا الْيَرْمَعِ

فَأَغْثَبْ رَهَانًا مَا لَنَا مِنْ حِيلَةٍ  
فِي دَفْعِهِ مَا ذَنْبُ مَنْزِلِ لَعْلَعِ

فَعَذَرْتَهَا لَمَّا سَعَتْ كَلَامَهَا  
تَشْكُو كَمَا أَشْكُو بِقُلْبِ مُوجِعِ

وَسَأَلْتَهَا لَمَّا رَأَيْتُ رُثُوعَهَا  
مَسْرَى الْرِّبَاحِ الْذَّارِيَاتِ الْأَرَبَعِ

All who sought you  
you showered with graces  
Only for me did your  
lightning flash faithless

We used, she said,  
to come there together  
in my branches' shadows  
in that lush land

My lightning, once  
a smile's flash,  
is now a blaze  
of barren stone

Blame time  
relentless time!  
What fault was it  
of Lá'la'i?

I forgave her  
as I heard her speak  
grieving as I grieved  
with wounded heart

I asked her when  
I saw her meadows  
pastures of the  
scouring winds—

[5]

[10]

هَلْ أَخْبَرَنِكِ رِيَاخُهُمْ إِعْقِلَهُمْ  
قَالَتْ تَعَمْ قَالُوا بِذَاتِ الْأَجْرَعِ

حَيْثُ الْحَيَّاْمُ الْبِيْضُ شَرْقُ بِالْذِي  
تَحْوِيهِ مِنْ تِلْكَ الْشَّمُوسِ الظَّلْعِ

Did they tell you where  
they'd rest at noon  
Yes, she said,  
at Sand Hill

[10]

Where white tents glow  
from the light of  
all those suns  
ablaze within

وَأَحْرَبَا مِنْ كَيْدِي وَأَحْرَبَا  
وَأَطَرَّا مِنْ خَلْدِي وَأَطَرَّا

فِي كَيْدِي نَارُ حَوَى مُحْرَفَةً  
فِي خَلْدِي بَدْرُ دُجَى قَدْ غَرَبَا

يَا مِسْكُ يَا بَدْرُ وَيَا عُصْنَ نَقَّا  
مَا أَوْرَقَا مَا أَنْوَرَا مَا أَطْبَبَا

يَا مَبِيسِمًا أَحَبَبْتُ مِنْهُ الْحَبَبَا  
وَيَا رُضَابًا ذُفْتُ مِنْهُ الضَّرَبَا

[5] يَا فَمِرًا فِي شَفَقٍ مِنْ خَجَلٍ  
فِي خَدْدَه لَاخَ لَنَا مُنْتَقِبَا

لَوْ أَنَّهُ يُسْفِرُ عَنْ بُرْقِعِه  
كَانَ عَذَابًا فَلِهُدَا أَخْتَجَبَا

شَمْسُ صُحَى فِي قَلَكٍ طَالِعَةً  
عُصْنُ نَقَّى فِي رَوْضَةٍ قَدْ نُصِبَا

ظَلْلُتُ لَهَا مِنْ حَذَرٍ مُرْتَقِبَا  
وَالْعُصْنُ أَسْقِيَه سَمَاءً صَبَبَا

إِنْ طَلَعْتُ كَائِنُ لِعَيْنِي عَجَبًا  
أَوْ غَرَبْتُ كَائِنُ لِحَيْنِي سَبَبَا

## **Vanished**

Deep are the wounds and the rapture sharp  
Love has ravaged me to the marrow

Yet by night a full moon shines  
within my soul—musk and moon

And a branch on a dune,  
so green and clear, so fragrant!

O how I loved the luster of his smile,  
the nectar tasted in his kiss

A pale moon in sunset glow  
on his cheek from behind a veil

[5]

Had he lowered the veil, he'd  
have sharpened the pain    He let it be

She rose before me like a midday sun,  
a branch on a dune become a garden

In fear I kept vigil, watering  
that garden with a bursting sky

In wonder I behold her rise,  
then, as she sets, I expire

[10] مُذْ عَقَدَ أَحْسِنُ عَلَى مَفْرِقَهَا  
تَاجًا مِنَ الْتَّبِيرِ عَشِيقُتُ الْذَّكَرِ

لَوْ أَنَّ إِبْلِيسَ رَأَى مِنْ آدَمِ  
نُورَ مُحَيَاهَا عَلَيْهِ مَا أَبَى

لَوْ أَنَّ إِدْرِيسَ رَأَى مَا رَفِمَ أَلَّ  
حُسْنُ بَخَدِيهَا إِذَا مَا كَتَبَا

لَوْ أَنَّ بِلْقِيسَ رَأَتْ رَقْرَفَهَا  
مَا حَطَرَ الْعَرْشُ وَلَا الْصَّرْخُ بِهَا

يَا سَرْحَةَ الْوَادِي وَيَا بَانَ الْعَصَنَا  
أَهْدُوا لَنَا مِنْ نَشْرِئُمَ مَعَ الْصَّبَنَا

[15] مُسَكَّا يَفْوُخُ رَيْاهُ لَنَا  
مِنْ رَهْرِ أَهْضَامِكَ أَوْ رَهْرِ الْرُّبَيِّ

يَا بَانَةَ الْوَادِي أَرِينَا فَتَنَّا  
فِي لِينِ أَعْطَافِهَا أَوْ قُضَبَا

رِيحُ صَبَا تُخْبِرُ عَنْ عَصْرِ صَبَا  
بِحَاجِرٍ أَوْ بِمَيِّنَ أَوْ بِقُبَابَا

أَوْ بِالْنَّقَى فَالْمُنْحَنَى عِنْدَ الْحَمَى  
أَوْ لَعْلَعَ حَيْثُ مَرَاتِعُ الظَّبَا

لَا عَجَبٌ لَا عَجَبٌ لَا عَجَبًا  
مِنْ عَرَبِيِّ يَتَهَاوِي الْعُرُبَا

[20] يَفْتَ إِذَا مَا صَدَحَتْ قُمْرَيَّةً  
بِذُكْرِ مَنْ يَهْوَاهُ فِيهِ طَرَبَا

Beauty laced the strands of her hair  
in a gold tiara, gilding my fever

[10]

Had Iblis seen her glow on Adam  
he'd 've fallen down in prayer

Had Idrīs seen the mark of beauty  
on her cheek, he'd 've written no more

Had Bilqīs seen her carpet  
Sulaymān's hall would've slipped her mind

O sarh tree of the valley, moringa, tamarisk  
send your fragrance on the Eastwind

A scent of musk, and a breath  
of the lowland and highland blossoms

[15]

Moringa of the riverbed, show me  
a bough or wreath soft as her shoulder

The Eastwind tells of a time made young  
at Hājir, Mína, or at Qúba

By the trail-bend dune not far from Híma,  
at Lá'la' where gazelles graze

O do not do not do not wonder  
at an Arab flirting with a beauty of the sands

When the turtledove cries lost love—  
he's gone

[20]

بِالْجِزْعِ بَيْنَ الْأَبْرَقَيْنِ الْمَوْعِدُ  
فَأَنْجَحْ رَكَائِبَنَا فَذَاكَ الْمَوْرُدُ

لَا تَطْلُبَنَّ وَلَا شَنَادِي بَعْدَهُ  
يَا حَاجِرُ يَا بَارِقُ يَا شَهْمَدُ

وَالْعَبْ كَمَا لَعِبَتْ أَوَانِسُ نَهَدُ  
وَأَرْسَعْ كَمَا رَتَعَتْ ظِبَاءُ شَرَدُ

فِي رَوْضَةِ عَنَاءِ صَاحِبِ دُبَابُهَا  
فَأَحَادِبُهُ طَرَّا هُنَاكَ مُغَرَّدُ

[5] رَقْتْ حَوَشِيهَا وَرَقْ نَسِيمُهَا  
فَالْعَيْمُ يَبْرُقُ وَالْعَمَامَةُ تَرْعُدُ

## Vintage of Adam

Near the rock plain  
at Trail's Bend  
our camels will kneel  
by home waters

There's no need to seek  
anywhere after  
or call for Bāriq  
Tháhmad or Hājir

Revel like pert-  
breasted girls  
or gazelles that pause  
to graze then wander

While a fly murmurs  
in the meadow  
and a songbird trills  
in answer

The garden fringe,  
breeze tender,  
dark cloud glowing,  
thunder rumbling

[5]

وَالْوَذْقُ يَنْتَلُ مِنْ حَلَالٍ سَحَايِه  
كَدُمُوعٍ صَبٌ لِّلْفِرَاقِ تَبَدَّدُ

وَأَشْرَبْ سُلَافَةً حَمْرَهَا بِحُمَارِهَا  
وَأَطْرَبْ عَلَى عَرِيدٍ هُنَالِكَ يُسْتَشِدُ

وَسُلَافَةٍ فِي عَهْدِ آدَمَ أَخْبَرَتْ  
عَنْ جَنَّةِ الْمَأْوَى حَدِيثًا يُسْنَدُ

إِنَّ الْجِسَانَ شَفَلَنَّهَا مِنْ رِيقَةٍ  
كَأَلْمِسْنَكِ بَحَادٍ بِهَا عَلَيْنَا الْحُرَدُ

Rains cascading  
like the tears of a lover  
torn apart from  
the one he loves

Drink this ancient  
wine, drink deeply  
Let the song's  
spell take you . . .

Adam's vintage  
bearing word  
down the genera-  
tions from Eden

This wine, scented  
with musk,  
savored on the lips  
of women and girls

يَا أَئِيْهَا الْبَيْتُ الْعَتِيقُ تَعَالَى  
نُورٌ لَكُم بِقُلُوبِنَا يَسَّالَا

أَشْكُو إِلَيْكَ مَفَاوِزاً قَدْ جُبْتُهَا  
أَرْسَلْتُ فِيهَا أَدْمُعِي إِرْسَالَا

أَمْسِي وَأَصْبِحُ لَا أَلَدُ بِرَاحَةٍ  
أَصْلَ أَبْكُورَ وَأَقْطَعُ الْأَصَالَا

إِنَّ الْنَّيَاقَ وَإِنْ أَضَرَّ بِهَا الْوَجَى  
تَسْرِي وَتَرْقُلُ فِي الْسُّرَى إِرْقَالَا

[5] هَذِي الْرَّكَابُ إِلَيْكُمْ سَارَتْ بِنَا  
شَوْقًا وَمَا تَرْجُو بِذَاكِ وَصَالَا

## Old Shrine

To you, old shrine,  
high above,  
a light beckons  
from my heart

O the long,  
empty reaches  
I've crossed, tears  
my messengers

Morning and evening  
I ride without rest  
roping dawn to  
dusk to dawn

The camels stride  
through the night,  
hoof-bruised and lame,  
hard-striding

They bear me to you  
in longing, without  
desire of ever  
arriving there

[5]

قَطَعْتُ إِلَيْكَ سَبَاسِبًا وَرَمَاءِلًا  
وَجُدُّا وَمَا تَشْكُو لِذَاكَ كَلَالًا

مَا تَشْكِي أَمْ أَجْوَى وَأَنَا الَّذِي  
أَشْكُو الْكَلَالَ لَقَدْ أَتَيْتُ حُكَالًا

Through the endless  
reach of sands  
they race in a trance  
without complaint

No, I'm the one  
who groans  
he's weary—  
absurd

بَيْنَ النَّقَا وَلَعْلَى  
ظِبَاءُ دَاتِ الْأَجْرَعِ

تَرْعَى بِهَا فِي خَمْرٍ  
خَمَائِلًا وَتَرْعَى

مَا طَلَعَتْ أَهِلَّةً  
إِلَّا فِي دَاكِ الْمَطْلَعِ

إِلَّا وَدَدْتُ أَنَّهَا  
مِنْ حَدَّرٍ لَمْ تَطْلُعِ

وَلَا بَدَثْ لَامِعَةً  
مِنْ بَرْقٍ دَاكِ الْيَرْمَعِ

إِلَّا أَشْتَهِيْثُ أَنَّهَا  
لِمَا بِنَا لَمْ تَلْمَعِ

يَا دَمْعَتِي وَأَنْسَكِي  
يَا مُفْلِي لَا شُفْلِي

يَا رَقْرَنِي خُدْ صُبُدَا  
يَا كَبِدِي تَصَدَّعِي

وَأَنْتَ يَا حَادِي أَتَّيْدُ  
فَالنَّارُ بَيْنَ أَضْلُعِي

[5]

## No New Moon Risen

Between Náqa and Lá'la'  
Ájran gazelles

Graze the hillsides,  
in a covert, hidden

No new moon rises  
on that horizon

Without me wishing  
it wouldn't dare

Nor does the bare  
stone desert flash

[5]

Without me fearing  
our exposure

May these eyes  
pour tears forever

Sighs rise heavenward,  
heart shatter!

Slowly now, driver,  
my ribs burn

[10]

قَدْ فَنِيَتْ مِمَّا جَرَى  
خَوْفَ الْفِرَاقِ أَذْهَبَ

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَلَ الْتَّوَىٰ  
مُ تَلْقَ عَيْنَا تَدْمُعُ

فَأَرْحَلَنِ إِلَى وَادِي الْلَّوَىٰ  
مَرْبِعُهُمْ وَمَصْرِعُهُ

إِنْ بِهِ أَحَبَّتِي  
عِنْدَ مِيَاهِ الْأَجْرَىٰ

وَنَادِهِمْ مَنْ لِفَتِيٰ  
ذِي لَوْعَةٍ مُؤْدَعٌ

[15]

رَمَتْ بِهِ أَشْحَانُهُ  
بَهْمَاءَ رَسْمٍ بَلَقَعٍ

يَا قَمَرًا تَحْتَ دُجَىٰ  
خُدْ مِنْهُ شَيْنًا وَدَعٍ

وَزَوْدِيَّهُ نَظَرَةً  
مِنْ خَلْفِ ذَاكَ الْبُرْقُعِ

لِأَنَّهُ يَضْعُفُ عَنْ  
دَرْكِ أَجْمَالِ الْأَرْوَعِ

I wept and wept  
at the thought of their leaving

[10]

And now they're gone  
I can give no more

Journey to the swale  
of the twisting dune

Where they graze  
where I lie fallen

There by Ajran waters  
are those I love

So tell of a man  
left torn apart

Cast down in sorrow  
before the ruin

[15]

O hidden moon  
take something from him

But leave him a glimpse  
from behind the veil

(For he couldn't bear  
to behold such beauty)

أَفْ عَلِيهِ بِالْمُنْيِ  
عَسَاهُ يَخْبِأْ وَيَعْيِ

[20]

مَا هُوَ إِلَّا مَيِّتٌ  
بَيْنَ النَّفَقَ وَلِعَلَعِ

فَمُتُّ يَأْسًا وَأَسَى  
كَمَا أَنَا فِي مَوْضَعِي

مَا صَدَقْتُ رِيحُ الصَّبَّا  
حِينَ أَتَتْ بِالْحُدَى

فَدْ تَكْذِبُ الْرِّيحُ إِذَا  
تُسْمِعُ مَا لَمْ يُسْمِعِ

And a potion of hope  
to restore him to life

And to his senses  
He is just a creature

Dead on the trail  
between Náqa and Lá'la'

[20]

Dead from despair,  
dead from grief

Dead like me  
in the place I stand

What the Eastwind promised  
was illusion

When she led you to hear  
what wasn't spoken

بِأَيِّ الْعُصُورِ الْمَائِسَاتُ عَوَاطِفًا  
الْعَاطِفَاتُ عَلَى الْخُدُودِ سَوَالِفَا

الْمُرْسَلَاتُ مِنَ الشُّعُورِ عَدَائِرًا  
الْلَّيِّنَاتُ مَعَاقِدًا وَمَعَاطِفًا

السَّاحِباتُ مِنَ الدَّلَالِ ذَلَالًاً  
اللَّاِسَاتُ مِنْ أَجْهَامِ مَطَارِفَا

الْبَاخِلَاتُ بِخُسْنِيهِنَّ صِيَانَةً  
الْوَاهِبَاتُ مَتَالِدًا وَمَطَارِفَا

[5] الْمُؤِنَّقَاتُ مَضَاحِكًا وَمَبَاهِمًا  
الْطَّيِّبَاتُ مُفَبَّلًا وَمَرَاشَفَا

## Circling

I swear by my father's  
life they sway  
like boughs, strands  
along the cheeks

As their tresses  
gently fall  
Soft and supple  
through shoulder and wrist

They walk forth trailing  
flirtatious pride  
in gowns of luxuriant  
silken splendor

Cautious, they hold back  
their beauty but give  
of their treasures freely,  
old and new

A laugh's glamour,  
a welcoming smile,  
the ambrosial elixir  
of a kiss

[5]

الناعمات بُحْرَدًا وَالْكَاعِبَا  
ثُ مُنَهَّدًا وَالْمُهَدِّبَا طَرَائِقَا

الحالبات بِكُلِّ سُحْرٍ مُعْجِبٍ  
عِنْدَ الْحَدِيثِ مَسَامِعًا وَلَطَائِقَا

السَّايراتُ مِنْ الْحَيَاءِ مَحَاسِنًا  
تَسْبِي بِهَا الْقَلْبَ الْتَّقِيَّ الْخَائِفَا

المُبْدِيَاتُ مِنْ الشُّعُورِ لَأَلِيَا  
تَشْفِي بِرِيقَتِهَا ضَعِيفًا تَالِفَا

[10] الرَّامِيَاتُ مِنْ الْعُيُونِ رَوَاشِقًا  
قَلْبًا خَبِيرًا بِالْخُرُوبِ مُشَاقِقًا

المُطْلِعَاتُ مِنْ أَجْيُوبِ أَهْلَةً  
لَا يُلْفَيَنَّ مَعَ الْتَّمَامِ كَوَاسِقًا

A word, a phrase  
or plaintive call  
to enchant the ear  
and bind the soul

A woman's embrace,  
a girl's charms,  
graces giving  
wonder on wonder

With modest veils  
over such beauty  
as would ruin  
a God-fearing man

O how their teeth  
glow with a liquor  
that would bring  
back the dead!

Their eyes' arrows  
piercing the heart  
of a man long-  
practiced in war

New moons rising  
from their bodices—  
Once full they'll  
never fade

[10]

أَلْمُنْشِئَاتُ مِنْ الْدُّمُوعِ سَحَائِنًا  
أَلْمُسْمِعَاتُ مِنْ الْزَّفِيرِ قَوَاصِفًا

بَا صَاحِيَّ إِمْهَاجِيِّ حُمْصَائِهُ  
أَسْدَتْ إِلَيْهِ أَيَادِيَّاً وَعَوَارِفًا

نُظِّمَتْ نِظَامَ الْشَّمْلِ فَهِيَ نِظَامُنَا  
عَرَبِيَّةُ عَجْمَاءُ ثَلْهِيُّ الْعَارِفَا

[15] مَهْمَا رَأَتْ سَلَّتْ عَائِلَكَ صَوَارِمًا  
وَبَرِيرِيَّكَ مَبْسِمُهَا بَرِيرِيًّا خَاطِلًا

بَا صَاحِيَّ قِفَاعًا بِأَكْنَافِ الْحَمَى  
مِنْ حَاجِرٍ يَا صَاحِيَّ قِفَاعًا قِفَاعًا

حَتَّى أَسَابِلَ أَيْنَ سَارَتْ عِيسَيْهُمْ  
فَقَدِ افْتَحْمَثُ مَعَاطِيلًا وَمَتَالِعًا

And tears bursting  
in cascades,  
and sighs deep  
as rolling thunder

O my companions,  
my bones' marrow!  
for a slender girl  
who gave me her favor

She joins all  
to all in harmony  
Arabic or Persian  
she'd charm the sage

Wherever she gazes  
she bares a sword  
Lightning shimmers  
in her smile

[15]

Halt, dear friends,  
at the borders  
of Híma, near Hājir,  
halt there, please

That I may ask where  
their red-roans turn  
I've ridden through peril  
and the shadow of death

وَمَعَالِمًا وَمَجَاهِلًا بِشِمْلَةٍ  
تَسْكُو الْوَجْهَا وَسَبَابِيَا وَتَنَائِفَا

مَطْوِيَّةُ الْأَقْرَابِ أَدْهَبَ سَيْرُهَا  
بِخَيْثَيْنَةٍ مِنْهَا قُوىًّا وَسَدَائِفَا

[20] حَتَّىٰ وَقْفُتْ بِهَا بِرْمَلَةٌ حَاجِرٌ  
فَرَأَيْتُ نُوقًا بِالْأَشْيَلِ خَوَالِفَا

يَقْتَادُهَا قَمَرٌ عَلَيْهِ مَهَابَةٌ  
فَطَوَيْتُ مِنْ حَذَرٍ عَلَيْهِ شَرَاسِفَا

قَمَرٌ تَعَرَّضَ فِي الطَّوَافِ فَلَمْ أَكُنْ  
بِسِواهُ عِنْدَ طَوَافِهِ بِي طَائِفَا

يَمْخُو بِفَاضِلٍ بُرْدُوهُ آثَارُهُ  
فُسْحَارُ لَوْ كُنْتَ الدَّلَيلُ الْقَائِفَا

Past the last way-stone  
into trackless spaces  
on a hard-strider groaning  
through the desert void,

Flanks gaunt  
hump hollowed  
forces spent  
from her journey's pace

I brought her to halt  
at Hājir's sands  
near Tamarisk, seeing  
nurslings and mares

Led by a moon  
of ghastly mien  
I folded toward him  
in desire and fear

He appeared  
in the circling as  
around him I turned,  
he around me

His footprints effaced  
by the edge of his robe,  
so baffling should you  
seek to follow

[20]

بِأُثْيَالَاتِ الْنَّفَّا سِرْبُ قَطَا  
ضَرَبَ الْحُسْنُ عَلَيْهِ طُنْبَا

وَبِأَجْوَازِ الْفَلَّا مِنْ إِضَمٍ  
تَعْمُ تَرْعَى لَدَيْهَا وَظِبَى

يَا حَلِيلَيٰ قِفَا وَأَسْتَنْطِفَا  
رَسْمَ دَارِ بَعْدَهُمْ قَدْ خَرِبَا

وَأَنْدُبَا قُلْبَ فَتَّى فَارَقَهُ  
يَوْمَ بَانُوا وَأَبْكَيَا وَأَشْحِبَا

[5] عَلَّهُ يُخْبِرُ حَيْثُ يَمْمُوا  
أَلْجَرْعَاء الْحِمَى أَمْ لِئُبَا

## Like Sába's Lost Tribes

In the tamarisk stand  
near White Dune  
sand grouse shelter  
and beauty camps

Within a desert  
slashed by ravines  
camels graze  
among gazelles

O my two  
friends, halt  
here and question  
these ruins

As you grieve  
for a young man  
who lost his heart  
when she went away

Have they set out  
for Híma's sands  
or might they be headed  
to Qúba instead?

[5]

رَحَلُوا الْعِيسَ وَمَأْشَعْرُ كِهْمٌ  
أَلِسْهَهُو كَانَ أَمْ طَرْفٍ تَبَا

كَانَ إِلَّا وَلَهُ قَدْ غَلَبَ  
لَمْ يَكُنْ ذَاكَ وَلَا هَذَا وَمَا

يَا هُمُومًا شَرَدْتُ وَفَتَرَقْتُ  
خَلْفَهُمْ تَطْلُبُهُمْ أَيْدِي سَبَا

أَيُّ رِيحٍ نَسَمَتْ نَادِيَتُهَا  
يَا شَمَالًاً يَا جَنُوًّا يَا صَبَّاً

هَلْ لَدِيْكُمْ خَبَرٌ مَّا بِنَا  
فَدْ لَقِيْنَا مِنْ تَوَاهِمْ نَصَبَا

أَسْنَدَتْ رِيحُ الْصَّبَّا أَخْبَارَهَا  
عَنْ تَبَاتِ الشَّيْحِ عَنْ رَهْبَرِ الْرُّبَّا

I didn't notice them  
saddling to leave—  
Did my senses fail me  
or my attention?

It wasn't this  
and wasn't that  
but a conflagra-  
tion of desire

And O my cares—  
how you dispersed,  
scattering after them  
like Sába's lost tribes!

I call the fragrant  
winds as they pass:  
Northwind, South,  
Sweet-scented East!

Has news of us,  
so weary and spent  
in their absence,  
reached you?

The Eastwind brought  
the absinthe's word  
taken it in turn  
from the mountain flower

[10]

أَنَّ مَنْ أَمْرَضَهُ دَاءُ هُنْوَى  
فَلَيُعَلِّلَ بِأَحَادِيثِ الْصَّبَا

ئِمَّ قَالَتْ يَا شَمَالُ حَرِّي  
مِثْلَمَا خَبَرْتُهُ أَوْ أَعْجَبَاهَا

ئِمَّ أَنْتَ يَا جَنُوبُ حَدَّثِي  
مِثْلَ مَا حَدَّثْتُهُ أَوْ أَعْذَبَاهَا

[15] قَالَتِ الْشَّمَائِلُ عِنْدِي فَرْجٌ  
شَارَكْتُ فِيهِ الْشَّمَائِلَ الْأَزْبَابَا

كُلُّ سُوءٍ فِي هَوَاهُمْ حَسْنَا  
وَعَذَابٍ بِرِضاهُمْ عَذْبَا

فَإِلَى مَا وَعَلَى مَا وَلِمَا  
شَتَّكِي الْبَتْ وَتَشْكُو الْوَصَبَا

*Whoever suffers  
love's ills  
hadiths of young  
passion may heal*

Give us a word  
like the one given,  
she said to the Northwind,  
or more wondrous still

And you, then, wind  
from the South,  
bring news as sweet  
as mine or sweeter

I bring you, South  
said, glad tidings  
shared by the North  
and Southwest

[15]

*All wrongs endured  
become graces,  
all pain, if it pleases them,  
turns to pleasure*

Till when and why  
do you lament  
their leaving and  
count your wounds?

وَإِذَا مَا وَعَدُوكُمْ مَا تَرَى  
بَرْقَةُ إِلَّا بَرِيقًا خُلُّبًا

رَقَمُ الْعَيْمُ عَلَى رُذْنِ الْعَمَّا  
مِنْ سَنَا الْبَرْقِ طِرَازًا مُذْهَبًا

[20] فَجَرَثَ أَذْمَعُهَا مِنْهَا عَلَى  
صَحْنِ خَدَّيْهَا فَأَدْكَثَ لَهَا

وَرْدَةٌ نَابِتَةٌ مِنْ أَذْمَعٍ  
تَرْجِسُ يُنْطِرُ غَيْشًا عَجَبًا

وَمَئَى رُمْتَ جَنَاحَاهَا أَرْسَلَتْ  
عَطْفَ صُدْغَيْهَا عَلَيْهَا عَفْرَنَا

شُشْرُقُ الشَّمْسُ إِذَا مَا أَبْسَمَتْ  
رَبُّ مَا أَشَوَرَ ذَاكَ الْحَبَبَا

Whatever they promise  
you see in the lightning  
only the flash  
of a rainless cloud

There on the fringe  
of dark, the cloud  
wove a filigree  
of pure gold

Then sent tears  
running along  
its cheeks, then  
kindled a flame

[20]

Eyes as black  
as narcissi shone  
and a rose appeared  
upon her cheek

If you seek it  
she will lower  
her scorpion curls  
over her temples

The sun rises  
in her smile  
How clearly, lord,  
her moist teeth shine!

يَطْلُعُ الْلَّيْلُ إِذَا مَا سَدَّلَتْ  
فَاحِمًا جَحْلًا أَثِيَّا عَيْهَبَا

[25]

يَجَارَى الْنَّحْلُ مَهْمَا تَقَلَّتْ  
رَبٌّ مَا أَعْذَبَ ذَاكَ الْشَّنَبَا

وَإِذَا مَالَتْ أَرْشَنَا فَنَنَا  
أَوْ رَئَتْ سَلَّتْ مِنْ الْلَّخْظِ طُنَا

كَمْ شَاغِي بِالنَّعَّا مِنْ حَاجِرٍ  
يَا سَلِيلَ الْعَرَبِيِّ الْعَرَبَا

أَنَا إِلَّا عَرَبِيُّ وَلِدَا  
أَعْشَقُ الْبِيْضَ وَأَهْوَى الْعَرَبَا

لَا أَبَالِي شَرَقَ الْوَجْدُ بِنَا  
حَيْثُ مَا كَانَتْ بِهِ أَوْ غَرَبَا

Night falls  
as she loosens  
the plush jet  
black of her hair

She spits and brings [25]  
bliss to the bees  
Much sweeter, lord,  
the nectar of her kiss

Like a willow  
in the wind she moves  
Her glance bares  
a glimmering sword

How far will you go,  
Arab son,  
courting the women  
by Hājir's white sands!

I'm but an Arab  
born to love  
bright beauties  
of my kind

Whether passion  
rises within me  
or sets, no matter—  
so long as they're there

[30]

كُلَّمَا قُلْتُ أَلَا قَالُوا أَمَا  
وَإِذَا مَا قُلْتُ هَلْ قَالُوا أَبَا

وَمَئِيْ مَا أَنْجَدُوا أَوْ أَنْهَمُوا  
أَقْطَعَ الْبِيدَ أَحْثُ الْطَّبَّابَا

سَامِرِيُّ الْوَقْتِ قَلْبِي كُلَّمَا  
أَبْصَرَ الْأَنَارَ يَبْغِي الْمَذْهَبَا

وَإِذَا هُمْ عَرَبُوا أَوْ شَرَّفُوا  
كَانَ ذَا الْقَرْبَيْنِ يَفْعُلُ الْسَّبَبَا

كَمْ دَعَوْنَا لِوَصَالِ رَعَبَا  
كَمْ دَعَوْنَا مِنْ فِرَاقِ رَهَبَا

[35]

يَا بَنِي الْرَّؤَاءِ هَذَا قَمَرٌ  
عِنْدَكُمْ لَاحٌ وَعِنْدِي غَرَبَا

*Isn't it?* I said

[30]

They said *it isn't*

And when I asked *maybe...*

they added *not*

Whenever they rode  
toward highland or plain  
I tore through the desert  
in fierce pursuit

My heart's the Sāmīri  
of the moment  
Discerning the trace  
it casts for gold

East or west  
I'm on their trail  
like Iskāndar gliding  
on heaven's cords

When we were with her  
we cried out in pleasure  
then in her absence  
cried out in fear

O sons of Zawrā—  
behold the full moon  
rising above you  
as it slips my horizon

[35]

حَرَبِي وَاللَّهُ مِنْهُ حَرَبِي  
كَمْ أُنَادِي خَلْفَهُ وَأَحْرَبَا

لَهْفَ تَفْسِي لَهْفَ تَفْسِي لَفْتَيْ  
كُلَّمَا عَنِي حَمَّامُ عُيَّيَا

Woe is me,  
I call in their wake,  
woe is me . . .  
ruination!

Woe O woe,  
woe for a lad  
At the cry of a dove  
he's gone

أَضَاءَ بِذَاتِ الْأَضَا بَارِقُ  
مِنَ النُّورِ فِي جَوَّهَا خَافِقُ

وَصَلَصَلَ رَعْدُ مُنَاجَاتِهِ  
فَأَرْسَلَ مِدْرَازَهُ الْوَادِقُ

فَصَحْتُ مِنْ الْوَجْدِ يَا سَائِقُ  
أَتَنَادُوا أَنِي خُوا فَلَمْ يَسْمَعُوا

أَلَا فَانْزِلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَرْبَعُوا  
فَإِنِّي مَكِنْ عِنْدُكُمْ وَأَمِقْ

[5] ٌكِيْفَاءَ عَيْدَاءَ رُعْبُوْبَةٍ  
فَلَوْاْدَ لَشَّجِيْ هَا تَائِقُ

يُفْوَحُ الْنَّدِيُّ لَدَى ذُكْرِهَا  
فَكُلُّ لِسَانٍ إِهَا نَاطِقٌ

## Áda Trail

Lightning lit up Dhāt-  
al-Áda, flashes shuddering  
steep valley sides

A chain of rumbling  
across the sky, then  
thunder unleashed rains!

Kneel the camels! they shout  
to all—but no one hears  
Driver, I scream

Graze the camels!  
For the love of a girl  
in your care, a slender thing—

Soft her gestures, delicate  
her walk—the heart of a  
sad soul breaks

[5]

Mention her and we sigh  
Every tongue  
whispers her name

فَلَوْ أَنَّ مُجْلِسَهَا هَضَمَهُ  
وَمَقْعُدُهَا جَبَلٌ حَالِقٌ

لَكَانَ الْقَرَارُ هَا حَالِّهَا  
وَلَنْ يُدْرِكَ الْحَالِقُ الْرَّامِقُ

فَكُلْ خَرَابٍ هِيَا عَامِرٌ  
وَكُلْ سَرَابٍ هِيَا غَادِرٌ

[10]

وَكُلُّ رِيَاضٍ بِهَا رَاهِرٌ  
وَكُلُّ شَرَابٍ بِهَا رَائِقٌ

فَلَيْلِيَ مِنْ وَجْهِهَا مُشْرِقٌ  
وَيَوْمِيَ مِنْ شَعْرِهَا غَاسِقٌ

لَقَدْ فَلَقَتْ حَبَّةً أَعْلَمِ بِإِذْ  
رَمَاهَا بِأَسْهُمِهِ الْفَالِقُ

عُيُونٌ تَعْوِدُنَ رَشْقَ الْحَسَانِ  
فَلَيْسَ يَطِيشُ لَهَا رَاشِقٌ

She makes her home on  
a bald-cap mountain  
Were she camped below

Lowlands would rise  
and the heights would soar  
beyond the gaze

Every ruin, she brings  
to life, she turns mirage  
into quenching rains

With her, every garden  
bursts into flower  
All wine is pure

[10]

Her countenance illu-  
mines my night, dark  
in the fall of her hair's my day

The Sunderer split my  
heart down center  
when she let her arrows fly

With eyes adept at  
finding their target  
she buried the arrows inside

فَمَا هَامَهُ فِي خَرَابِ الْبِقَاعِ  
وَلَا ساقُ حُرْ وَلَا نَاعِقُ

[15]

بِأَشَاءَمَ مِنْ بَازِلٍ رَحَلُوا  
لَيَحْمِلَ مَنْ حُسْنُهُ فَائِقُ

وَيُشَرِّكُ صَبُّ بِدَاتٍ أَلَّا ضَما  
قَتِيلًا وَفِي حُبِّهِمْ صَادِقُ

No owl in a ruin  
No turtledove either  
No, not even a crow

Is more baleful  
than an old camel  
saddled to carry

That fatal beauty away  
and leave a man  
still loving

Dead on Áda trail

[15]

يُذَكِّرُنِي حَالُ الْشَّبِيهَةِ وَالشَّرْخِ  
حَدِيثٌ لَنَا بَيْنَ الْحَدِيثَةِ وَالْكَرْخِ

فَقُلْتُ لِنَفْسِي بَعْدَ حَمْسِينَ حِجَّةً  
وَقَدْ صِرْتُ مِنْ طُولِ الْتَّفَكُّرِ كَالْغُرْبِ

ثُذَكِرُنِي أَكْنَافَ سَلْعٍ وَحَاجِرٍ  
وَتَذَكِّرُ لِي حَالُ الْشَّبِيهَةِ وَالشَّرْخِ

وَسَوْقِي الْمَطَايَا مُنْجِداً ثُمَّ مُتَهَمَا  
وَقَدِحِي لَهَا نَارُ الْعَقَارِ مَعَ الْمَرْخِ

## Fifty Years

Brought back to the prime  
of my life and youth  
by words spoken  
between Hadītha and Karkh

After fifty years  
of hard thinking  
I've become like  
a fledgling bird

Brought back to the folds  
of Splitrock and Hājir  
back to the prime  
of my life and youth

When I led camels  
to Najd and Tihām  
and lit for her a fire  
of flametree and markh

أَطَارُ كُلَّ هَاتِفَةٍ بِأَيْكِ  
عَلَى فَنَنٍ بِأَقْنَانِ الْشُّجُونِ

فَبَكِيَ إِلْفَهَا مِنْ عَيْرِ دَمْعٍ  
وَدَمْعُ الْحُزْنِ يَهْمُلُ مِنْ جُهُونِي

أَقُولُ لَهَا وَقَدْ سَمَحْتُ جُهُونِي  
بِأَدْمِعِهَا تُخَبِّرُ عَنْ شُؤُونِ

أَعِنْدِكِ بِالْذِي أَهْوَاهُ عِلْمٌ  
وَهَلْ قَالُوا بِأَقْيَاءِ الْعُصُونِ

## Drowning Eyes

I trade cries  
with a dove  
in a tangle thick  
with woe

Tearlessly she  
mourns  
her only one  
as my eyes stream

I ask as my drown-  
ing lashes reveal  
the wreckage of  
my mind    What news

Do you have  
of those I love?  
are they safe  
in branches' shade?

عِنْدَ الْكُثَيْبِ مِنْ جِبَالِ رَزُودٍ  
صَيْدٌ وَأَسْدٌ مِنْ لِحَاظِ الْغِيدِ

صَرْعَى وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ مَلْحَمَةٍ أَلْوَغَى  
أَيْنَ أَلْأَسْوُدُ مِنْ أَلْعَيْوَنِ أَلْسُودٍ

فَتَكَثُرَتْ بِهِمْ لَحَظَاتُهُنَّ وَحَبَّادًا  
تِلْكَ الْمَلَاحِظُ مِنْ بَنَاتِ الْصَّيْدِ

## Sweet the Gaze

Lions and other  
beasts of prey  
touched by the glances  
of beautiful women

Smitten near Zarūd—  
these sons of carnage!  
What are lions  
before dark eyes?

A glance took them  
by mortal surprise  
Sweet the gaze  
of the hunter's child

ٌلَاثُ بُدُورٍ مَا يُرَنْ بِزِينَةٍ  
خَرَجْنَ إِلَى الْتَّنْعِيمِ مُعْتَجِرَاتِ

حَسْرَنَ عَنْ أُثَالِ الْشُّمُوسِ إِضَاءَةً  
وَلَبَّيْنَ بِالْأَهْلَالِ مُعْتَمِرَاتِ

وَأَقْبَلَنَ يَمْشِينَ الْرُّوِيدَا كِمْثُلَ مَا  
تَمَسَّى أَلْقَطَا فِي أَحْفَفِ الْحَبَرَاتِ

## You Now

Three moons needing

no adornment

rose over Tan‘īm,

faces veiled

Lowering the veils they

glowed like the sun

*I'm here for you now*

by the stations they chanted

They passed with a gait

like that of sandgrouse,

skipping along

in dappled gowns

أَلَا يَا شَرِيْ بَحْدِيْ تَبَارِكْتَ مِنْ بَحْدِيْ  
سَقْنَكَ سَحَابُ الْمُزْنِ جَوْدًا عَلَى جَوْدِ

وَحِيَاكَ مَنْ أَحْيَاكَ حَمْسِينَ حِجَّةً  
يَعْوُدِ عَلَى بَدْءٍ وَبَدْءٍ عَلَى عَوْدِ

قَطَعْتُ إِلَيْهَا كُلَّ قُفْرٍ وَمَهْمَةً  
عَلَى الْنَّافَةِ الْكَوْمَاءِ وَاجْمَلِ الْعَوْدِ

إِلَى أَنْ تَرَاءَى أَبْرُقُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الْحِمَى  
وَقُدْ رَادِينِ مَسْرَاهُ وَحْدًا عَلَى وَجْدِ

## **Lightning over Gháda**

Earth of the highlands  
    how blessed you are,  
quenched by the gentle  
    comfort of rains

He greets you again  
    —long-life greetings—  
who has greeted you  
    for fifty years

And always returns  
    to the beginning  
and always begins  
    again to return

I've ridden through wastelands  
    and empty quarters  
on high-humped mares  
    or long-toothed camels

Till evening's flash  
    over Híma  
split me apart  
    with longing

يَا خَلِيلِيَّ أَلِمَّا بِالْجَحْشِ  
وَأَطْلُبَا بَحْدًا وَذَاكَ الْعَلَمَا

وَرِدًا مَاءً بَخِيمَاتِ الْلَّوْى  
وَأَسْتَظِلَّا ضَاهِهَا وَأَسَلَّمَا

فَإِذَا مَا جِئْتُمَا وَادِيَ مِنِ  
فَآلَّذِي قُلْبِي بِهِ قَدْ جِئْتُمَا

أَبْلَغَا عَنِّي تَحِيَّاتِ الْهُوَى  
كُلُّ مَنْ حَلَّ بِهِ أَوْ سَلَّمَا

[5] وَأَسْمَعَا مَادَا يُحِبُّونَ بِهِ  
وَأَخْبَرَا عَنْ ذِيفِ الْقُلْبِ بِهَا

## Come Down to the Waters

Pass by al-Híma,  
friends, in search  
of Najd and its  
lonesome waymark

Come down to the waters  
at Twisting Sands  
down to the lote shade  
and absinthe

When you reach  
Mína's valley  
you'll be in the place  
that holds my heart

To all who arrive  
bring greetings  
and blessings of peace  
on my behalf

Hearken to each [5]  
report that reaches you  
and tell in turn  
of a haggard man

يَشْتَكِيهُ مِنْ صَبَابَاتِ الْهُوَى  
مُعْلِنًا مُسْتَخْبِرًا مُسْتَهْمِهًـا

Who opens his heart  
and pleads for a word,  
asking only  
why . . . why

أَحَبُّ بِلَادَ اللَّهِ لِي بَعْدَ طَيْبَةٍ  
وَمَكَّةَ وَالْأَقْصَى مَدِينَةَ بَعْدَانِ

وَمَا لِي لَا أَهْوَى الْسَّلَامَ وَلِي بِهَا  
إِمَامٌ هَدَى دِينِي وَعَفْدِي وَإِعْمَانِي

وَقَدْ سَكَنَتْهَا مِنْ بُنَيَّاتِ فَارِسٍ  
لَطِيفَةُ إِيمَاءٍ مَرِيضَةُ أَجْفَانِ

شُحِيٌّ فُشْحِيٌّ مِنْ أَمَائِتُ بِلَحْظِهَا  
فَخَاءَتُ بِخُسْنَى بَعْدَ حُسْنٍ وَإِحْسَانِ

## A Persian Girl

After Medina,  
Mecca and Jerusalem,  
Baghdad's God's city  
I love the most

Why wouldn't I  
love that city  
of peace My imām's  
there to guide me

There lives a girl  
a Persian pearl  
of delicate gesture  
and languid eye

Who kills with a glance  
then revives with a word  
tempering fierce beauty  
with compassion

تَقْسِي الْفَدَاءُ لِبِيضٍ خَرَدْ عُرُبٍ  
لَعْبَنْ بِي عِنْدَ لَنْمَ الْرُّكْنِ وَالْحَرَبِ

مَا تَسْتَدِلُ إِذَا مَا تَهْتَ حَلْفَهُمُ  
إِلَّا بِرِيحِهِمْ مِنْ طَيْبِ الْأَئِرِ

وَلَا ذَجَا بِي لَيْلٌ مَا بِهِ فَمَرْ  
إِلَّا ذَكَرْتُهُمْ فَسَرْتُ فِي الْقَمَرِ

وَإِنَّمَا حِينَ أُمْشِي فِي رِكَابِهِمُ  
فَاللَّيْلُ عِنْدِي مِثْلُ الْشَّمْسِ فِي الْبَكَرِ

[5] غَارَلُ مِنْ عَزَلِي مِنْهُنَّ وَاحِدَةٌ  
حَسْنَاءَ لَيْسَ لَهَا أُخْتٌ مِنْ الْبَشَرِ

## Day Falls Night

I'd give all I am  
for those ravishing girls  
who teased me where  
we kissed the stone

When you lose yourself  
in their wake  
a fragrant trace  
on the wind will guide you

When moonless night  
drags dark upon me  
I recall them and walk  
bathed in light

When I ride with them  
in the falling dark  
my night shines  
like the rising sun

I whispered love  
to one of them,  
a beauty far  
beyond compare

[5]

إِنْ أَسْفَرْتَ عَنْ مُحْيَاهَا أَرْثَكَ سَنًا  
مِثْلَ الْغَزَالَةِ إِشْرَاقًا بِلَا غَيْرَ

لِلشَّمْسِ عُرَيْتَهَا لِلَّيْلِ طُرَيْتَهَا  
شَمْسٌ وَلَيْلٌ مَعًا مِنْ أَعْجَبِ الْصُّورِ

فَنَحْنُ بِاللَّيْلِ فِي ضَوْءِ الْنَّهَارِ يَهُ  
وَنَحْنُ فِي الظُّفَرِ فِي لَيْلٍ مِنَ الشَّعْرِ

When she opens her veil

her face shines—

Sunblaze—lighting

unfading sky

Strands of hair

along her forehead—

sun by night, in-

explicable

By night the light

of day in her shines

By day night falls

with the dark of her hair

طَلَعْتُ بَيْنَ أَذْرِعَاتِ وَبُصْرِي  
إِنْثُ عَشْرٍ وَأَرْبَعَ لِي بَدْرًا

فَدْ تَعَالَتْ عَلَى الْزَمَانِ حَلَالًا  
وَتَسَامَتْ عَلَيْهِ فَخْرًا وَكِبْرًا

كُلُّ بَدْرٍ إِذَا تَنَاهَى كَمَا لَأَ  
حَاءَهُ نَفْصُهُ لِيَكُمْ شَهْرًا

غَيْرُ هَذِي فَمَا لَهَا حَرَكَاتٌ  
فِي بُرُوجٍ فَمَا تُشَفَّعُ وَتُرَا

[5]

حُقَّةُ أُودِعَتْ عَيْرًا وَنَسْرًا  
رَوْضَةُ أَشْبَتْ رَيْعًا وَرَفْرًا

## Odd to Even

Between Adhri'āt  
and Búsra she appeared,  
a girl of fourteen,  
full moon rising

In pride and glory  
she surpasses  
the ebb and flow  
of time itself

Every moon  
when it waxes full  
must wane again  
to complete its turn

But this moon runs  
through no constellations  
and knows no doubling  
from odd to even

It's you who bring [5]  
each sweet fragrance  
you, who give the  
spring its blossom

إِنْتَهَىٰ الْخُسْنُ فِيكِ أَقْصَىٰ مَدَاهُ  
مَا يُوْسِعُ أُلُّمَكَانِ مِثْلُكِ أُخْرَىٰ

Beauty in you  
has become complete  
There's none like you  
in creation

رَعَى اللَّهُ طَيْرًا عَلَى بَانَةٍ  
قَدْ أَفْصَحَ لِي عَنْ صَحِيحِ الْجَبَرِ

بِأَنَّ الْأَحِبَّةَ شَدُّوا عَلَى  
رَوَاحِلِهِمْ ثُمَّ رَاهُوا سَحْرُ

فَسِرْتُ وَفِي الْقُلُوبِ مِنْ أَجْلِهِمْ  
حَحِيمٌ لِمَا يَنْهِمُ تَسْتَعْزِزُ

أَتَابِعُهُمْ فِي ظَلَامِ الْدُّجَى  
أَنَادِي بِهِمْ ثُمَّ أَقْهُو الْأَثْرَ

[5] وَمَا لِي ذَلِيلٌ عَلَى إِثْرِهِمْ  
سِوَى تَفَسِّي مِنْ هَوَاهُمْ عَطِيزٌ

## My Only Guide

God save that bird

high in a moringa

who called out the news

sharp and clear

that those I loved

had cinched their saddles

and set off by camel

at the break of dawn

leaving me, heart

afire, in their wake

In the moonless dark

I raced in pursuit

calling after,

close on their traces

tracking and tracking—

[5]

my only guide

a fragrant breath

on the wind of desire

رَفِعْنَ الْسِّحَافَ أَضَاءَهُ الدُّخْنِ  
فَسَارَ الْرَّكَابُ لِصَوْءِ الْقَمَرِ

فَأَرْسَلْتُ دَمْعِي أَمَامَ الْرَّكَابِ  
فَعَالُوا مَئَى سَالَ هَذَا الْنَّهَرِ

وَلَمْ يَسْنَطِيْغُوا عُبُورًا فَقُلْتُ  
دُمْوِعِي جَرِيْنَ هَذِهِ دَرَزَ

كَانَ الْمُحْوَدَ لِلْمَعِ الْبُرُوقِ  
وَسَيْرُ الْعَمَامِ لِصَوْبِ الْمَطَرِ

[10] وَجِيدُ الْقُلُوبِ لِرَقِ التُّغُورِ  
وَسَكْبُ الدُّمُوعِ لِرَكْبِ تَغَزَّ

When they lowered their veils  
they lit the dark—

flooding the riders  
in a sudden full moon

My tears rained down,  
blocking the way

Since when, they asked,  
does a river run here?

The tears, I say—  
as they seek

and fail to cross it—  
are endless    As

if the thunder  
and lightning flares

and clouds roiling  
in the pouring rain

were hearts beating,  
the flash of a smile

[10]

and a burst of tears  
for those gone away

فَيَا مَنْ يُشَبِّهُ لِيَنِ الْقُدُودِ  
لِلِّينِ الْقُضِيبِ الْرَّطِيبِ النَّضِيرِ

وَلَوْ عَكَسَ الْأَمْرَ مِثْلَ الَّذِي  
فَعَلْتُ لِكَانَ سَلِيمَ النَّظَرَ

فَلِيَنِ الْعُصُونِ لِلِّينِ الْقُدُودِ  
وَوَرْدُ الْرَّيْاضِ لِوَرْدُ الْحَفَرِ

You who liken  
the lover's cheek  
  
to the dewy softness  
of a new spring bough  
  
turn it around  
as I've done and you'll see  
  
a bough's pliant  
as a lover's limbs  
  
Blush red's  
the garden rose

يَا أُولَى الْأَلْبَابِ يَا أَهْلَ الْنُّهَى  
هِمْتُ مَا بِيْنَ الْمَهَآةِ وَالْمَهَآةِ

مَنْ سَهَا عَنِ الْسُّهَى فَمَا سَهَا  
مَنْ سَهَا عَنِ الْمَهَآةِ قَدْ سَهَا

سِرْ بِهِ سِرْ بِهِ لِسِرْ بِهِ  
فَاللَّهُمَّ تَفْتَحْ بِالْحَمْدِ الْلَّهُمَّ

إِنَّهَا مِنْ قَيَّاتِ عُرُبِ  
مِنْ بَنَاتِ الْفُرْسِ أَصْلًا إِنَّهَا

[5] ظَمَّ الْخَسْنُ مِنْ الدُّرُّ هَا  
أَشْنَبَا أَبْيَضَ صَافِ كَالْمَهَآةِ

## Sign Masters

Wise ones! Sign-masters! I wander, dazed, between Onyx and Oryx

Distracted, he who can't see the sun, not Súha, that faint horizon spark

Take him to offer his heart for his herd Oblations open the throat in praise

She's an Arab beauty and yet pure Persian she is as well

Beauty composed her a harmony in pearl, her teeth gleaming clear as crystal

[5]

رَأَيْنِي مِنْهَا سُفُورٌ رَاعَيْنِي  
عِنْدَهُ مِنْهَا جَمَالٌ وَهَا

فَأَنَا ذُو الْمَوْتَكَبِينَ مِنْهُمَا  
لَهُكَذَا الْقُرْآنُ قَدْ جَاءَ بِهَا

قُلْتُ مَا بَأْلُ سُفُورٍ رَأَيْنِي  
مَوْعِدُ الْأَقْوَامِ إِشْرَاقُ الْمَهَمَّا

قُلْتُ إِنِّي فِي حَمِيٍّ مِنْ فَاجِمٍ  
سَاتِرٍ فَلْتُرْسِلِيهِ عِنْدَهَا

[10]

شِعْرُنَا هَذَا بِلَا قَافِيَةٍ  
إِنَّمَا قَصْدِي مِنْهُ حِزْفُهَا

غَرَضِي لَفْظُهُ هَا مِنْ أَجْلِهَا  
لَسْتُ أَهْوَى الْبَيْعَ إِلَّا هَا وَهَا

She lowered her veil  
and a fearsome beauty  
drew me toward her  
yet held me back

I'm the one  
with two deaths to die,  
both told here  
in this Qur'an

Frightened by  
a lowered veil?  
A battlefield's  
a rising sun

My sanctuary,  
I said, is night's  
black curtain  
So let it fall

These verses have  
no rhyme, the sound  
of *her*'s their only  
aspiration

She is the sign,  
the signification  
*Her* for *her*'s  
my only offer

[10]

وَلَا أَنْسَ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ وَانَّهُ مَنْزِلٍ  
وَقَوْلِي لِرَكْبِ رَائِحَيْنَ وَثَرَلِ

أَقِيمُوا عَلَيْنَا سَاعَةً نَشْتَفِي بِهَا  
فَإِلَيْنِي وَمَنْ أَهْوَاهُمْ فِي تَعَلْلِ

فَإِنْ رَحَلُوا سَارُوا بِأَيْمَنْ طَائِرٍ  
وَإِنْ تَرَلُوا حَلُوا بِأَخْصَابِ مَنْزِلٍ

وَبِالشَّعْبِ مِنْ وَادِي قَنَاءٍ لَقِيتُهُمْ  
وَعَهْدِي بِهِمْ بَيْنَ الْنَّقَاءِ وَأَلْمُشَلَّ

[5] يُرَاغُونَ مَرْعَى الْعِيسِيِّ حَيْثُ وَجَدْنَهُ  
وَلَيْسَ يُرَاغُوا قَلْبَ صَبَّ مُضَلَّ

## Parting's Hour

I'll never forget  
Camp Wân and my word  
to the riders leading  
my love away

Stay a while  
for by my love!  
I need some respite  
and time to heal

If they ride, let it be  
with fortune  
If they halt, let it be  
on fertile land

I met them in Qánat  
valley and stayed  
with them from  
Náqa to Arroyo

They tend to roans  
grazing the pasture  
but not to a lover  
dazed and lost

[5]

فِيَا حَادِي أَلْأَجْمَالِ رِفْقًا عَلَى فَنِّي  
تَرَاهُ لَدَى أَلْسَوْدِيْعِ كَاسِرَ حَنْظَلِ

يُخَالِفُ بَيْنَ الْرَّاحِتَيْنِ عَلَى الْحُشَّا  
يُسَكِّنُ قَلْبًا طَارَ مِنْ صِرْرٍ مَحْمَلِ

يُقْوِلُونَ صَبِرًا وَأَلَّا سَيِّعَرُ صَابِرٌ  
فَمَا حِيلَّتِي وَالصَّبَرُ عَنِي بِمَغْزِلِ

وَلَوْ كَانَ لِي صَبِرٌ وَكُنْتُ بِمُكْحِمِهِ  
لَمَا صَبَرْتُ تَفْسِي فَكَيْفَ وَلَيْسَ لِي

Have mercy, driver,  
on a young man  
splitting bittergourd  
at parting's hour

One hand he clutches  
to his chest  
The other calms  
a heart tearing free

As the saddle groans  
Patience! they say,  
but grief knows not  
what this means

And if I'd ever  
been under its sway  
I'd have lost it  
So what of me now?

طَلَعَ الْبَدْرُ فِي دُجَى الشَّعَرِ  
وَسَقَى الْوَرَدَ تَرْجِسُ الْحَوْرِ

غَادَةً تَاهِتِ الْحِسَانُ بِهَا  
وَزَهَاءُ نُورُهَا عَلَى الْقَمَرِ

هِيَ أَسْنَى مِنْ الْمَهَاءِ سَنًا  
صُورَةً لَا تُقَاسُ بِالصُّورِ

فَلَكُ الْنُّورُ دُونَ أَحْمَصِهَا  
تَاجُهَا خَارِجٌ عَنِ الْأَكْرِ

[5] إِنْ سَرْتُ فِي الْضَّمِيرِ يَجْرِحُهَا  
ذِلِكَ الْوَهْمُ كَيْفَ يَا بَصَرِ

## Chimera

A full moon rises  
in the dark of her hair  
Her eyes, black narcissi,  
moisten the rose

Other beauties  
in her flowering vanish  
Her light darkens  
the light of the moon

More beautiful than  
all gazelles is she,  
a form beyond  
all measure and form

The sphere of light  
turns at her feet  
Her diadem gleams  
beyond the stars

If thought's whisper  
might wound her  
harsher still  
would be the gaze

[5]

لُعْبَةٌ دَكْرُنَا يُذَوِّبُهَا  
لَطْفَتْ عَنْ مَسَارِحِ الْنَّظَرِ

طَلْبُ الْتَّعْتُ أَنْ يُبَيِّنَهَا  
قَسَعَالْتُ قَعَادَ دَأْ حَصَرِ

وَإِذَا رَامَ أَنْ يُكَيِّنَهَا  
لَمْ يَرْلُ نَاكِصًا عَلَى الْأَئِمَّرِ

إِنْ أَرَاحَ الْمَطِيَّ طَالِبُهَا  
لَمْ يُرِحُوا مَطِيَّةً الْفِكَرِ

[10] رَوْحَنْتُ كُلَّ مَنْ أُشَبَّ بِهَا  
تَفْلِلَةً عَنْ مَرَاتِبِ الْبَشَرِ

غَيْرَةً أَنْ يُشَابِهَ رَائِفُهَا  
إِلَّا ذِي فِي الْحِيَاضِ مِنْ كَدَرِ

Chimera—recall her  
and she's gone—  
too quick for thought  
or observation

Words would describe her  
but she rises  
always just beyond  
and leaves them a'stammer

They'd place her  
but she steals away  
leaving them baffled  
by her traces

Riders pursuing  
might ease their pace  
but no one can ease  
a racing mind

All who love her  
she revives,  
then takes beyond  
the bounds of mortal being

[10]

Unwilling to lavish  
her nectared kiss  
on a would-be lover  
in the mire

أَحْبَابَنَا أَيْنَ هُمْ  
بِاللَّهِ قُولُوا أَيْنَ هُمْ

كَمَا رَأَيْتُ طَيْفَهُمْ  
فَهَلْ ثُرِيبَنِي عَيْنَهُمْ

فَكُمْ وَكُمْ أَطْلُبُهُمْ  
وَكُمْ سَأْلُ بَيْنَهُمْ

حَتَّىٰ أَمِنْتُ بَيْنَهُمْ  
وَمَا أَمِنْتُ بَيْنَهُمْ

[5] لَعَلَّ سَعْدِي حَالِيلٌ  
بَيْنَ الْنَّوَى وَبَيْنَهُمْ

لِتَنْعَمَ الْعَيْنُ بِحِمْ  
فَلَا أُؤْلُ أَيْنَ هُمْ

## Where Gone

Where are my true loves now? By God  
tell me where they've gone

I have seen their apparition  
Show me their true form!

How long have I sought among them  
asking where they are

To be assured in their presence  
but in the end—never sure

Perhaps my star will intervene  
twixt the here and far

[5]

My eyes rejoice, and my tongue  
ask where O where no more

بَيْنَ الْحَشَا وَالْغَيْوِينِ النَّحْلُ حَرْبٌ هَوَى  
وَالْقُلْبُ مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَاكَ الْحَرْبِ فِي حَرْبٍ

لَمِيَاءُ لَعْسَاءُ مَعْسُولٌ مُقَبِّلُهَا  
شَهَادَةُ النَّحْلِ مَا تُلْقِي مِنْ الْضَّرِبِ

رَيَا الْمُخْلُخِلِ دَيْنُورٌ عَلَى فَمِّ  
فِي حَدَّهَا شَفَقٌ عُصْنٌ عَلَى كُثُبٍ

حَسْنَاءُ حَالِيَّةٌ لَيْسَتْ بِعَانِيَةٍ  
تَفْتَرُ عَنْ بَرَدٍ ظُلْمٍ وَعَنْ شَنِّ

[5] تَصُدُّ حِدًا وَتَلْهُو بِأَهْوَى لَعِبًا  
وَالْمَوْتُ مَا بَيْنَ ذَاكَ الْجِدْ وَالْلَّعِبِ

مَا عَسَعَسَ الْلَّيْلُ إِلَّا جَاءَ يَعْقِبُهُ  
تَسْفُسُ الصُّبْحِ مَعْلُومٌ مِنْ الْحَقِّ

وَلَا نَمُرُ عَلَى رَوْضٍ رِيَاحُ صَبَا  
يَخْوِي عَلَى كَاعِبَاتٍ خَرَدٌ عُرُبٌ

## Cool Lightning

There's a wrench in my gut  
and a tear in my eye—  
my heart rages between

Deep red are her lips,  
her kisses sweet as  
clear honey from bees

Her anklets entice like a cloud  
on a moon—sunset  
on her cheek, branch on a dune

Single and yet her  
bangles sparkle, cool  
lightning is her smile

She guards herself in earnest  
and in love she plays  
Death waits between

[5]

No night draws dark without  
the breath of dawn rising  
This we know of old

No wind from the East falls  
on a garden guarding maidens  
with budding breasts

إِلَّا أَمَالَتْ وَنَمَّتْ فِي تَسْسِيمَهَا  
بِمَا حَمَلْنَا مِنْ الْأَرْهَارِ وَالْفُضُّبِ

سَأَلْتُ رَبِيعَ الْصَّبَابَ عَنْهُمْ لِشُخْرِينِي  
قَالَتْ وَمَا لَكَ فِي الْإِخْبَارِ مِنْ أَرْبِ

[10] في الْأَلْأَبْرَقِينِ وَفِي بَرْكِ الْغَمَادِ وَفِي  
بَرْكِ الْعَمِيمِ تَرْكُتُ الْحَجَّيَّ عَنْ كَثِيرٍ

لَا تَسْتَقِلُّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَرْضٌ فَقُلْتُ لَهَا  
أَيْنَ الْمَفْرُ وَخَيْلُكَ الشَّوْقُ فِي الْطَّلَبِ

هَيْهَاتَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مَعْنَى سَوَى خَلْدِي  
فَخَيْثُ كُنْتُ يَكُونُ الْبَذْرُ فَازْتَقِبِ

أَلَيْسَ مَطْلَعُهَا وَهِيَ وَمَغْرِبُهَا  
قَلْبِي فَقَدْ زَالَ شُؤُمُ الْبَانِ وَالْعَرَبِ

مَا لِلْعَرَابِ نَعِيقُ فِي مَنَازِلِنَا  
وَمَا لَهُ فِي نِظَامِ الْشَّنْشِلِ مِنْ نَدِيبِ

Without stirring the leaves  
and wafting the perfume  
it gathers and passes on

I asked the Eastwind about them  
And who are you to want  
to know? she answered

*I left them at Twin Flash—* [10]  
*and at the relays of Ghimād*  
*and Ghamīm, close by*

*It's said no land can hold them*  
But they will never elude  
the cavalries of my longing

They hide in my soul  
and here where I am, look!  
the full moon rises

In my mind, then sets  
in my heart   Gone's  
the curse of willow and moringa

And here where we dwell  
no crow can caw, ruing  
our embrace as one

حَمَامَةُ الْبَانِ بِذَاتِ الْعَصَا  
ضَاقَ لِمَا حَمَلْتِنِيهِ الْفَصَا

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَحْمِلُ شَجَوَ الْهُوَى  
مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَجْعَلُ مُرَّ الْفَصَا

أَقُولُ مِنْ وَجْدٍ وَمِنْ لَوْعَةٍ  
يَا لَيْتَ مَنْ أَمْرَضَنِي مَرَضًا

مَرَّ بَابِ الْدَارِ مُسْتَهْزِئًا  
مُسْتَخْفِيًّا مُعْتَجِرًا مُعْرِضًا

[5]

مَا ضَرَّنِي تَعْجِيزُهُ إِنَّمَا  
أَضَرَّ بِي مِنْ كَوْنِهِ أَعْرَضًا

## The Turning

Moringa dove cooing  
in Dhāt al-Ghāda—  
no world can hold  
your song

Who can bear  
love's sorrows  
or down fate's  
bitter potion?

Heartsplit I cry,  
O you who put me  
through all this  
will you care for me now?

He passed by  
my door laughing,  
hid his face  
then turned away

It wasn't his hiding  
that hurt, no  
It was the turning,  
the turning away

[5]

يَا حَادِي الْعَيْسِيِّ بِسْلَعْ عَرَجْ  
وَقَفْ عَلَى الْبَانَةِ بِالْمُدَرَّجْ

وَنَادِهِمْ مُسْتَعْطِفًا مُسْتَلْطِفًا  
يَا سَادَاتِي هَلْ عِنْدُكُمْ مِنْ فَرَجْ

بِرَامِةِ بَيْنَ النَّفَّا وَحَاجِرِ  
حَارِيَةِ مَقْصُورَةِ فِي هَوْدَجْ

يَا حُسْنَتَهَا مِنْ طَفْلَةِ غُرَّتَهَا  
ثُضِّيُّهُ لِلطَّارِقِ مِثْلِ السُّرُجْ

[5] لُؤْلُؤَةِ مَكْنُونَةِ فِي صَدَفِ  
مِنْ شَعَرٍ مِثْلِ سَوَادِ السَّبَحِ

لُؤْلُؤَةِ غَوَّاصَهَا الْفِكْرُ فَمَا  
يَنْفَكُ فِي أَعْمَاقِ تِلْكَ الْلَّحْجِ

يَخْسِبُهَا نَاظِرُهَا ظَبِيْ تَفَّا  
مِنْ جَيْدِهَا وَحُسْنِ ذَاكَ الْعَنْجِ

كَائِنَهَا شَمْسُ صُحَّى فِي حَمَلِ  
قَاطِعَةً أَفْصَى مَعَالِي الْدَّرَجِ

إِنْ حَسَرْتُ بُرْقَعَهَا أَوْ سَغَرْتُ  
أَزْرَتُ بِأَتْوَارِ الصَّبَاحِ الْأَبْلَجِ

## Brave

Turn at Splitrock, driver, then halt  
by the moringa in Mudárraj

Call out: Ladies, would you  
grant us sweet release?

Near Râma, Hâjir, and White Dune  
a shy-eyed girl rides in a palanquin

She lights the way like a lamp  
for a man walking the night

Pearl in a shell of jet black hair—  
The mind dives after, sinking deep

[5]

Neck supple, gestures coquette,  
like a gazelle of the shifting sands

Like the forenoon sun arcing  
over Aries

When she lowers her veil, she covers  
dawn in her morning light

[10]

نَادِيْتُهَا بَيْنَ الْحِمَى وَرَامَةٍ  
مَنْ لِفَتَّى حَلَّ بِسَلْعٍ يَرْبَحِي

مَنْ لِفَتَّى مُتَيِّمٍ فِي مَهْمَهٍ  
مُولَّهٖ مُدَلَّهٖ أَعْقَلٌ شَحِي

مَنْ لِفَتَّى عَبْرَثُهُ مُغْرِقَةٌ  
أَسْكَرَهُ حَمْرٌ بِذَاكَ الْفَلَجِ

مَنْ لِفَتَّى رَقْرَثُهُ مُخْرِقَةٌ  
تَيَّمَهُ جَالٌ ذَاكَ الْبَلَجِ

قَدْ لَعِيَتْ أَيْدِي أَهْوَى يَقْلِبِهِ  
فَمَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْذِي مِنْ حَرَجِ

I cried out between Híma and Râma,  
Who's here for a lad who halts and hopes

[10]

At Sal'     For one in a desert maze,  
haggard, haunted, forlorn?

For one drowned in his tears,  
drunk on the wine of her open mouth?

For one burned in sighs,  
lost in the glow between her eyes?

Desire's hand played on his heart  
Where is his crime?

مَنْ لِي بِخَصْوَبَةٍ أَلْبَانِ  
مَنْ لِي بِعَسْوَلَةٍ أَلْلَسَانِ

مِنْ گَاعِبَاتِ دَوَاتِ خَدْرٍ  
تَوَاعِمْ ثُهَّدٍ حِسَانٍ

**بُدُورٌ تَمْ عَلَى غُصُونِ  
هُنَّ مِنَ الْنَّفَقْ فِي أَمَانٍ**

فِي رَوْضَةٍ مِنْ دِيَارِ حَسْمِي  
حَمَامَةٌ فَرْقَ عُصْنٍ بَانِ

[5] تَذَوْبُ عِشْقًا مَّوْتُ شَوْفًا  
لَمَّا شَحَاهَا الْلَّذِي شَحَانِي

تَنْدُبُ إِلَّا تَذْمُ دَهْرًا  
رَمَاهَا فَصَدًّا إِمَّا رَمَانِي

فِرَاقُ جَارٍ وَنَأْيٌ دَارٌ  
فَوَا زَمَانِي عَلَى زَمَانِي

مَنْ لِي إِمْنٌ تَرْتَضِي عَذَابِي  
مَا لِي إِيمَانٌ تَرْتَضِي يَدَانِ

## In the Ruins of My Body

Who'll show me her henna'd hand?

Who her honey'd tongue?

Such an enticing girl she is,

and in her beauty guarded well

Full moons on a flowering bough—

those like her will never fade

In the ruins of my body there's

a garden dove high in a moringa

She dies longing, dissolved in desire,

[5]

stricken with what struck me

Her mate she mourns and blames time's

arrow buried in both our hearts

The near are gone, home's far away

Time has taken all that was

Who's with me as she commends my pain

Before her, all my power fades

وَغَادِرَةٍ قَدْ غَادَرَتْ بِعَدَائِ  
شَبِيهَ الْأَفَاعِي مَنْ أَزَادَ سَبِيلًا

سَلِيمًا وَتَلَوِي لِينَهَا فَتُذِبُّهُ  
وَتَتَرُكُهُ قَوْقَ الْفِرَاشِ عَلِيلًا

رَمَتْ بِسَهَامِ الْلَّحْظِ عَنْ قَوْسِ حَاجِبٍ  
فَمِنْ أَيِّ شِقٍ جَهْتَ كُنْتَ فَتِيلًا

## **Done**

Double-dealer with curls like snakes  
she left a man who sought the way

Coiled him in her ringlets  
and left him stricken on the bed

Prey to her glances from every side  
Whichever way you've come, you're done

بِذَاتِ الْأَضَاءِ وَالْمَأْرِمَيْنِ وَبَارِقِ  
وَذِي سَلَمٍ وَالْأُبْرَقِيْنِ لِطَارِقِ

بُرُوقُ سُيُوفِ مِنْ بُرُوقِ مَبَاشِمِ  
تَوَافِجُ مِسْكٍ مَا أُبِحَّتْ لِنَا شِقِّ

فَإِنْ حُورِبُوا سُلُوا سُيُوفَ لِخَاطِهِمْ  
وَإِنْ سُولِمُوا هَدُوا عُقُودَ الْمَضَائِقِ

فَنَالُوا وَنَلَّا لَدَّتِينَ تَسَاوَى  
فَمُلْكٌ لِمَعْشُوقِ وَمُلْكٌ لِعَاشِقِ

## Nightwalker

For a nightwalker  
at Ma'zimáyn or Áda,  
at Flashrock, Ridge  
or Abraqáyn

There are swords  
flashing through smiles  
and pouches of musk  
forbidden the senses

Resist and they'll  
unsheathe their glances  
Give in and they  
will shatter the chains

We took and they  
took equal pleasure—  
Kingdoms for the beloved  
and for the lover

رَضِيَتْ بِرَضْوَى رَوْضَةً وَمُنَاخَا  
فَإِنَّ بِهِ مَرْعَى وَفِيهِ ثُقَاخَا

عَسَى أَهْلُ وُدْدِي يَسْمَعُونَ بِخَصْبِيهِ  
فَيَتَّخِدُونَ مَرْعَى وَمُنَاخَا

فَإِنَّ لَنَا قُلْبًا بِهِنَّ مُعَلَّفًا  
إِذَا مَا حَدَى الْحَادِي بِهِنَّ أَصَاخَا

وَإِنْ هُمْ تَنَادُوا لِلرَّحِيلِ وَفَرَّزُوا  
سَمِعْتَ لَهُ خَلْفَ الْرَّكَابِ صُرَاخَا

[5] فَإِنْ قَصَدُوا الْزَّوْرَاءِ كَانَ أَمَامَهُمْ  
وَإِنْ يَكُمُوا أَجْرَعَاءِ ثُمَّ أَنَاخَا

## Rídwa

Happy the thought  
of Rídwa's pastures  
where the traveler finds  
cool waters and rest

My love's party might  
have heard of the place,  
kneeled camels there  
and encamped

Wherever they go  
my soul clings  
as they chant  
their camels on

And when amid shouts  
they break toward desert  
you can hear it  
howling on their trail

If they move toward Zawrā'  
that's where it leads them  
If it's Jawrā' they seek  
it awaits them there

[5]

فَمَا أَلْطَيْرَ إِلَّا حَيْثُ كَانُوا وَخَيَّمُوا  
فَإِنَّ لَهُ فِي حَيَّهِنَّ فِرَاحَة

تَحَارِبَ حَوْفٌ لِي وَحَوْفٌ مِنْ أَجْلِهَا  
وَمَا وَاحِدٌ عَنْ قِرْزِهِ يَتَرَاحَة

إِذَا خَطَقْتُ أَبْصَارَنَا سُبُّحَاثُهَا  
أَصَمَّ لَهَا صَوْتُ الْشَّهِيقِ صِمَاخَا

Wherever they are  
wherever they camp  
the bird follows  
For its chicks are there

Two fears ceaselessly  
vie within me,  
fear for myself  
and fear for her

Lest her splendor  
shatter my gaze  
and she be deafened  
by my sighs

إِذَا مَا أَلْتَقَيْنَا لِلْوَدَاعِ حَسِبْتَنَا  
لَدَى الْأَصْمَمِ وَالْتَّعْيِيقِ حَرْفًا مُشَدَّدًا

فَسَخْنٌ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ مُثْنَى شُخُوصُنَا  
فَمَا تُبْصِرُ أَلْأَبْصَارُ إِلَّا مُوَحَّدًا

وَمَا ذَاكَ إِلَّا مِنْ تُخُولِي وَتُورِهِ  
كَلَوْلَا أَنِينِي مَا رَأَتْ لِي مَشْهَدًا

## Like a Doubled Letter

Parting we cling to each  
other and intertwine  
like a doubled letter

Although our shapes  
are two we appear  
as one alone

He's light and I am shadow  
If I didn't moan  
you'd never see me

وَقَالُوا شُعُورٌ بِدَارِ الْفَلَكِ  
وَهُنَّ مَنْزِلُ الشَّمْسِ إِلَّا الْفَلَكُ

إِذَا قَامَ عَرْشُ عَلَى سَاقِيهِ  
فَلَمْ يَبْقِ إِلَّا أَسْتِوَاءُ الْمَلِكُ

إِذَا خَلَصَ الْفَلَكُ مِنْ جَهْلِهِ  
فَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ثُرُولُ الْمَلِكُ

مَلَكِي وَمَلَكُوكُهُ  
فَكُلُّ لِصَاحِبِهِ قَدْ مَلَكُ

[5] فَكُوْنِي مِلْكًا لَهُ بَيْنِ  
وَمُلْكِي لَهُ قَوْلُهُ هِيَتْ لَكُ

فَيَا حَادِي الْعَيْسِ عَرْجُ بِنَا  
وَلَا تَغُدُ بِالرُّكِبِ دَارِ الْفَلَكُ

أَعْلَكَ دَارِ عَلَى شَاطِئِ  
بِقْرُبِ الْمُسَسَّيْ وَمَا عَلَّكُ

فَلَيْتَ الَّذِي بِي وَهُمْ لَتُهُ  
مِنْ أَحْبَبِ رَبِّ الْهَوَى حَمَلَكُ

فَلَيْسَ زَرُودُ وَلَا حَاجِزُ  
وَلَا سَلَمٌ مَنْزِلُ أَحْلَكُ

## Dár al-Fálak

Those suns, they tell us, are in Dár al-Fálak  
Beyond what heaven should a sun be set?

When the throne rests firm on its pillars,  
the king has only to take his place

When the heart abandons its last delusion  
it's only an angel descending

I am his and he is mine  
We belong to each other

I'm his, clearly, but is he mine?

[5]

*Come to me now*, he's saying

Red-roan driver, hold on!  
Don't miss the turn at Dár al-Fálak

May a riverbank camp near Musánna cast  
a spell on you and never let go

The love I've borne, the pain endured—  
may the lord of desire put you through it

It wasn't Zarūd, Hājir, or Sálam  
that left you, lover, drawn as a ghost

[10]

ظَلِلْتَ لِحِرِّ الْمَوَى طَالِبًا  
سَحَابَ الْوِصَالِ فَمَا ظَلَّكُ

أَذَلَّكَ عِزْ لِسُلْطَانِهِ  
فَلَيْتَ كَمَا ذَلَّكَ ذَلَّ لَكُ

وَيَا لَيْتَهُ إِذْ أَبِي عِزْهُ  
تَذَلَّلَهُ لَيْتَهُ ذَلَّكُ

In the scorching heat, you searched in vain  
for a cloud of union to shade you

[10]

May the one who subjected you  
grant you affection

But if pride restrains him  
let him embolden you

أَغِبْ قَيْفَنِي الْشَّوْقُ تَقْسِي فَالْتَّقِي  
فَلَا أَشْتَفِي فَالْشَّوْقُ عَيْنًا وَمُخْضَرًا

وَيُحْدِثُ لِقْيَاهُ مَا لَمْ أَظْنَهُ  
فَكَانَ الْشُّعْنَا دَاءً مِنْ الْوَجْدِ آخِرًا

لَا يَأْتِي أَرَى شَخْصًا يَزِيدُ جَمَالَهُ  
إِذَا مَا اُتْسَقِيَّنَا نَصْرَةً وَتَكْبُرًا

فَلَا بُدَّ مِنْ وَجْدٍ يَكُونُ مُقَارِنًا  
لِمَا زَادَ مِنْ حُسْنٍ نِظَامًا مُحَرَّرًا

## No Cure

Without him I die  
and with him's no better  
With or without him  
longing's the same

I found him, finding  
what I hadn't foreseen,  
the cure and disease  
as equal fevers

His silhouette flares  
as we draw near  
each other and  
burns more proud

The deeper the harmony  
the sharper the pain  
Measure for measure  
as decreed

الْقَصْرُ دُوْ لِلشُّرْفَاءِ مِنْ بَعْدَادِ  
لَا الْقَصْرُ دُوْ لِلشُّرْفَاتِ مِنْ سِنْدَادِ

وَالثَّاجُ مِنْ قَوْقَاصِ كَانَهُ  
عَذْرَاءُ قَدْ جُلِيَّتْ بِأَعْطَرِ نَادِ

وَالرَّبِيعُ تَلْعَبُ بِالْعُصُونِ فَتَسْتَشِي  
وَكَانَهُ مِنْهَا عَلَى مِيَعَادِ

وَكَانَ دِجَلَةُ سِلْكُهَا فِي جِيدِهَا  
وَالْبَعْلُ سَيِّدُنَا أُلْمَامُ أَهْمَادِ

[5] النَّاصِرُ الْمَنْصُورُ خَيْرُ خَلِيفَةٍ  
لَا يَمْتَطِي فِي الْحَرْبِ مَثْ حَوَادِ

## Baghdad Song

I long for Baghdād's  
palace of the brave  
(not for the battlements  
of old Sindād)

It crowns the gardens  
cascading below—  
a virgin revealed  
in a perfumed chamber

The branches are stirred  
by the wind and bend,  
lovers joined  
together at last

The river Tigris  
adorns her  
Her lord's our master  
imâm and guide—

Násir, Mansúr,  
best of the caliphs,  
who never rode out  
for war

[5]

صَلَّى عَلَيْهِ أَللَّهُ مَا صَدَّحْتُ بِهِ  
وَرَقَّا مُطَوَّقَةً عَلَى مَيَادٍ

وَكَذَاكَ مَا بَرَقْتُ بُرُوقُ مَبَاسِمٍ  
سَخَّتْ لَهَا مِنْ مُفْلِيَّ عَوَادٍ

مِنْ خُرَرِدِ كَالشَّمْسِ أَقْلَعَ عَيْثَهَا  
فَبَدَتْ بِأَضْوَأِ مُسْتَنِيرٍ بَادٍ

God bless him  
long as a dove  
on a bough coos  
and sways

Long as smiles  
flash lightning  
(my eyes responding  
like the morning rain)

From a bride like  
the sun when the mists  
part, unveiling  
herself in splendor

أَلَا يَا نَسِيمَ الْرَّيْحِ بَلْعُ مَهَا بَخْدٍ  
بِأَنِّي عَلَىٰ مَا تَعْلَمُونَ مِنْ الْعَهْدِ

وَفُلْنَ لِفَتَاهَةِ الْحُكْمِيِّ مَؤْعِدُنَا الْحِكْمَىِ  
عُدَيَّةَ يَوْمِ الْسَّبَتِ عِنْدَ رُبَّا بَخْدٍ

عَلَى الْرَّيْوَةِ الْحَمْرَاءِ مِنْ جَانِبِ الْصُّوَىِ  
وَعَنْ أَيْمَنِ الْأَفْلَاجِ وَالْعَلَمِ الْفَرْدِ

فَإِنْ كَانَ حَقًّا مَا تَفْوُلُ وَعِنْدَهَا  
إِلَيْيِ مِنْ الشَّوْقِ الْمُبَرَّحِ مَا عِنْدِي

[5] إِلِيْهَا فَفِي حَرِّ الظَّهِيرَةِ تَلْتَقِيِ  
بِخَيْمَتِهَا سِرًا عَلَى أَصْدَقِ الْوَعْدِ

فَتُلْقِي وَثُلْقِي مَا ثُلَّاقِي مِنْ الْمُهَوِّيِّ  
وَمِنْ شِدَّةِ الْبَلْوَى وَمِنْ أَلْمِ الْوَجْدِ

أَضْعَاثُ أَحْلَامِ أَبْشَرَى مَنَامَةِ  
أَنْطَقُ زَمَانِ كَانَ فِي نُطْقِهِ سَعْدِيِّ

لَعْلَ الَّذِي سَاقَ أَلْأَمَانِي يَسُوقُهَا  
عِيَانًا فِي هُدِيِّي رَوْضُهَا لِي جَنَّ الْوَزْدِ

## Red Rise

Eastwind fragrance, bring the gazelles of Najd  
this word, that I, as they know me, am faithful

Tell the girl of the tribe we'll meet early  
Saturday morning, in the Najdian hills

Near the trail-stone at the red rise  
to the right of the flood beds and lonely ruin

If, as you say, it's true that she suffers  
the same desire as I do and burns

We'll shade together in her tent  
fulfilling the promise we made

[5]

We'll tell of our longings, our tribulations  
our trances, aches, and fevers—dream

stuff? signs from sleep bright with promise?  
voice of a time that foretold my fortune?

May wishes' shepherd lead them to day—  
and her garden enclose me in roses

أَلَا هَلْ إِلَى الْزُّفْرِ الْحَسَانِ سَيِّلُ  
وَهَلْ لِي عَلَى آثَارِهِنَّ دَلِيلٌ

وَهَلْ لِي بَخِيمَاتِ الْلَّوَى مِنْ مُعَرَّسٍ  
وَهَلْ لِي فِي ظِلٍّ الْأَنْثِيلِ مَقِيلٌ

فَقَالَ لِسَانُ الْحَالِ يُخْبِرُ أَنَّهَا  
تَقْفُولُ تَمَّنَ مَا إِلَيْهِ سَيِّلُ

وَدَادِي صَحِيحٌ فِيلِكِ يا غَائِيَةَ الْمُنْتَيِ  
وَقَلِيلٌ مِنْ ذَاكَ الْوِدَادِ عَلِيلٌ

[5] تَعَالَيْتِ مِنْ بَدْرٍ عَلَى الْقَلْبِ طَالِعٌ  
وَلَيْسَ لَهُ بَعْدَ الْطَّلْوعِ أَفْوُلٌ

## Is There a Way

Is there a way  
to those radiant graces,  
a guide who'd track them  
to their place of rest

A haven from midday  
sun in the shade  
of the persica by  
those tents near the dune?

A voice within  
told me her answer  
*Hope for what  
you may attain!*

My love for you  
is strong and in it  
I'm stricken You  
are my desire

You are the full moon  
risen within me,  
risen and never  
to decline

[5]

فَدَيْثُكِ يَا مَنْ عَزَّ حُسْنَتَا وَمَخْوَهَ<sup>ٰ</sup>  
فَلَيْسَ لَهُ بَيْنَ الْحَسَانِ عَدِيلُ

فَرَوْضُكِ مَطْلُولٌ وَوَرْدُكِ يَانِعٌ  
وَحُسْنَاتِكِ مَعْشُوقٌ عَلَيْهِ قَبُولٌ

وَرَهْرُكِ بَسَامٌ وَغُصْنُكِ نَاعِمٌ  
مَيْلٌ لَهُ الْأَرْواحُ حَيْثُ مَيْلٌ

وَظْرُفُكِ فَتَانٌ وَطَرْفُكِ صَارِمٌ  
بِهِ فَارِسُ الْبَلْوَى عَلَيَّ يَصُولُ

I ransom my life  
for you, asking  
nothing but beauty  
in return

Your dewy garden  
glistens, your rose  
unfolds, and all  
the world adores you

Your flowers gleam  
Your boughs are tender  
Spirits bend  
with them as they sway

Your charm lures  
Your glances pierce  
Tribulation's rider  
charges me

لِطَيْبَةَ طَيْيَةَ صَارَه  
تَحْرَدَ مِنْ طَرِفَهَا السَّاحِرِ

وَفِي عَرَفَاتٍ عَرَفْتُ الْأَذْيَ  
ثُرِيدُ فَلْمُ أَكُ بِالصَّابِرِ

وَلَيْلَةَ جَمِيعِ جَمَعِنَا بِهَا  
كَمَا جَاءَ فِي الْمَقْلِ الْسَّائِرِ

يَمِينُ الْفَتَاهِ يَمِينُ فَلَا  
تَكُنْ تَطْمَئِنُ إِلَى غَادِرِ

[5] مُئَيِّنِي نِلْتُهَا لَيْتَهَا  
تَدُومُ إِلَى الزَّمِنِ الْآخِرِ

تَوَلَّغْتُ فِي لَعْنَعِ بِالْأَلَيِ  
ثُرِيكَ سَنَا الْقَمَرِ الْرَّاهِرِ

رَمَثُ رَامَةً وَصَبَتْ بِالصَّبَّا  
وَحَجَرَتِ الْحَجَرِ بِالْحَاجِرِ

وَشَامَتْ بُرَيْفَةً عَلَى بَارِقِ  
بِأَسْرَعِ مِنْ خَطْرَةِ الْحَاطِرِ

وَعَاصَتْ مِيَاهُ الْعَصَمِ مِنْ عَصَمِيِّ  
بِأَضْلَعِهِ مِنْ هَوَى سَاحِرِ

## I Came to Know

Táyban gazelles entrance with glances,  
sword edges flashing bright

At Árafa I saw what she wanted  
and lost all patience there

We joined her late one night in Jem  
as foretold down the generations

A maiden's oath is but a promise  
Don't trust in one who'll desert you

The wishes I was granted in Mína—  
would they'd lasted till the end of time! [5]

In Lá'la'c I was set aflame  
by one who shows the full moon rising

In Râma she searched, at Sába she burned,  
in Hájir she broke the seal

In Bâriq she saw the signs of lightning  
flash quicker than thought in the mind

The waters of Gháda were parched  
by desire aflame within me

[10]

وَبَأَنْتُ بِبَانِ الْتَّئِي فَأُشْتَقَّ  
لَا لِي مَكْنُونَهُ الْفَاحِرٌ

وَآضَتْ بِذَاتِ الْأَضَى الْقُهْفَرِي  
حِذَارًا مِنْ الْأَسْدِ الْخَادِرِ

بِذِي سَلَمٍ أَسْلَمْتُ مُهْجَحِي  
إِلَى لَحْظِهَا الْفَاتِكِ الْفَاتِكِ

حَمَتْ بِالْحَمَى وَلَوْتْ بِاللَّوْيِ  
كَعَطْفَةً جَارِحَهَا الْكَاسِرِ

وَفِي عَالِيَّ عَالَجْتُ أَمْرَهَا  
لِشْفَلَتْ مِنْ مِحْلِ الْطَّائِرِ

[15]

خَوْرُتْفَهَا خَارِقُ لِلسَّما  
ءِ يَسْمُو أَغْنِلَاءَ عَلَى الْنَّاظِرِ

At White Dune's moringa she departed  
then gathered her choicest hidden pearls

[10]

At Dhāt al-Āda she turned back,  
wary of a lion in wait

In Dhū Sálam she submitted my soul  
to her lethal gaze

At Híma stood watch and in Líwa swayed  
through the predator's crush

In peril at 'Ālij, she slipped  
through the raptor's claws

Her Khawárnaq tower soars  
beyond the heavens

[15]

أَلْهِمْ إِنْزِلْ أَحْبَابِ هُمْ ذَمْمُ  
سَحَّتْ عَلَيْهِ سَحَابٌ صَوْبُهَا دِمْ

وَاسْتَشِقِ أَرْيَحَ مِنْ تِلْقَاءِ أَرْضِهِمْ  
شُوقًا لِتُخْبِرَكَ الْأَرْوَاحُ أَيْنَ هُمْ

أَظْنُهُمْ حَيَّمُوا بِالْبَانِ مِنْ إِضَمْ  
حَيْثُ الْعَرَارُ وَحَيْثُ الْشَّيْخُ وَالْكَتَمْ

## **Artemisia and Arâr**

Pass by the lovers' station  
where covenants are kept  
Let it be blessed  
by quenching rains

Breathe in the spirits  
that hail from their lands  
and long to know  
where your loves have gone

Their tents perhaps pitched  
near Ídam's moringa  
on grounds dappled  
with artemisia and arâr

أَلَا يَا بَانَةَ الْوَادِي  
بِشَاطِي تَهْرِ بَعْدَادِ

شَحَانِي فِيلِكِ تَيَّاحُ  
طَرُوبُ قَوْقَ مَيَادِ

يُذَكِّرُنِي تَرْفُهُ  
تَرْمُمُ رَزَّةُ الْنَّادِي

إِذَا سَوَّتْ مَثَالِتَهَا  
فَلَا تَذْكُرْ أَخَا الْحَادِي

[5]

وَإِنْ جَادَتْ بَنْعَمَتِهَا  
فَمَنْ أَجْحِشَةُ الْحَادِي

يُذِي الْحُضِّمَاتِ مِنْ سَلْمَى  
يَرِينًا ثُمَّ سِنْدَادِ

لَقَدْ أَصْبَحْتُ مَشْعُوفًا  
إِنْ سَكَنَتْ بِأَجْحِيادِ

غَلِطْنَا إِنَّا سَكَنَتْ  
سُوَيْدَا خَلْبِ أَكْبَادِي

لَقَدْ تَاهَ أَجْمَاعُ بَهَا  
وَفَاخَ الْمِسْكُ وَالْحَادِي

## Tigris Song

O moringa of the flood-bed  
at the Tigris's banks

The cry of a dove on a swaying bough  
saddens my heart

Her song's like the song  
of the assembly's queen

At the sound of her oud, you'll  
forget the music of al-Rashīd

And when she sings, the chants  
of Ánjash fade

[5]

In Khadimāt, Sálma's direction,  
and in Sindād, I swear,

I'm gone for a girl  
in Ajyādī

No, she dwells within  
my liver's black bile

In a rush of saffron and musk  
beauty falls bewildered



## NOTES TO THE POEMS

**Poem 1.** This poem, and with it the *Tarjumān* as a whole, begins with the poet asking where his beloved and her company might be in their journey away from him. That motif establishes the *Tarjumān*'s first-order poetics in which the lover is voiced as male, and the beloved primarily (although not exclusively) as female. The poet may refer to the beloved in the singular or the plural. Thus, the plural “if they knew” refers to a specific group, the women of the tribe who, accompanied by male camel-drivers or guides, would travel together, shielded from the elements and from the gaze within their howdahs. “They” can then refer to the ensemble or to the beloved specifically. In many *Tarjumān* poems, the lover has his own ensemble with the companions who are asked to share the poet’s grief.

Verse 4 introduces the bewilderment that inflects poems throughout the *Tarjumān*. Lovers, referred to grandly as the “lords of love” (*arbāb al-hawā*), are ensnared and bewildered by that which they should master. In the *Tarjumān*, bewilderment comes in many forms and goes by many names, as the poet and even beauty itself find themselves perplexed, speechless, astonished, or lost.

**Poem 2.** This poem begins with “the moment of departure,” when the beloved and the other women of the tribe mount into their elaborately brocaded camel palanquins, before being led away by their camel-guides. The poem then shifts through a range of Qur’anic and cultic allusions, first and foremost to the Queen of Sheba, who is unnamed in the Qur’an but known in the tradition as Bilqīs. She first appears in verse 2, when peacock-like beauties in their howdahs are said to “Take possession / with glances that kill / like Bilqīs of Sheba / on her throne of pearl.” The Qur’anic story of Bilqīs (Q 27:15–44) culminates with Bilqīs having submitted (*aslamtu*) along with the prophet Sulaymān to the one God. Bilqīs continues to hover over the central verses of the poem before reemerging explicitly at the end.

Idrīs is a prophet mentioned twice in the Qur'an (Q 19:56–57; 21:85–86); he was associated in tradition with the biblical Enoch and the Greek Hermes, especially within the Arabic traditions surrounding Hermes Trismegistus. In hadith and biographical accounts of Muḥammad's heavenly ascent, Idrīs appears as the prophet of the fourth heaven, which was viewed as the sphere of the sun.

In verse 4, the poet compares this goddess-like figure to the Qur'anic Ḥāsā, who is able to bring the dead to life. He then associates her with the tablets of the Torah. From there the transformations pick up speed. She appears as a bishop; as the daughter of the Rūm or Byzantine Christians; as a being bathed in the light of the *nāmūs*, which is associated in both Christian and Islamic traditions with the Holy Spirit; as an anchorite who retreats to a tomb (specifically a marble mausoleum) in contemplation; and as a personification of wisdom who baffles Muslim sages as well as rabbis, psalmists, and priests. She is a being of such magnetic power that, were she to show an interest in the gospel, the lover and his companions would appear suddenly as church dignitaries.

Verse 10 returns to the moment of separation, with the poet begging the camel-driver not to lead his beloved away. In verse 12, at the point of death, the poet pleads with her to release him. She yields, relents, or submits (*aslamat* in the past tense)—just as Bilqīs had submitted to the one God along with Sulaymān.

The poem ends with a reference to Iblīs, the Lucifer-like figure in the Qur'an who refused the divine command to bow before Adam, was cast from his high station, and became the tempter of humankind. (“May salvation's angel”: other readings have *malik* [king] in place of *malak* [angel].)

Why would the poet ask for release on the point of death, which throughout the *Tarjumān* can reflect his passing away in union with the beloved? In *Priceless Treasures*, Ibn 'Arabī explains the poet's hesitation as due to his fear of *hulūl*, which occurs when the mystic believes he has become one with an incarnate God. He also quotes a hadith according to which the prophet Muḥammad says to God, “I take refuge from you in you” (*a'ūdhu bika minka*).

**Poem 3.** This poem opens and closes with the poet asking his companions to contact his beloved(s) or those who might know where the beloved's party has gone. The first site of the longed-for contact is Mecca, the evocation of which leads to the scene of the lover's self-sacrifice at the hajj.

Verses 2–4 evoke several core rites: the casting of pebbles at the stone cairns of Minā, near the station of Muhaṣṣab; the drinking from the waters of Zamzam spring, which in the Qur’anic account was opened miraculously when Hājar and her son Ismā’īl were about to perish from thirst; “fasts,” which refer to the daily acts of fasting (*ṣawm*) obligatory throughout the month of Ramaḍān and are viewed as a voluntary act of piety during periods of the hajj. “Feast” (*īd*) is the term used for the sacrifice and shared consumption of a camel, sheep, or goat in remembrance of Abraham’s sacrifice, an event that culminates the pilgrimage experience at the hajj and is carried out on the same day by nonpilgrims across the world. Verse 2, “my hajj”: more fully “my hajj and ‘umra.” ‘Umra, the voluntary minor pilgrimage, centers on the circumambulation of the Ka’ba and the running back and forth between the two hills in remembrance of Hājar’s search for water. It can be carried out directly after the hajj, or separately throughout the year outside of the hajj season. (On the lover’s self-sacrifice during the hajj, see Muṣṭafā Shaybī’s commentary on verses attributed to al-Ḥallāj on that same theme, in the course of which Shaybī offers several examples from later poets. Kāmil Muṣṭafā Shaybī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Ḥallāj* [Paris: Manshūrāt Asmār, 2005], 366–37.)

After the hajj verses, the poet resumes his journey by proxy, calling on the driver of the camel-train to travel through various desert sites in search of the beloved and her party. (Whose camel train: the beloved’s or the poets, or in the poet’s mind at least, both.) In the event that the driver’s shouted greetings are not returned, the poet begs him to call out the names of the beloveds of the past: “Da’d and Rabáb, / Záynab and Hind, / Lúbna, then Sálma.” Lubnā was the beloved of the poet Qays ibn Durayd, and their tale is told in the *Great Book of Songs*. (The phrase *wa zamzami* at the end of the verse is not a reference to Zamzam spring but is an imperative verb meaning to “ring forth.”)

Hálba (Halba, v. 10) is a district on the southwestern side of the Tigris River in Baghdad. Its mention here, along with other references to sites in or near Baghdad (as in poems 54, 56, and 61), has enhanced interest in the possibility that Niẓām may have been living in the Baghdad area after her time in Mecca.

**Poems 4–6.** These poems begin a pattern within the *Tarjumān* with short lyrical interludes alternating with longer and more complex poems. Poem 4 opens in *jinās* mode with the *s/l/m* and *h/l/l* consonants echoing one

another throughout the verse: *salāmun ‘alā salmā wa man ḥalla bi-l-ḥimā wa ḥuqqa li-mithlī an yusallima*: “Peace [be to] Sálma / and Peace to those / who halt at al-Híma / It’s right I greet you.” Tucked within these phonetic fireworks is what may be a rejoinder to Qurrat al-‘Ayn who, in the preface devoted to her, had rebuked Ibn ‘Arabī by declaring that it was not fitting “for one like you (*mithlak*) to speak in such a way.” Here the poet responds that it is right for one like me (*mithlī*) to greet you. The poem ends with the voice of the beloved breaking in to respond to the lover’s complaint. She does so by emphasizing the paradox of *shawq* that recurs at other critical moments in the *Tarjumān*: “*Each moment he / be-holds me anew / in his heart, she said / What more can he ask?*”

**Poem 5** opens with the binary relationship between the Arabian uplands of Najd and the region of Tihām (more fully, Tihāma), the coastal plain along the Red Sea. The poet intensifies the theme by following the mention of Najd and Tihāma with two Arabic verbs based on the *n/j/d* and *t/h/m* roots. *Anjada*: “to ascend in travel” or “to travel to the highlands of Najd.” *Athama* denotes the descending movement of travel or, more specifically, travel to the lowland, coastal region of Tihāma.

**Poem 6** begins by extending the theme of patience that concluded the previous poem. Verse 1 takes shape around the double meaning of the Arabic verb *bāna*, one of many classical Arabic words that carry opposite meanings. *Bāna* can mean either “to appear, become present” or “to depart, become absent.” In either case, the beloveds who are gone live still or once lived (the time frame is indefinite) within the grieving lover. Verse 2 extends the verbal play on *bāna* by mentioning the moringa (*bān*), a mention intensified by its placement in verse-end rhyming position. The final verse takes on a particular poignancy, given that those who are gone may represent not only the beloved and her party but all the friends and loved ones of the poet’s past.

**Poem 7.** The poet returns to the hajj motifs found in poem 3 but in a new key, with huri-like figures opening and closing the poem. The various hajj rites unfold verse-by-verse through the body of the poem: the touching of the black stone in the Ka‘ba wall during the ritual circumambulation; the march from ‘Arafa (which can also be spelled ‘Arafat) to Minā; the casting of pebbles at Minā’s three cairns; the “standing” at ‘Arafa for most of a day;

and partaking of waters from the Zamzam spring. Here the poet, rather than offering himself for sacrifice, risks perishing at the sight of unveiled beauty. By this point in the *Tarjumān*, a pattern has been established, with the lover encountering death or dying at the center of many of poems. If he has in fact perished, that leaves his continuing voice in verses that follow as a sort of ghostly presence or else, as some poems will later suggest, as part of a continual process of dying and being brought back to life. If he resists gazing at these personifications of beauty, he has, at the very least, fallen deep into lovesickness.

Two poems from ‘Umar ibn abī Rabī‘a offer a possible subtext for poems 3 and 7 in the *Tarjumān*: ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a, *Dīwān* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt li-t-ṭibā‘as wa-n-nashr, 1984), 399 and 422.

**Poem 8:** This deceptively simple poem begins with a mournful nasib in pre-Islamic style. The poet gestures toward the *atlāl*, then points to his own tears shed in memory of his beloved and all those associated with the remembered or imagined time of intimacy and belonging. He then tells of his reaction to the beloved’s departure. As verse 4 transitions into verse 5, there is a shift in time as the poet turns to address the beloved directly.

The words “aflame / with ceaseless sorrow” lead naturally to the references to fire in verse 6, but the continuity in fire imagery is accompanied by a shift in address with the introduction of a new character, the fire-striker (*mūqida n-nār*), who in the premodern context would bring up images of a person striking flint or rubbing sticks together. The fire-striker should take it easy, the poet tells him, for right “here” (that is, here with the poet or, as Ibn ‘Arabī glosses the verse in his commentary, “here in my heart”) is passion’s fire. The fire-striker need only take an ember from it to start a fire of his own. Here, the love-poet launches a twofold boast. As a lover, he brings his own fire, a fire from which any less passionate lover might borrow a flame. As a poet, his words burn with poetic fire, from which other poets might borrow a flame.

The Arabic *iqtabasa* means “to take an ember” but carries wider meanings as well: “to borrow from”; “to emulate”; “to study under” (in the sense of a student studying under the master of a particular discipline); “to quote”; and in literary-critical discourse, “to embed words or phrases from the Qur’ān within a literary text.” In classical Arabic poetry, an analogy to prophetic revelation could serve to intensify the poetic

boast, and in this poem Ibn ‘Arabī provides a subtle example. The second half of verse 6 evokes the Qur’anic story of Mūsā and the fire. “Here is passion’s fire / Just take an ember” (*hādhihi nāru al-ṣabābatī sha’nakum an taqtabisu*). In Q 20:9, Mūsā tells his journey companions to stay behind while he investigates a fire that he has discerned in the distance. Perhaps, he says, the fire he discerns may provide an ember (*qabas*) for his group or may offer guidance (*al-hudā*). (See also Q 27:8; Q 28:29.) When Mūsā approaches the fire, the divine voice addresses him, revealing the identity of the one God and commissioning him with the message he will deliver to Pharaoh. By the twelfth century, the analogy between Mūsā’s fire and the fire within the lover’s heart had become a core motif within Arabic love poetry.

The fire in the lover’s heart introduced here recurs in other poems in the *Tarjumān*, with each occurrence resonating with earlier instances and foreshadowing later ones. That fire (erotic, poetic, prophetic, and mystical) passes its embers from one poem to another within the *Tarjumān* even as it borrows embers from the Qur’an and earlier poets.

For more on the motif of Mūsā’s fire and the lover, see Emil Homerin, “A Distant Fire: Ibn al-Shahrazūrī’s Mystical Ode and Arabic Sufi Verse,” *Journal of Sufi Studies*, 4:1 (2015): 27–58.

**Poem 9.** This poem opens with the interpermeation of the natural and the human that will recur in other poems in the *Tarjumān*. It concludes in verse 5 with an image of monumental splendor as figures of beauty pose poetically like the graces in Renaissance art. In the case of the *Tarjumān*, however, these beauties are described through allusions to Qur’anic verses on the huris of paradise who appear as the archetypes of beauty and acceptance (Q 37:48–49). Verse 5 also echoes the opening and closing of poem 7 even as it foreshadows the central section of poem 12.

**Poem 10.** These two verses form an apparently simple repartee. In verse 1, the beloved rebukes the poet. The lover’s response, “You’re seeing yourself / in the mirror / of humankind,” is rooted in a play on the word *insān*—a word that can mean “a human being,” “humankind” in general, or “pupil of the eye.” Poets and Sufis had long played on the metaphorical aspects of the mirror reflection. When you see yourself in the mirror, the self you see in the mirror is looking at you.

The unnamed lady is said to see her own reflection in the mirror of a human being *insān*. *Insān* is always gender nonspecific. It is also a word with deep Qur’anic resonance, as in Q 81:5 when the divine voice asks its human creation, “O human being, what has led you away from your generous lord,” suggesting that *insān* can designate the human condition.

The mystical possibilities of this couplet will be drawn out further in poem 11. A bridge is provided by the word “garden.” In his commentary to poem 10, Ibn ‘Arabī writes that the vision of the divine beloved in his heart/eye is nothing other than the vision of the afterlife garden of the blessed as well as the garden of Eden. In poem 11, the poet declares his own amazement at “a garden among the flames” and proceeds to proclaim that his heart has become receptive of every form. For a discussion of the complete human being and the mirror image in the mystical thought of Ibn ‘Arabī, see Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chapter 3 (“Identity Shift and Meaning Event”), 63–89.

**Poem 11.** This poem, the keystone of the *Tarjumān*, takes us through a series of quietly spectacular transformations and reversals. In the first three verses, the poet engages in a dialogue with mournful doves of the moringa and the persica (*arāk*), a tree or large shrub that in the nasib came to be associated with the smile of the beloved. In verse 4, spirits howl and mourn in the branches of a third tree, the gháda (*ghadā*), which was valued for its shade and for use as cooking coals. In the *Tarjumān*, it is associated with the fire in the lover’s heart and, in the commentary and other writings of Ibn ‘Arabī, with the burning bush from which God addressed Mūsā (Q 20:11–14; 27:8–10; 28:30–31). As the spirits rustle and bend the branches, they bring the poet through the experience of “passing away” (*fanā’*).

At this point, the poet echoes poems 3 and 7 and foreshadows later poems by situating himself within the hajj. Two stations are mentioned: Jem (*al-jam'*, “the union,” “the assembly”) is an epithet for Muzdalifa, a site on the hajj route toward Minā where the vast numbers of pilgrims who have been traveling in staggered groups come together. Muḥássab (*al-muḥaṣṣab*) is a site just nearby where the pilgrims gather the pebbles that they will cast at the three cairns (since reinforced as large pillars) of Minā. Equally significant are the two sites not necessarily associated with

the hajj: Na‘mān and Tamarisk, which both mark times spent with or near the beloved. The verse elicits a homology between the hajj, in which pilgrims ritually approach the divine beloved, and the lover’s pilgrim-like effort to follow the beloved along her journey away from him back to the lost time of union.

The hajj experience and the identity of the poet shift in verse 5, as the poet now speaks not of lovers and pilgrims performing the hajj but of his heart as the Ka‘ba around which spirits or beloveds circle. Who are they who circle his heart? The most immediate possible antecedent of “they” is “the spirits.” The image here recalls the Qur’anic depictions of the celestial temple around which angels circle and into which they disappear. But the verses that follow suggest that it is huri-like beauties who circle his heart. No longer is the poet as lover wandering Arabia in search of the lost beloved. No longer is he a pilgrim at the hajj. Rather, his heart has become the Ka‘ba, the goal and still center of all movement. Here the poem enacts the Sufi idea, mentioned throughout Ibn ‘Arabi’s writings, that the greatest Ka‘ba is the heart of the human being at the threshold of mystical union. The next two verses evoke the lover’s complaint about the deceptiveness of the beloved’s promise. Then, as is if in continuation of the same thought but in a reversal of it, the poet expresses wonder at the gazelle (a figure somewhere between a metaphor and an epithet for the beloved), who engages in the sign language and subtle communication that had long been a motif in ghazal poetry. (For a classic example, see ‘Umar ibn abī Rabī, *Dīwān*, 344–45.)

Verses 10–13 form one of the most anthologized passages in Arabic poetry and especially in Sufi literature, though much is lost when those verses are shorn of the rest of poem. The verses begin with a play on the gazelle figure and the fire within the poet’s heart, a play that will anchor other poems in the *Tarjumān*: “A pasture between / breastbone and spine / Marvel, a garden / among the flames.” See also poem 20, verses 6–7: “My father’s life, / my own! for / a gazelle browsing / within my ribs / What burns for her / there is light / and only light / can quell this fire.”

Beginning the next verse, with “My heart can take on / any form,” the poet proceeds to recall the sacred texts and sites of veneration that his heart can take on. He then declares the religion of love (*dīn al-hubb*)—even as he recalls beliefs and practices that sounded through poem 2, albeit in a different key.

The poem concludes with an homage to the lover/beloved pairs of the past. Bishr and Hind, like Qays and Laylā, are poet/beloved pairs from the early ghazal tradition whose stories were elaborated in the *Great Book of Songs*. Ghaylān (Ghaylān Ibn ‘Uqba, d. ca. 735 CE), popularly known as Dhū al-Rumma, was considered the last representative of the early Arabic Bedouin ode. His odes consisted almost exclusively of the nasib and *rahīl* (journey-quest). Rather than returning from the isolation of the solitary journey to celebrate the tribe or to present a missive to the ruler, however, this poet-lover journeys ceaselessly after the beloved Mayya and back to the times spent with her. (For an introduction to and translation of one of Dhū al-Rumma’s odes, see Michael Sells, *Desert Tracings: Six Classic Arabian Odes* [Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989], 68–76.)

These classic lover-pairs serve as the poet’s model (*uswa*), exemplars of the worldly and unworldly love celebrated in the *Tarjumān*. A couplet of Qays (Majnūn Laylā) in which he compares himself to an Udhri lover-poet named ‘Urwa is particularly relevant to the dynamism of poem 11, with its emphasis on continual death and rebirth as the protean heart of the lover or mystic takes on ever new forms: “I marvel that ‘Urwa the ‘Udhri / became a legend for generations / He died, comfortably, one time / while I die anew each day” (*Dīwān Majnūn Laylā*, edited by Yūsuf Farhat [Beirut: Dar li-kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1994], 221).

As a whole, poem 11 consists of several movements. The dove scene (verses 1–3) establishes an intense emotional register. In verses 4–5, the poet “passes away” amid the moaning of spirits in the *ghadā* branches and, in a ghostly fashion, suffers torments after he has expired and anticipates new ordeals along the hajj stations (verse 6). The evocation of the hajj sets the stage for the radical transformation of verse 7, where the poet no longer speaks about the Ka’ba but *as* the Ka’ba. With verse 8 the lover’s complaint about the beloved(s) turns to wonderment. He announces that his heart has become receptive of every form, unfolds the various forms it takes, and professes a “religion of love” modeled by the legendary lovers of the past.

Readers of other editions and translations of this poem will note the absence of two verses in this translation. The verses appear neither in the historic manuscripts of the *Tarjumān* nor in the version of poem 11 in *Sessions of the Righteous*. They do appear in *Priceless Treasures*, but without comment other than the statement that the meaning of the verses needed no explanation.

In other editions and translations, the verses follow the reference in verse 7 to spirits or beloveds circling the poet's heart. The poet states that these beings circled his heart just as the "Best of Creation" (an epithet for the prophet Muḥammad) circled the Ka'ba—a construction of mere stones that the intellect would consider unworthy of veneration. Yet the Prophet was *nātiq*, which means rational or capable of speech, the Arabic term used by philosophers who defined the human being as a rational/speaking animal. The verses read: "As the Best of Creation / circled the Ká'ba / which reason and its proofs / would deem unworthy / And kissed stones there / he! a voice of reason / and what is the House [an epithet for the Ká'ba] / compared to human being?"

كَمَا طَافَ خَيْرُ الْخَلْقِ بِلْكَعْبَةِ  
الَّتِي يَقُولُ دَلِيلُ الْعَقْلِ فِيهَا بِشَفَّصَانِ  
  
وَقَبْلَ أَخْجَارًا بِهَا وَفِنْدَوْ نَاطِقُ  
وَأَيْنَ مَقَامُ الْأَبْيَتِ مِنْ قَدْرِ إِنْسَانٍ

**Poem 12.** This poem takes up themes and images from poem 2, but in a different key. At its heart is an interplay between human and nonhuman realms of creation as well as in the tension between a transcendent reality and the manifestation of that transcendent reality within the world, and more specifically within the marble or porcelain figures mentioned in the first verse. It then extends that tension to the three-in-one being proclaimed in various Christian theologies, a triplicity mirrored in the poet's personae as gazelle-minder, astrologer, and monk. Statues: *al-dumā*, referring to the statues or figurines that Ibn 'Arabī associated with Christian veneration in greater Syria.

For the use of *dumya* / *dumā* in the poetry of medieval Islamic Spain, see Henri Pérès, *La poésie andalouse en arabe classique au XIe siècle; ses aspects généraux, ses principaux thèmes et sa valeur documentaire* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1953), 178, 181, 334–43. And for *al-dumā* in early ghazal poetry, see 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'a, *Dīwān*, 293–94.

**Poem 13.** The first four verses of this poem return to the mournful colloquy between the poet and dove or doves, and in this case enact that colloquy through an embedded dialogue. In verse 5, the poet recalls his

experience at ‘Ālij, the immense sand desert known today as the Nefūd, just north of the medieval pilgrimage route from Mecca and Medina to Iraq. The rest of the poem proceeds in classical nasib style. Verse 8 recalls the trauma of the day of separation (*yawm al-bayn*). Verses 9–10 recall the beloved’s party’s journey away from the poet, a scene that extends the poet’s memory into the realm of imagination, given that the poet-lover would not have been traveling with that caravan and could not, strictly speaking, remember it. Verse 11 presents desert travelers tightening the saddles and loosening the reins at the start of the journey or else, once the journey is underway, increasing the camels’ pace. The reference could be to the journey of the beloved’s party or to the journey undertaken by the poet and his companions to rejoin the beloved, a journey that, within the nasib world of the poem, is unending. In verse 10, the poet finds the “death’s cords” before him. By this point in the *Tarjumān*, the lover’s encounter with death has emerged as a pattern, evoked most often in a single verse at a moment of particular emotional intensity within a given poem.

**Poem 14.** This poem is rooted in protocols of hadith transmission, which came to be used for a variety of orally transmitted reports, whether or not they constituted hadiths in the formal sense. Such reports consisted of two parts: the chain of transmitters that, by Ibn ‘Arabī’s time, could span more than six centuries, and the speech that was being reported, ideally in the form of verbatim quotation. Reports of the verses and sayings for the first generations of Muslim love poets were gathered, along with chains of transmission, into immense works such as the *Great Book of Songs*, even as love poets had begun presenting interiorized hadith conversations—a conceit that Ibn ‘Arabī developed and employed with particular intensity. In this poem, the lover receives a message down through a chain of transmitters who comprise personified states of consciousness or emotion. Here, the lover sends a return message *back in time*, through the transmitters, to the original speaker (a procedure that does not, of course, occur in the formal hadith presenting the words or actions of the prophet Muhammad). In some cases, as with this poem, I have employed italics to indicate the message or *matn* of the original speaker and, where it seems appropriate, the return message of the lover.

Verse 3, “brought us / the word”: the term here for bringing a word or a report is *mu‘an’an*. That term could refer to a report that is passed on from generation to generation through a chain of transmitters or to a tale

as passed on by a tell-all or gossip. Verse 5, “*The one you seek / is within your ribs, / turned in each breath / from side to side*”: a subtext here is a hadith stating that “the heart of the person of faith is between two fingers of God.” On that hadith, see Morris, *The Reflective Heart*, 52, 65. In *The Meccan Openings*, Ibn ‘Arabī quotes another couplet on the same topic (*Fut.*, vol. 5, ch. 178, pp. 593–94).

**Poem 15.** This poem proceeds in a hyperbolic register. After a brief mention of the beloved and her party leaving the poet, the verses barrel along a track of expressive flashes. The poet evokes the erotically charged memory of the cheek of the beloved, gendered as male. He breaks into complaint and calls for a friend to help him in his trials. He begs for a glimpse of the beloved and receives a kind rejection. He casts another look back to the beloved’s departure, then curses the cawing crows that portended it and that are transformed in his mind into the camels that carried her off. The poem concludes with the lover recalling and reliving a separation that for him always has occurred and always is occurring.

**Poem 16.** This poem begins with a remembrance of the day of departure. The poet then recalls or imagines the beloved journeying toward Yemen and then, in a sudden switch, turning back toward Khawarnaq and Sadīr, semilegendary palaces in the border regions between Arabia and Iraq that were associated with the vanished grandeur of past civilizations. For verses 5–6, I have employed the colloquial “damn it” for the Arabic *thubūran*. The word might be more formally translated as “ruination,” “destruction,” or “perish” (as in “perish the day”). Verse 6 is a direct paraphrase of Q 25:14 concerning the final day of judgment. When wrongdoers find themselves consigned to their place of punishment, they cry *thubūran* and the divine voice answers, “Do not, today, cry out *thubūran* just once; cry it over and over.”

The tone shifts as the poet addresses a dove, moving into a deep lament at the dove’s cry. In this he echoes the dove-poet dynamic that opened poem 11. When the poet complains that the dove’s cry has increased his own sadness, we might ask if he is not also addressing himself, given that he was the one who was crying out his anguish in the previous verses. The dove in this poem and elsewhere in the *Tarjumān* appears as multivalent and may also intimate an association with the beloved, as the poet imagines his beloved weeping as he does. The lamentation culminates in the

poet's announcement that "death hovers in a dove's cry" and his asking for a brief remission, a request that recalls the plea for release in poem 2.

The poem moves on to address the Eastwind, the star shepherd, and the lightning gazer, three figures at the heart of the nasib tradition. The star shepherd represents the desert poet who, beset by cares, passes a sleepless night "grazing the stars," that is, watching them as they move across the night firmament until they slip over the horizon or fade into the light of dawn—just as a herder watches his flock as it sets out to graze by day and returns at dusk.

For a classic exploration of this motif, see Stetkevych, *Zephyrs of Najd*, chapter 4: "Meadows in the Sky," 134–67. 'Abd al-'Aziz Sayyid al-Ahl offers a brief discussion of several verses from poem 16; see *Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī: min shi'rīhi* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm: 1970), 246–47.

**Poem 17.** Verse 6, "my liver's caul": Arabic poetry redounds with words for "heart" but also mentions other organs of the body as seats of love and passion, including the liver or, as in this case, the caul or membrane surrounding the liver. Elsewhere in the *Tarjumān*, the liver can be associated more explicitly with black bile and melancholy—not surprisingly, given the influence of ancient Greek medical treatises on Arabic thought and literature. (For "caul" as the membrane around the heart or liver, see the King James translation of Hosea 13:8, "the caul of the heart," and Exodus 29:13, "the caul that is above the liver.")

**Poem 18.** This poem opens with the poet standing before the *at'lāl*, asking the ruins or area around them to speak. In this case, the poet seems to be calling on others to question the now-deserted meadows, though he may in fact be calling on himself as well. In the nasib tradition the *at'lāl* remain mute before the poet's questioning, yet a response (from somewhere, perhaps from the poet himself) is given. The poem proceeds in three projective movements: the address to the meadows and the response that the beloved's party has gone off seeking al-Udháyb; the delegation of the Eastwind to serve as a scout and her subsequent report; and finally the sending forth of companions to track down the beloved and her party.

**Poem 19.** This poem proceeds from *at'lāl* lament to recollections of the young women who will come to represent the beloved's party. Wher-ever they alight (or alighted, the remembered past and timeless present

become indistinguishable), the drought-stricken land burgeons with life, and when they leave, it bears “the tombs of those who loved them.” Like the spirit, which in Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical thought brings everything it touches to life and flower, the beloved and her party revive the land when they alight and leave it barren again when they depart. The ending reverses the tomb theme of poem 16. In poem 16, it was not the lovers who are confined to tombs in the wake of the beloved’s departure but those who failed to love in the first place.

**Poem 20.** This poem includes the most sustained allusions to the Nizām figure within the *Tarjumān*. The poet begins in a frenetic mode (verses 1–5), with each verse taking up one motif that recurs, often in expanded form, elsewhere in the *Tarjumān*. These motifs include lovesickness, for which the only cure is the name of the beloved who caused the ailment; the mournful cry of the dove; the lover’s exclamations over a girl’s beauty and charms; the figuring of the beloved in terms of rising and setting heavenly bodies (in this case the sun); and the poet’s address to the *atlāl* and his recollection of beauties that once filled the place.

The movement from motif to motif slows somewhat at verses 7–8 with the image of the gazelle and the fire within the poet’s breast, then comes to a halt in verses 9–15. In these verses, the poet calls on his companions to help him grieve at the ruins of the beloved’s campsite, although he acknowledges that ultimately he must face his loss alone. He perseverates at this point, repeating his pleas to the companions as if he were frozen in place before the *atlāl*. The reanimation of the poet occurs as he urges his companions to console him with names of various beloveds, tales of intimate goings-on at the stations of Hājur and Zarūd, and verses recounting the fate of star-crossed lovers such as Bishr and Hind, Qays and Laylā, and Ghaylān and Mayya. As he recites the names of these muses, poet-lovers, and sites of love from a now-mythic past, he begins to revive.

With verse 17, the poem shifts to the Nizām figure and into a new lyrical register. The poet longs for a girl who is a master of the rhetorical arts (“for a young girl, / harmony in verse, / in prose, in oration!”), more fully, “a young girl who is master of prose, poetry, pulpit, and elucidation”: *dhāti nathrin wa nizāmin wa minbarin [pulpit] wa bayyāni*). The word for poetry (*nizām*) offers yet another instance in which Nizām is embedded within the poetry rather than named by the poet as a beloved. In his Nizām preface, Ibn ‘Arabī had extolled her as a girl (*tafla*, the same

word used in this poem) who not only embodied beauty in all its forms but also mastered all forms of verbal eloquence, had called her a master (*shaykha*), and suggested that she might have been his own master.

That the verse alludes to the Niżām figure mentioned in the preface is confirmed in the following verse, which extols the beloved as a daughter of Persian kings and of Isfahān—the city of Niżām’s father and aunt. The unnamed, obliquely referenced beloved is then associated with Iraq, an association that resonates with other poems in the *Tarjumān* expressing longing for a beloved in Baghdad or places near to it. The conjuration of Niżām brings into play the East/West polarity of Arabia-Persia and, with a slight tilt, Yemen-Iraq. (At the time, the designation Iraq referred primarily to the region of Baghdad rather than any particular polity.) The poet uses a courteous address appropriate for formal circles (“my lords” or “gentlemen”) to challenge the logic that contradictions can never meet. He then announces a mystical communion in which he and the beloved share wine without having to pass the cup back and forth and share a song of rapture without sound (verses 21–22).

In this poem, the precise alignment of the opposites that by logic cannot meet shifts from verse to verse. In the final verse, the poet rebukes an unnamed poet for claiming that Suhayl and the Pleiades, two signal points of the night sky, could never come together, given that one rises toward Syria while the other is setting over Yemen. (The verses in question are ascribed to ‘Umar ibn ‘abī al-Rabī‘a [*Dīwān*, 438].)

**Poem 21.** In verse 1, the poet urges the wadi to respond to “the lady / of this hallowed ground”: *rabba al-himā*. *Rabba* is the feminine of *rabb*, “lord,” the plural of which, *arbāb*, appeared in the concluding verse of poem 1: “The lords of love.” *Al-himā*, translated here as hallowed ground, can be interpreted as a common noun, as in this translation, or as a place-name. In pre-Islamic poetry, the word referred to a tribe’s sacred pasture grounds. Its sacral character shows forth clearly in poetry and lore: if someone from a rival tribe transgressed upon a *himā*, it was a cause for war.

In the nasib, the *himā* epitomizes a site of beauty and bounty, and the abode of the beloved. The poet urges the wadi garden to provide shade for the “lady of the *himā*” until her assembly, which includes desert travellers setting up their tents by the wadi, can gather around her. That assembly appears as pastoral counterpart to the audience that might have

assembled around a diva in Baghdad. It also foreshadows the gathering (*nādī*) assembled around its mistress or lady (*rabba*) in poem 61. Only when the lady of the *himā* is fully accommodated and her assembly has gathered around her will it attain the shade, dew, and rain that it needs. Here as elsewhere in the *Tarjumān*, the verdant meadow or garden is tied intrinsically to the presence of the beloved.

**Poem 22.** This exquisite lyric exemplifies the sensuous visionary imagery of the *Tarjumān*. The imagery of verse 6 echoes within and beyond the *Tarjumān*'s interior frame. The first part of the verse, “she extends you a hand / soft as undyed silk,” may recall the opening of the *Qurrat al-‘Ayn* preface: as Ibn ‘Arabī finished reciting the four verses that had come to his mind near the Ka‘ba, he felt a jolt between his shoulders “from a hand softer than undyed silk.”

**Poem 23.** This poem consists of a slow ascent (verses 1–5) followed by a rapidly accelerating movement that concludes with the poet’s self-portrait in a time out of time. It opens with a group of riders posed at dawn after a long night journey. They gaze at something appearing in the early dawn light. The scene and the specific word for “appear” (*lāḥa*) indicate an apparition as much as an appearance. The vision occurs at the liminal moment when an object first emerges into visibility, prompting the observer to wonder whether he really sees something or not, whether what he sees is real or imaginary, and what it in fact truly is. The features of what is seen gradually emerge into clarity as a prominent object on a mountain peak, and then into further definition as a monumental structure like the fabled castle of *Aqūq*. The poetic lens then moves in to a close-up of the inscription carved, like an ancient graffito perhaps, into the structure’s brick or rock walls. As the tale carved there unfolds, the poetic pace accelerates, propelled by parallel constructions, the poem’s anapestic *mutaqārib* meter, and increased alignment between metrical feet and syntactical units.

**Poem 24.** With this poem, Ibn ‘Arabī plumbs a particularly deep vein of nasib sensibility. The poem proceeds at a steady, solemn pace into and through a passage of grief. It begins with the lover asking an unnamed addressee to stay and grieve by the ruins at the station of La‘la’. By leaving the addressee unnamed, he evokes the possibility that he may be address-

ing himself. Verse 2 continues the address but ends by suggesting the poet has indeed been addressing himself. In verse 3, the poet grieves for the times spent near “her moringa,” thereby tying together the ruins, the moringa, the station of La’la’, and the beloved. There follows the dervish’s verse that inspired the poem as the poet complains that the lightning (a sign of rain for the desert traveler and, in the lightning of the beloved’s smile, a sign of promised intimacy) has been unfaithful only to him. The station of La’la’, the ruins, the moringa, the lightning, and the formerly “luxuriant land” seem to respond as one with the beloved:

We used, she said,  
to come there together  
in my branches’ shadows  
in that lush land

My lightning, once  
a smile’s flash,  
is now a blaze  
of barren stone

In verse 8, the poet shifts to speaking in the third person about his interlocutor:

I forgave her  
as I heard her speak,  
grieving as I grieved  
with wounded heart

Over the final three verses, the dialogue shifts as the poet asks the deserted meadow where the beloved and her party might be. The meadow no longer responds as one with the grieving beloved but instead informs the poet of the beloved’s itinerary.

**Poem 25.** This poem takes up the most informal of all classical meters, *rajaz*. The first part of the poem consists of exclamations, chains of images, and rapid shifts in address. In verses 4–6, the beloved is gendered as male, then suddenly, in verse 7, as female.

Verses 11–13 praise the beloved with parallel evocations of Qur’anic themes. Verse 11, “Had Iblīs seen . . . he’d have fallen down in prayer”: the

Qur'an relates that when the creator announced his intention to create the human being, Adam, who would serve as his regent (*khalifa*) on earth, the angels protested, asking why he would create one who will "spill blood and corrupt the world." Adam is shown to know something, "the names," that the angels do not. The angels take the position of ritual prayer (*sujūd*) before Adam. When Iblīs refuses, he is cast from the heavens (Q 2:30–34; 15:28–31; 32:7–9; 38:71–75). In this poem, the beloved outshines Adam: a glimpse of her beauty would have compelled even the proud Iblīs to fall into *sujūd*. Verse 12 evokes the Idrīs–Enoch–Hermes figure, the legendary inventor of writing. Verse 13 returns to the Qur'anic story of Bilqīs and Sulaymān that formed the poetic frame for poem 2.

**Poem 26.** Like poem 14, this poem enmeshes itself within the language of hadith transmission and images of the lost, verdant meadows of the *nasib*. "The Garden of Eden": literally "The Garden of Safe Abode" (*jannat al-ma'wā*) beheld in Muḥammad's prophetic vision (Q 53:15). In the hadith and prophetic biographies, Muḥammad encounters *jannat al-ma'wā* near the culmination of his heavenly ascent. *Jannat al-ma'wā* could be viewed as the garden of the future paradise as well as a retrieval of the Garden of Eden. Arabic poets had long boasted of the ancient vintage of their wine: a vintage of ancient Persia or of Enoch, Noah, or Adam, or even, as in the opening verse from Ibn al-Fārid's famous wine ode, a vintage of a time that preceded the creation of the grapevine. For the association of wine with musk, see the Qur'anic reference to the wine of paradise (Q 83:26) as "wine sealed with musk."

**Poem 27.** The poem begins with the expression "old house" (*al-bayt al-'atīq*), which can serve as an epithet for the Ka'ba. The poet's reference to it as "high above" may reflect the manner in which the Ka'ba temple looms over the pilgrims. Yet the verse may also allude to the Qur'anic "Frequented House" (*al-bayt al-ma'mūr*, Q 52:7), the celestial counterpart to the Ka'ba, around which a different set of seventy thousand angels perform ritual prayers each day according to hadith in the highly regarded compilations of al-Bukhārī and Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj.

*Sessions of the Righteous* (*MAB* 1:290) introduces this poem with these words: "I was circling the Ka'ba one night when I was overcome with a particularly sweet feeling. And I said, complaining of the thirst I suffered during my desert journey, 'Old house high above . . .'"

**Poem 28.** This poem takes the short, dimeter form of the informal *rajaz* meter. Due to the short verse length, I have translated it into couplets, with some minor adjustments, starting at verse 15, to fit the English cadence. The verse number indications (15, 20) reflect the verse numbering in the Arabic text.

**Poem 29.** This poem begins with a sixteen-verse reverie, a dance of erotic images, and the vision of an endless cascade of acceptance, with the Qur'anic visions of huris as a subtext. At its midpoint (verse 16), the mood turns as the poet plunges into a short version of the classical ode's harrowing journey-quest (*rahil*). The poem culminates with an eerie set of verses in which a fearsomely attractive figure, gendered masculine, appears as a moon during the ritual circling associated with Ka'ba, which we've encountered in poems 3, 7, and 12. In poem 29, the Ka'ba is not mentioned and the circling is performed as the poet and the moon figure circle each other, with the former continually effacing his footprints with the train of his robe. Such circling resonates strongly with the first chapter of *Meccan Openings* in which Ibn 'Arabī encounters a mystical youth who is at once a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, a personification of the Ka'ba, and the agent of mystical initiation. The scene also resonates with one of the core rituals of Sufism, when a group chants a *dhikr* (repeated mantra-like words or short phrases from the Qur'an or other revered sources) while moving in a circular motion. In some sessions, two individuals from the circling group come to the center, lock hands together, and spin in the opposite direction of the circling group. The faces of the two spinning in the center stand out to each other with clarity as the chanting devotees appear as a blurry whirl. Verse 21, "I folded toward him / in desire and fear" (*fa-tawwaytu min ḥadharin 'alayhi sharāsifan*): the eeriness of the final verses is intensified by the use of an Arabic word (*shursūf*, pl. *sharāsif*) that can mean either "rib cage" (as in I bowed from below the rib cage or I held him to my rib cage) or "ill-luck" and that, with a single shift of vocalization (*shursūf*, pl. *sharāsif*), would mean "shroud." Verse 22 begins with "he [a full moon] appeared in the circling": *qamarun ta'arḍa fī-t-tawāf*. The same words appear in the second verse of a poem by Ibn 'Arabī included in *Sessions of the Righteous* (*MAB* 1:411–14).

**Poem 30.** In this, the longest poem of the *Tarjumān*, the poetic voice wanders through various modalities and moods of ghazal verse. The poem

also features a number of Qur'anic allusions. The first occurs in verse 8 with "Sabā's [Sheba's] lost tribes" (Q 34:15–31). Some have suggested that Sūra 34 reflects a Yemen or land of Sabā in decline, presumably well after the time of Bilqīs, perhaps after the collapse of the great Ma'rib dam, the ruins of which are visible today. "Sabā's lost tribes": *aydī sabā*, literally "the hands of Sabā," a metaphor that could mean "the power of Sabā" or "the forces of Sabā." In verses 10–14, the poet laments his loss and asks each of the winds in turn to report a hadith that will speak to his condition. Verses 19–21 move through differing perspectives of nature/human empathy and mutual mirroring. The natural (evening clouds, sunset glow, rain, narcissi, and roses) and the human (tears, cheeks) are intertwined. The nature-human convergence here resonates strongly with the endings of poem 12 and poem 28.

After an interlude of ghazal flirtation that reaches a point of poetic self-parody, the poet presents himself through two Qur'anic characters. The first is the mysterious al-Sāmirī (verse 32), who appears in the Qur'anic story of Mūsā, the Israelites, and the golden calf (Q 20:85–97). When Mūsā comes down from the mountain and confronts his people worshiping the calf, they excuse themselves by pointing to al-Sāmirī as the responsible party. After they melted down the jewelry that they had taken from Egypt and molded it into the shape of a calf, al-Sāmirī sprinkled it with dust taken from the footprint of "the messenger" (*rasūl*), causing it to low. That messenger is usually taken to be the spirit (*rūh*) or Jibrīl. Ibn 'Arabī associates the messenger in this story with the spirit as a life force. A core theme throughout his writings holds that wherever the spirit passes, life surges.

Another Qur'anic character is evoked in verses 33–34, where the poet declares that he will pursue the beloved's party, no matter where they travel, like Dhū al-Qarnayn ("the two-horned"). In Q 18:83–98, Dhū al-Qarnayn is depicted traveling to the eastern and western ends of the earth along heavenly "cords" (*asbāb*). In Islamic lore, Dhū al-Qarnayn was associated with Iskandar (Alexander the Great), the name I have employed in the translation.

On the Qur'anic portrayal of Dhū al-Qarnayn, see Kevin van Bladel, "Heavenly Cords and Prophetic Authority in the Quran and Its Late Antique Context," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70, no. 2 (2007): 223–46; and *idem*, "The Alexander Legend in the Qur'an," in *The Qur'an in Its Historical Context*, edited by Gabriel Said Reynolds

(London: Routledge, 2008), 83–102. For a brilliant exploration of the “the trace” or “footprint” in the Moses/Mūsa accounts in rabbinic literature and Islamic traditions, see David Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988): 14–190, 476–83.

**Poem 31.** This elegant ghazal recalls poem 22 in register and pace but in longer, more sustained form.

**Poems 32–38.** An interior suite of short poems. In **poem 32**, the poet hearkens back to the times of his youth when he traveled from Najd to Tihām and lit a campfire for his beloved. The lover’s memories are sparked by words heard between Karkh (the western part of Baghdad) and Ḥadītha, which lies on the Euphrates some 150 miles northwest of Baghdad. “Fifty years”: commentators have pointed out that Ibn ‘Arabī would have been about fifty years old at the time he composed the *Tarjumān*. In the context of the Niẓām romance, Karkh, like Ḥalba and Dār al-Falak, is associated by some readers with the residence of Niẓām. In verse 4, the poet recalls building a fire from “flametree and markh”—two desert plants, ‘afār and *markh*, valued as kindling. **Poem 33.** The entire poem is devoted to the dove-poet colloquy, with its own distinctive emphasis and tone. **Poem 34.** This short, apparently simple poem features reverberating patterns, etymological excavations, puns, and elaborate alliterations. The sophisticated employment of *jinās* results in a light touch of wit and a pictorial impression of poignant simplicity. **Poem 35.** Tan‘im is a site outside of Mecca. Women pilgrims who were menstruating would wait there until their menses had passed before proceeding to the Ka‘ba and performing the hajj. “I’m here for you now” (*labbayka*) is the ritual phrase pronounced by pilgrims at various points during the hajj.

**Poem 36.** Verse 4, “Flashed over Híma”: there is a particularly intriguing text puzzle regarding this verse. The manuscripts consulted for this book (described in appendix 1) read *al-himā*, as do *Diwān al-Ma‘rif* and *Sessions of the Righteous* (*MAb* 2:261), yet the manuscripts and printed editions of *Priceless Treasures* read *al-ghadā*, which is the word Ibn ‘Arabī proceeds to interpret in his commentary.

In *Sessions of the Righteous*, the poem is followed by the same commentary found in *Priceless Treasures*: this is the only instance of Ibn ‘Arabī providing a commentary on a poem in *Sessions* identical to that found in

*Precious Treasures*. In *Sessions*, the poem is introduced by “Among my poems on the *laṭā’if al-‘irfāniyya fī al-ishihrāt* (mystic subtleties within the allusions) is the following . . .”

This poem extends the themes of poem 32 and the poet’s reflection on his fifty years. It concludes with a play on the first verse of a poem by Ibn Dumayna (d. ca. 800). Ibn ‘Arabī included Ibn Dumayna’s entire six-verse poem along with his own commentary on it in *Sessions of the Righteous*, where he followed it with Ibn Sīna’s famous “fall of the soul” poem, before proceeding to present a group of ten *Tarjumān* poems. *Sessions of the Righteous* (*MAb* 1:286–93) thereby provides a window onto poetic intertextuality in thirteenth-century Arabic poetry and into Ibn ‘Arabī’s own poetic sensibility.

**Poem 37.** This poem distills a recurring theme of the *Tarjumān*, that of the lover’s message, into five exquisitely wrought verses. The poet commissions his companion-messengers to travel through the Arabian imaginary’s archetypal sites (verses 1–3) in order to proclaim his devastated condition and make inquiries on his behalf (verses 4–5). The messenger’s trajectory begins near al-Himā (“Preserve,” “Sanctuary”), hearkening back to the vernal tribal grounds of the pre-Islamic poets. The first goal is the highland plateau of Najd that for the poets is the land of fragrant east winds, fresh springs, the fellowship of lovers and seekers, and intimations of the beloved’s presence. In Najd, the poet adds, the messengers will encounter a solitary waymark, literally “that waymark” (*dhāka al-‘alam*), an expression in which the demonstrative adjective “that” connotes uniqueness or special significance. For the poets, an *‘alam* could refer to a mound of stones or cairn set up along a desert route, a natural feature such as a mountain peak, a ruined fortress, or other another constructed or natural feature that served to guide the traveler in the unforgiving vastness of the desert. The word evokes the desert topography and those who venture through it but, as noted in reference to poem 23, can elicit deeper questions regarding perception and knowledge, appearance and reality; issues that, for the traveler attempting to find the path through the desert maze, constitute a matter of life and death.

In this poem, that certain special waymark is the one that would guide the messengers toward a place and time of proximity to the beloved and her party. On that path they will pass by Twisting Sands (*al-liwā*), a feature or site that took a prominent place in the nasib from the time of the

pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays, who associated it with the place where (or near to where) the beloved set off on her journey away from the lover. After Twisting Sands comes the shade of the lote (*al-dāl*), the tree that could mark the *locus amoenis* of the lover's union with the beloved in that primordial time before the separation, and Salam (also known as Dhū al-Salam, "the place of *salam* trees"), yet another station in the travels of the beloved.

Then, finally, comes the traveler's goal: Minā, site of the most intense rites of the hajj pilgrimage, including the great sacrifice that marks the holiest day of the Muslim calendar—the place that holds the poet's heart. Minā is at the heart of a vast concourse of pilgrims. There the messengers are to listen to the reports brought by travelers from near and far, to pass on to them news of the lover's condition, and, most importantly, to inquire. The poet uses an emphatic sequence of three verbs to indicate the act of inquiry and does so in a manner that leaves the proposed inquiry both open-ended and urgent, rendered here at "why . . . why?" (One might also interpret the questions as "how, where, why?") In the nasib context, that question may be posed to the companions of the beloved, to the sweet fragrances, lightning flashes, Eastwind, or to the ruins of the beloved's campsite, the *atlāl*, that since pre-Islamic times have answered the poet's question with silence.

**Poem 38.** This poem starts out as an homage to Baghdad as the home of both the poet's imam and of a beautiful Persian girl. Verse 4 is built upon the wordplay between two radicals. The first, *ḥ/y/y*, forms the basis for words such as "life," "greet," and "tribe," all three of which are semantically interrelated: to greet someone is to wish that person long or healthy life, and a tribe—or, in later usage, neighborhood—is the locus of life. The first hemistich of the verse, translated literally, reads: "She greets and thereby brings back to life the one she slew with her gaze." The second hemistich of the fourth Arabic verse (the final quatrain in the English) is built upon three different forms of the radical *ḥ/s/n*: *husn* (beauty); *husnā* (an action carried out in a generous way or one that turns out happily or "for the best" or simply a happy outcome); and *ihsān*, a word with a particularly deep ethical and religious valence. Arabic commentators and lexicographers viewed *ihsān* as an extension of the beautiful into the realm of the ethical and social spheres. A famous hadith characterizes *ihsān* as: "to worship God as though you see him, and even if you cannot see him,

know that he sees you.” More widely, the virtue of *ihsān* can entail making every act, however humble, an act of worship.

**Poem 39.** This poem opens with huri-like figures teasing the poet at the Ka‘ba, an echo of poem 7. It then unfolds as an extended elaboration of the light/night and sun/moon binary that recurs throughout the *Tarjumān*, often breaking into longer poems in the form of one to three verse segments. The poem unfolds as a dance of images, each of which extends the core light/night contrast into a new set of oppositions and reconciliations, particularly through the contrast between the splendor of the beloved’s unveiled countenance and the sheltering dark of her hair.

**Poem 40.** This homage to a girl is also a meditation on time and place. The girl is said to be fourteen years old. She appears as the full moon, which occurs on the fourteenth day of the month according to the Islamic lunar calendar. Yet this moon-girl does not undergo growth or decline, the twin aspects of the “natural” moon as it moves through time. The phases of the moon take on particular importance during the month of Ramadan, which begins with the spotting of the new moon. The month falls into two fourteen-day segments, the first in which the moon waxes, and the second in which it wanes. By stating that the moon-girl in question neither moves through constellations nor goes through phases, the poet places her beyond the natural cycles of time and place. Thus, she “knows no doubling, odd to even” (*fa mā tushaffi‘u l-witra*) but remains singular. It is timelessly “full.” To double the odd (oneness) to the even (twoness) would be to fall into the world of time. For a Qur’anic subtext, see Q 36:40: “And the moon—we have determined mansions for it through which it [travels] and returns, the night does not outstrip the day, and each [of the heavenly bodies] is gliding along in its own sphere.” See also Q 89:1–6, where the divine voice swears by essential polarities and patterns of the cosmos: “By the dawn / By the nights ten / By the odd and the even / By the night as it eases away / Is there not in that an oath for the thoughtful mind?” (Qur’anic exegetes have interpreted the ten nights as the ten nights of the hajj.) The girl-moon thereby transcends the polarities and patterns within the created world and within the act of creation.

Ibn ‘Arabī also notes in his commentary that fourteen is considered a perfect number in that it combines the perfect number four with ten

(1+2+3+4). See also *Meccan Openings* (*Fut.*, vol. 2, ch. 69, pp. 416–17), especially the opening of the eleventh verse of the poem presented there.

**Poem 41.** In this poem, the call of a bird in a moringa tree (which in this case could be either the mournful coo of a dove or the ominous caw of a crow) incites the lover’s journey that will take up the rest of the poem. The poem is composed in the anapestic *mutaqārib* meter, with uniform feet of three syllables patterned as  $\text{^ } \text{^ } \text{-}$  or  $\text{^ } \text{- } \text{-}$ . That meter contributes to the poem’s galloping forward momentum, a momentum that is further enhanced by the manner in which the two halves of each verse create a syntactical call-and-response effect, especially in poem’s middle section. I have adjusted the default uppercase protocol for the beginning of stanzas to reflect the way the poetic voice in this poem charges across the verses. Like poem 12, this poem concludes with a declaration regarding the nature-human symbiosis: the softness of a lover’s cheek is not like the softness of a fresh bough, but vice versa. The attributes of nature are patterned on the human: “Blush red’s the garden rose.”

**Poem 42.** Here the poetic voice approaches full delirium. The first three verses are based upon intense employment of *jinās*. Verse 1 juxtaposes *mahāt* (doe oryx) with *mahā* (onyx or sunstone), echoing earlier *Tarjumān* representations of the gazelle and oryx as luminous beings analogous to the sun. The second verse entwines itself around the Arabic radical *s/h/ā*, which yields *suhā*, the faint star that was considered to be most difficult to spot and became a test case for stargazers, as well as the verb *sahā*, “to neglect” or “fail to perceive.” The third verse culminates with the theme of the sacrificial offering, with complex *jinās* play on the letters *s/r/b* and *l/h/ā*:

<i>sir bihī</i>	<i>bi-sirbihī</i>	<i>li-sirbihī</i>
lead him away	with his heart	for (taking the place of) his herd
<i>fa-l-luhā</i>	<i>taftahū</i>	<i>bi l-ḥamdi l-lahā</i>
for oblations	open	with praise the throats (open throats in praise)

The final two verses tie together love-madness, hadith traditions regarding allowable forms of exchange, and the power of invocation. They do so with a play on the Arabic syllable “*hā*,” which serves as an end rhyme

throughout the poem. Yet the penultimate verse begins with the poet stating that this poem has no proper end-rhyme construction. The poet declares that his only aim (*qaṣd*, the word from which the word for the classical ode, *qaṣida*, is derived) is the letter or syllable *hā*, which can feature as part of a word or as an independent pronoun. His claim is partially unpacked in the next verse, which begins, literally translated, “my goal is the expression ‘her’ (*hā*) for the sake of ‘her.’” The full implication of this appeal unfolds in the final hemistich, which would read, word for word, “the only trade or exchange I love is *hā wa hā* (“her and her,” “it and it,” or “this and this”). In his note to this poem, Nicholson suspected that *hā wa hā* was “a formula used in completing a bargain.” Here the expression may reflect a principle in Islamic rulings on trade. Indeed, hadiths outlining what commodity trades were permissible employ a nearly identical expression. The trade in certain commodities, such as gold, silver, wheat, and barley, was subject to stringent rules. It was licit to trade gold bullion for gold jewelry, for example, but not for silver jewelry. Gold could only be traded in the form of *hā' wa hā'*: “this item for that item of the same species, immediately and without delay.” (For one party to delay handing over an item would raise the question of usury in Islamic legal considerations.) The letter *hamza* in *hā'* would have been dropped in the poem in accord with the rules of poetic license.

The poet addresses the beloved saying, “you so full with / beauty—I’ve nothing.” He has nothing to give. She needs nothing. He then declares his solution: he will trade “her” for “her.” In the jurisprudence of the religion of love, the poet’s permissible terms of exchange (gold for gold, etc.) align with the magic of invocation: by calling “her,” he brings her into his presence.

For the relevant hadith traditions, see Volkan Yıldırın Stodolsky, *A New Historical Model and Periodization for the Perception of the Sunnah of the Prophet and His Companions*, PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2012, 109–17, 235. On the question of proper rhyme (*qāfiya*) in regard to this poem, Ibn ‘Arabī states in his commentary that some grammarians consider the kind of end rhyme employed in this poem as lacking the proper preceding syllable but that others take a different position. See *Pricless Treasures: Dīwān Dhakhā’ir al-A'lāq [sic]*, edited by Muḥammad ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Shuqayrī (al-Haram [Egypt]: al-‘Ayn lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buhūth al-Insāniyya wa-al-Ijtima‘iyya, 1995), 454.

**Poem 43.** This poem begins with the poet's plea to the camel drivers who are leading the beloved and her party away. It proceeds through a haze of memories concerning the day of separation, recalled or imagined trajectories of the beloved, and the lover's complaint at being abandoned and neglected. "Splitting bittergourd" in verse 6 recalls the *mu'allqa* (Hanging Ode) of the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays, in which the lover describes his shock and pain at the lover's departure with the same words—a phrase interpreted by commentators as evoking burning eyes and tears. Bittergourd or bitter apple (*hanzal*) is the fruit of an earth-hugging vine known for its astringency. The poem concludes with two verses on patience, echoing the final verse of poem 5.

**Poem 44.** Divine ineffability plays a central role in Islamic theology and within Sufi thought particularly. The divine reality, being infinite, cannot be described in human language, although the names and attributes given to it in the Qur'an, viewed as the word of God, are affirmed. This poem centers on the ineffability of the beloved, who eludes the grasp of those who would delimit her or tie her down.

Verse 10: the manuscripts indicate considerable confusion over two words in this verse, which are based on the radical *r/w/h* (which yields meanings of spirit, wind, and refreshment) and *n/q/l* (which yields meanings of move, transport, transmit, and translate).

**Poem 45.** While poem 44 evoked the ineffability of the beloved, poem 45 evokes the infinity of *shawq*. The lover longs to be with the beloved, but, when with her, his fear of separation comes between them. In other poems, the infinity of *shawq* reflects the motif that at the point of union with the beloved, the lover has lost all consciousness of self. When self-consciousness returns with the lover realizing he is one with the beloved, he falls back into separation. Ibn 'Arabī addresses this aspect of the lover's dilemma in the chapter on love theory in the *Meccan Openings* (*Fut.* 5: 593–94; Gloton, *Traité d'Amour*, 57–58). In the classical ghazal tradition, the union of lover and beloved is, by definition, ephemeral at best. In the thought of Ibn 'Arabī (as noted in reference poem 11), the mystic is ever perishing out of love for the divine beloved, becoming one with the beloved, then thrown back into separation at the beloved's appearance in a new form, and then joyfully reuniting with the beloved in that new manifestation. This poem, composed in the rollicking *rajaz* meter and with

numerous puns and interior rhymes, provides a change of pace and tone at this point in the *Tarjumān*.

**Poem 46.** A dialogue between the poet and the Eastwind serves as the emotive heart of this poem. I have used italics to clarify the dialogue without resorting to quotation marks, which in Arabic love poetry—as in the hadith and the Qur’ān—can result in embedded chains of double quotes and single quotes: “I asked the Eastwind about them / And who are you to want / to know? she answered / *At Twin Flash I left / the pilgrims, and at the relays of Ghimād and Ghamīm, close by / It’s said no land can hold them / But they will never elude / the cavalries of my longing . . .*” Here and in other cases, however, the exact moment when the speech of one party ends and the other begins can be open to more than one interpretation.

**Poem 47.** This short poem begins with the poet-dove scene encountered in earlier poems. In this case, a Qur’ānic passage serves as the subtext for the complaint. The divine speaker states (Q 33:72), “We offered the trust (*al-amāna*) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they each shrank from it in fear. The human being accepted it, but proved to be unjust and foolhardy.” In the poem, love is in effect the trust that the world could not bear to accept. In his commentary on this poem, Ibn ‘Arabī quotes the twelfth-century garland poet of Seville, al-A’mā al-Tuṭīlī: “His laugh flashed pearl. The full moon shone as he removed his veil. / Time could not hold him, but my heart took him in” (*dāḥikun ‘an juman / sāfirun ‘an badrī / dāqa ‘anhu z-zamān / wa ḥawāḥu ṣadrī*). A subtext for Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary is a *hadīth qudsī* (divine saying): “My heaven and earth could not hold me, but the heart of my believing servant does.” On this hadith in the work of Ibn ‘Arabī, see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 107. See also Hermann, vol. 2, pp. 258–59; and A. R. Nykl, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry, and Its Relations with the Old Provençal Troubadours* (Baltimore: J. H. Furst, 1946). For the Arabic text of the Tuṭīlī’s twenty-one-verse *muwashshahā* along with a translation, see James T. Monroe, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry: A Student Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 252–55. For the theme of accepting the trust that the cosmos itself has refused, see also Hafiz’s

“The sky couldn’t bear the burden of His trust, so they cast lots and drew the name of crazy me,” translated by Elizabeth Gray, *The Green Sea of Heaven: Fifty Ghazals from the Diwan of Hafiz*, ghazal 29, verse 3, pp. 98–99.

The final two verses of the poem return to the imagery of circling (*tawāf*), echoing the mutual-circling verses in poem 29.

**Poems 48–50.** Here we encounter another suite of short poems. **Poem 48**, a work of consummate lyricism, needs no commentary. **Poem 49** opens with three verses oscillating between the lover’s complaints about and praise of the beloved. In verse 4, the body of the poet becomes the *atlāl* or ruins in which there is a garden, a garden that elsewhere in the *Tarjumān* springs into blossom when the beloved and her party are present. This garden, however, is the haunt of a dove and of the lover, each mourning their own loss. The dove motif recalls similar passages in poems 11, 13, 16, 20, 33, and 47, and anticipates those in 56 and 61, although each of those passages takes on a distinctive inner dynamic and specific placement within each poem in which it appears. The final verse, in which the poet complains of a beloved who seems to take pleasure in his torment, returns the poem to the ghazal discourse with which it began. **Poem 50** recalls the pre-Islamic nasib motif of the phantom (*tayf* or *khayāl*) of the beloved, which makes a night visitation to the lover. For a translation and study of a pre-Islamic ode centered on the phantom theme, see John Seybold, “The Earliest Demon Lover: The Ṭayf al-Khayāl in al-Mufaḍḍaliyāt,” in Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, ed., *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994): 180–89.

**Poem 51.** This short poem opens with a reference to a nightwalker (*tāriq*), a word with baleful associations in Arabic poetry. As the poem continues, it becomes clear that it is the lover who is walking through the night. There follows a procession of place-names deeply resonant within the Arabic poetic tradition. As elsewhere, I have used both transliteration and translations to weave such names into the acoustics of the English text and to hint at some of their associations. In the poem’s final verse, the poet declares a kingdom for the beloved and a kingdom for the lover, a declaration that, in poems to follow, will be complicated by more tangled reflections on mastery and subjection in love.

**Poem 52.** This poem embodies a phenomenon central to the classical Arabic *nasib*: the lover laments his distance from the beloved yet “recalls” her journey away from him even though he could not have witnessed it. Alternatively, he presents himself as speaking during the departure, predicting the trajectory she would follow after her departure. Here, as in verses 3–4 of poem 19, Ibn ‘Arabī radicalizes the phenomenon to the point of schizophrenia. The poet presents one part of himself as standing with his companions at the site of departure or at one of the beloved’s abandoned stations, and depicts the other part as clinging to, trailing, and haunting the beloved’s party at every stage of their journey, “howling on their trail.”

**Poem 53.** Visual and acoustic metaphors combine in this three-verse poem. The doubled letter is a core element of Arabic phonology and orthography. In Arabic, consonant doubling is a fundamental phonemic marker. To ignore it is to babble incomprehensibly. Printed copies of the Qur’an always include a small mark (*tashdīd*) above the consonant in question, and copyists or editors sometimes added the *tashdīd* to poetic texts. The conceit underlying this poem is based on the default writing system, in which the doubled letter remains unmarked. Arabic readers are expected to know when to read a single consonant and when to read it as doubled. In the latter case, the letter is pronounced as doubled as if two identical letters had been merged into a single sign. The letter is in this sense “heard but unseen.”

With “I’m shadow, and he is light,” the poem moves to a more cross-linguistic, two-in-one image. For the motif of the largely invisible yet audible lover in a poem by the Andalusian lyric master Ibn Zaydūn (d. 1070), see Michael Sells, “Love,” in María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael A. Sells, eds., *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: The Literature of al-Andalus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 128–29; Ibn Zaydūn, *Dīwān* (Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1967), 74.

**Poem 54.** Love’s dialectic of mastery and subjection drives this poem. The poem may not fit the specific subgenre of Arabic riddle poem, yet it is layered with riddle-like employment of *jinās*, complicated still further by plays on the visual aspects of Arabic script involving the diacritical dot. Those who neglect to dot the “i” when writing English, or who have struggled to read the handwriting of those who neglect it, will appreciate the

importance of the dot. Arabic has numerous letters that can be distinguished one from the other only by such dots, and given the human fallibility of copyists and the fragility of a dot on a centuries-old sheet of paper, diacritics play a major role in variant readings for a word. The final verses of this poem are strewn (riddled in fact) with plays on two Arabic consonants, the *dāl* (د) (equivalent to English “d” and the *dhāl* (ذ) [dh], which is pronounced as the “th” in “thou”), particularly in words based on the *d/l/l* root and the *dh/l/l* root. Most *d/l/l*-based words carry meanings of intimacy and closeness while *dh/l/l* words signify subjection, humbleness, lowness. The following two verses, attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī by the historian al-Maqqarī, suggest a reward in store for anyone who discerns the proper reading: “Between *tadhallul* (subjection) and *tadallul* (intimacy) is a dot / wherein the scholar loses his way / It is the dot of the universe. Traverse it / and you’ll gain wisdom and the elixir of life.”

بَيْنَ التَّدَلُّ وَالتَّدَلُّ شُقْطَةٌ  
فِيهَا يَتَّرِيَهُ الْعَالَمُ النَّحْرِيرُ

هِيَ شُقْطَةُ الْأَكْوَانِ إِنْ جَاءَ زَعْماً  
كُنْتُ الْحَكِيمَ وَعَلِمْتُ الْأَكْسِيرَ

“Dar al-Falak” (literally, “The House of the Heavenly Sphere”), mentioned in verses 1 and 6, is likely a reference to the convent in Baghdad founded by the caliph Nāṣir li-ad-Dīn in 1180, and, as mentioned, the references to it in this poem have enhanced the enigma regarding the relationship between Ibn ‘Arabī and Nizām. See Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī, *Deuter der Sehnsüchte (Turjuman al-Ashwaq)*, 2 vols., trans. Wolfgang Hermann (Zürich: Edition Shershir, 2013–16), 2:284; Addas, *Red Sulfur* 210–11; Ḥājj Yūsuf, *Shams al-maghrib*, 250–255. For the two “dot” verses attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī by al-Maqqarī, see *Nafh al-tib*, 2:165.

**Poem 55.** Although this poem is anchored firmly within the ghazal imaginary, it also evokes such themes as *fānā’* (the “passing away” of the lover out of longing for the beloved) and *wajd* (trance, ecstasy, fervor) that are among the core concepts in Sufism and specifically within Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical thought. The poem was also included in *Meccan Openings (Fut.,* vol. 5, ch. 179, p. 594). There, Ibn ‘Arabī introduces it as being “on the

topic of the unlimited surge in love that occurs at the moment of vision and *shawq*.” He adds the following comment to the poem: “[The poet] alludes to God’s manifestation in various forms, in the afterlife and within the world inside the heart of his servant—as is reported in the *hadith* of *Sahīh Muslim* [one of two most authoritative hadith collections in Sunni Islam] regarding the transformation through forms. [Such transformation] is in accord with the divine ‘essence’ (*dhāt*), which transcends all *tashbih* (likeness) and *takyīf* (location).” The words *dhāt*, *tashbih*, and *takyīf* are key terms in Ibn ‘Arabī’s wider mystical philosophy. The gist of Ibn ‘Arabī’s statement is that God or “the real” (*al-haqq*) is infinite; it eludes confinement within space and time (*takyīf*) or likeness (*tashbih*) to a finite object or being. Nor can it be excluded from the world or any aspect of the world. It is at once transcendent to the world and immanent within it, and most fully immanent within the heart of the faithful servant. The manifestation of the beloved is constantly changing its form and manifesting itself anew. The mystic’s goal is to achieve constant transformation along with the manifestations of the beloved. This entails the self’s passing away in each moment in order to be receptive of the new manifestation, the joy of receiving that manifestation and joining the beloved within it, and the sorrow of losing it as the beloved takes on a new manifestation.

**Poem 56.** This homage to Baghdad begins by praising the city over Sindād, one of several legendary sites of ancient vanished grandeur. Legend placed Sindād near the town of al-Hīra and provided it with the epithet “Dhū al-Shurufāt” (the castle with grand cornices or battlements). Verse 3, “branches are stirred / by the wind and bend, / lovers joined / together at last,” echoes verse 4 of poem 11: “Spirits moan / in the Gháda branches, / bending them over / as I pass away.” In his commentary on poem 11, Ibn ‘Arabī notes that the word *arwāh* can mean either spirits or winds.

Verse 4, “Násir, Mansúr, best of the caliphs”: a likely reference to the caliph Násir li-Dín Allāh, who ruled 1180–1225. Ibn ‘Arabī had a strong attachment to the person and memory of Násir, as is evident from the poems of the *Tarjumān* and from the encomium to him in *Sessions of the Righteous* (*MAb* 1: 87–88). Násir integrated many of the thriving Sufi networks of the time into a society of chevaliers (*futuwwāt*), who, in addition to other works of gallantry, served to reinforce the caliphate’s military

campaigns against the Byzantine Greeks, the Franks, and regional rivals. (Neither Nāṣir, the Byzantines, the Franks, nor Nāṣir's nominal subordinates—the Seljuks in Anatolia and the Ayyubids in Egypt and the Levant—anticipated that within a little more than two decades, Hulugu's Mongol army would sack Baghdad and abolish the five-century-old Abbasid caliphate.)

The likely subtext for the opening of the poem is a verse attributed to the early Arabic poet al-Aswad b. Ya'fur in one of the earliest collections of Arabic poetry, the *Mufaddaliyyāt*. The verse recalls “the peoples of al-Khwarnaq and al-Sadīr and Bāriq / and the castle of Dhū al-Shurufāt.” All four of the sites mentioned feature in the *Tarjumān*. Another version of al-Aswad's poem refers to Sindād by the epithet Dhū al-Ka'bāt (the Castle of the Ka'bas). Both versions appear in the most famous classical biography of Muhammad, *The Sira [Life] of the Messenger of God*, by Ibn Hishām (d. 833). See *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. A. Guillaume (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 39, 705.

**Poem 57.** The expression “dream stuff” in verse 6 is a quotation from Sūra 12 of the Qur'an, which relates the story of Yūsuf (Joseph). In the Qur'anic narrative, the Egyptian potentate (al-'Azīz) asks those in his circle to interpret a dream or vision in which he saw seven fat cows being devoured by seven lean ones, and seven fresh heads of grain along with others that were dry. Those in his circle reply that what he saw was “dream stuff” (*adghāthu ahlām*: clumps of dreams, often translated as “confused dreams”) and explain that they are not skilled in dream interpretation. Later, Joseph goes on to interpret the meaning of what the potentate saw as foretelling seven years of plenty followed by seven years of scarcity (Q 12:43–49).

**Poem 58.** Verse 3, “a voice within” (*lisān al-hāl*): literally “the tongue or language of condition (*hāl*).” In Arabic poetry, the *hāl* (pl. *aḥwāl*) denotes a powerful state of mind and emotion that comes upon the lover. In Sufi discourse, it indicates the states of being, emotion, or consciousness that “come upon” mystics in their quest for the divine beloved. Such states can oscillate between extremes: union and separation, intimacy and alienation, exhilaration and panic, centeredness and disintegration, expansiveness and contraction, intoxication and sobriety, airy lightness and paralyzing heaviness. In the *Treatise on Sufism* of al-Qushayrī (d. 986), which

Ibn ‘Arabī had read and acknowledged as a major influence, a full chapter unpacks more than two dozen *ahwāl* with verses of Arabic love poetry serving to exemplify many of them. For an introduction to and translation of Qushayrī’s chapter on the *ahwāl*, see Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism* (New York: Paulist Press Classics of Western Spirituality, 1996), 97–150. In the verse at hand, the *ḥāl* emerges as yet another transmitter in the chain of transmitters bearing the beloved’s words or whereabouts to the poet. From another perspective, the entire chain of transmitters given in poem 14 can be considered a classic enumeration of the conditions through which the lover passes.

**Poem 59.** This poem serves as bookend to poem 2, the collection’s first long poem, and it contains nearly the same number of verses (fifteen as opposed to the thirteen of poem 2). Poem 2 ended with the poet on the verge of death, pleading with a Bilqīs-like figure to release him from her grip. She yields or submits (*aslamat*) to the lover’s prayer for release. Here a similarly powerful female figure navigates a series of threats and then submits (*aslamat*) the lover “to her lethal gaze.” In his commentary to poem 2, Ibn ‘Arabī states that his prayer to be released from the Bilqīs figure’s spell was uttered in order to avoid the error of *ḥulūl*, in which the mystic at the point of *fānā’* misinterprets his experience as a union through divine incarnation. In this poem, it is the Bilqīs figure who submits the poet’s soul to her gaze, suggesting perhaps that the poet’s earlier hesitation may have been overcome by the conviction that the *fānā’* in question would not result in the error of *ḥulūl*.

**Poem 60.** In this evocation of the days of love and youth, the poet addresses an unspecified, singular “you” that can indicate the poet, the beloved or the sympathetic third party (one of the poet’s friends), or the listener who is placed rhetorically within the clan of love and longing. In verse 3, the Arabic lists three desert plants here, artemisia, *katam*, and *‘arār*. Both *katam* and *‘arār* denote small shrubs prized as firewood. I have left out the *katam* to preserve the English cadence.

**Poem 61.** This final poem centers on a musical theme. It begins by celebrating a figure who fits the profile of the *jāriya*-diva, the young woman who dazzles the court with her voice and musicianship. This young woman, rather than enchanting the court of a caliph, enchants her audi-

ence by making them forget the splendorous courts of the caliph Harūn al-Rashīd, referred to in the poem as Hādī's brother. (Rashīd's brother Hādī himself was known as an accomplished musician.) She also drives from memory the chants of Anjasha, the prophet Muḥammad's camel driver, who was said to put the camels into a trance through his chanting. Verse 4, "oud": literally, "her triple strand" (*mithālithahā*), which would likely refer to a type of oud string that was triple-twisted.

In the poem and the *Tarjumān*'s final verses, the poet declares he has fallen for a girl in Ajyād (a height near Mecca), then immediately and emphatically corrects himself, stating that she lives instead deep in the *suwād* (black) of his liver. As mentioned above in reference to poem 17, the term evoked the black humor (*melancholia*) of Greek medicine. At the same time, blackness here, as throughout the *Tarjumān*, indicates the deep interior of something, a place of intimacy, the repository of the secret or mystery (*sirr*), the innermost core of the heart. In that deep space, the beloved resides. In his chapter on love in *Meccan Openings*, Ibn 'Arabī quotes two unattributed verses expressing the contradictory realities faced by the lover-mystic: the lover complains that the beloved is somewhere far away, when that same beloved lives deep within. In the *Meccan Openings* poem, the loved ones are found within the black (that is, the pupil) of the lover's eye and beneath his ribs (*Fut.* vol. 5, ch. 178, pp. 593–94). The lover looks without, but they are in the dark center of his perception. He sighs for those who dwell near (or within) his lungs.

How strange that I yearn for them and longing  
ask about them while they're with me  
My eyes weep for them but they're there  
in their blackness. I sigh and they line my ribs

وَمِنْ عَحْبٍ أَلِيْ أَحْنُ إِلَيْهِمْ  
وَأَسْأَلُ شَوْقًا عَنْهُمْ وَهُمْ مَعِي  
وَتَبَكِيْهِمْ عَيْنِي وَهُمْ فِي سَوَادِهَا  
وَتَشَاهِدُهُمْ تَفْسِي وَهُمْ بَيْنَ أَصْلَعِي

A similar dynamic occurs near the end of Ibn 'Arabī's *Niżām* preface: "She dwells among the noble; and she camps among the brave—and in the black pupil of the eye, and deep within the heart."

The poem ends with the declaration that, with the appearance of the beloved, beauty itself wanders in bewilderment (*tāhat*), just as, we might recall, the lords of love found themselves ensnared and bewildered in the love of which they were the lords.

## Appendix 1

### NIZĀM PREFACE

#### Prologue

Praise be God, the glorious, the one who acts, the beautiful, the lover of beauty;<sup>1</sup> who created the world in the most complete form and adorned it; and in making it, apportioned out degrees of wisdom about the beyond; who alluded to the place of his secret and determined it; and unfolded it before his intimates and made it clear;<sup>2</sup> who bathed the earth in beauty and passed his entranced lovers away in the contemplation of that beauty.

May God bless Muḥammad bin ‘Abdullāh who manifests his most beautiful form who was sent forth with the complete sharia and exemplary life; destined for the highest station and endowed with universal wholeness. God’s blessings and peace upon him, his family, and companions.

*Mecca, 598*

Now: when I arrived in Mecca in the year 598 (1202 CE), I found a large number of notables, scholars, and intellectuals—men and women of Persian background—who had settled there. There was no one, however noble, who was as attentive to the state of their soul and immersed in the moment as the learned shaykh and imam of the shrine of Abraham (blessings upon him): that immigrant to the sacred land, Makīn al-Dīn bin Rustam of Isfahan, may God rest his soul, and his learned and elderly sister, the Shaykha of the Ḥijāz, Fakhr al-Nisā’ bint Rustam.<sup>3</sup>

I heard the shaykh recite from al-Tirmidhī’s hadith collection and other works in the company of his circle of distinguished scholars.<sup>4</sup> He held his symposia in a garden, and he was, God rest his soul, a kind and captivating companion, delightful conversation partner, generous host, and dear

friend. His advanced age left him free to express exactly what was on his mind.

As for his sister, Fakhr al-Nisā', "Pride of Women"—she should rather be named "Pride of All Scholars" (men and women alike). She was known for her impeccable hadith scholarship. So I wrote to her asking permission to receive her hadith reports from her in person. "My expectation in such matters has passed," she responded. "My time has come. Urgent demands preoccupy me now, and I am unable to grant the sessions you request. Death seems to be charging in on me, and my advanced age turns me to contrition." When her words reached me, I replied, "My condition and yours in hadith are one / To know and to act accordingly is our only aim."

She had her brother compose for me a general diploma granting me permission to pass on all of her hadith transmissions and had him deliver it to me in person. In addition to the general diploma, he also wrote out for me in his own hand all of his own hadith narrations. In response I composed the following verses for him.

I heard al-Tirmidhī in the voice of Makīn,  
imām of the people in the Balad al-Amīn<sup>5</sup>  
Nizām

Now, this shaykh (God bless him) had a daughter—a lissome maiden who would bind the gaze, dazzle a gathering with her speech, and astonish anyone engaging her in conversation. Her name was Nizām, and she was known as Sun Splendor.<sup>6</sup>

She was the shaykha of the two holy shrines for woman scholars, worshippers, itinerants, and renunciates in Mecca and Medina.<sup>7</sup> She was, without exaggeration, the very quintessence of culture throughout the sacred land. Her gaze cast a deep spell. Her Iraqi wit scintillated. When she elaborated, she was thorough; when she spoke succinctly, she left her rivals in silence.<sup>8</sup> When she spoke with artistic formality, she remained lucidly clear. In power of expression, she surpassed Qass bin Sa'da; in generosity she put Ma'n bin Zā'ida to shame; in loyalty she would have left faithful Samaw'al to stop in his tracks, leap bareback onto the steed of treason, and ride off in shame.<sup>9</sup>

Were it not for my concern for small-minded, suspicious souls, I would expand further on the character and virtues with which God had endowed her so generously. She is a rain-graced meadow, a sun among scholars, the prodigy of her time, the jewel of her generation; in generosity unstinting, in aspiration sublime. She was her own father's teacher. She's the mistress of every assembly she graces with her presence. She dwells among the noble, and she camps among the brave—and in the black pupil of the eye, and deep within the heart. Tihāma glows in her presence; gardens burst into life when she is near, the hills bloom. Knowing and acting in her are one. Her touch is an angel's, her resolve a king's.

Whenever I was with her, I remained aware of her noble character and ever mindful of her aunt and father, my dear friends. In this volume,<sup>10</sup> I have made for her a priceless necklace from the nasibs and decorous ghazals that I composed.<sup>11</sup> Yet I have expressed only a part of what I have discovered over the course of our long acquaintance, intimate company, and shared affection; from the subtlety of her thought and the purity of her station. For she is the request and the fulfillment, she, the virgin most pure.<sup>12</sup> Yet from these treasures and lockets (*al-dhakhā'ir wa al-a'lāq*),<sup>13</sup> I have harmonized verses from the surges of longing of an impassioned soul.

So I have given voice to an afflicted soul and signaled the relationship we had, hearkening back to those long-passed times and that blessed company. Each name that I mention in this volume refers to her, each yearned-for abode is her abode, and throughout this work I employ our accustomed style to allude to divine influences, inspirations, and correspondences.<sup>14</sup> For, *the end for us is better than the beginning*.<sup>15</sup> In regard to her knowledge (God grace her with favor), to which I refer, *none can better inform you than one who is ever aware*.<sup>16</sup>

May God protect readers of this volume—as well as those of my larger poetic *dīwān*—from unseemly thoughts regarding men of upright character and celestial concerns. Amen.

In the name of the almighty, other than whom there is no lord.  
*And God speaks the truth and shows the way.* (Q 33:4)

## Appendix 2

### **QURRAT AL-‘AYN PREFACE**

Here, by the grace of God, is the story of what happened to me when I was circling the Ka‘ba. I was in a particularly sweet state of mind when I was overcome with a condition [*ḥāl*] that I had felt before. So as not to disturb anyone, I withdrew from the area covered with paving-stones to the sands along the periphery of the shrine, and continued my circling there. Some verses came to my mind, and I recited them for myself and to anyone who might have been listening:

I wish I knew if they knew  
whose heart they've taken

Or my heart knew which  
high-ridge track they follow

Do you see them safe  
or perishing?

The lords of love are in love  
ensnared, bewildered

No sooner had I spoken than I felt a jolt from a hand softer than undyed silk. When I turned around, I found before me a Rūmī maiden. Never had I encountered so radiant a face, so sweet a voice, such modesty; such refined thought, elegant allusions; such spirit in conversation. There was none like her in wit, learning, beauty, and intuition.

“What was it you were saying just now, master?” she asked.

“I wish I knew if they knew / whose heart they've taken,” I said.

“How very strange that you, the sage (*‘arif*) of your time, would say something like that!” she objected. “Is not everything that is taken known to the one who takes it? Is it possible to have something and not know it? On the other hand, it is certainly fitting for one without knowledge

(*ma'rifa*) to exclaim ‘would that I know’!<sup>1</sup> The true path requires *a sincere tongue*.<sup>2</sup> How could one like you fall short in such a way? What was it you said next, master?” she asked.

“Or my heart knew which / high-ridge track they follow,” I said.

“Master,” she said, “the high-ridge track leads between two layers of the heart. Knowledge of it is forbidden. How is it that one like you wishes for that which cannot be attained? The path requires *a sincere tongue*. How is that one like you would fall short in such a way? And what was it you said next?”

“Do you see them safe / or perishing?” I said.

“They are safe indeed,” she said. “What you should be asking is whether *you* are safe or perishing. And what did you say after that?”

“The lords of love in love / are ensnared, bewildered,” I said.

“Amazing!” she exclaimed. “How can one pierced through the heart by love have any trace of self left to be bewildered? Love consumes. It numbs the senses, drives away intellect, astonishes thoughts, and sends the one in love off with the others who are gone. Where is there place for bewilderment, and who is left to be bewildered? The path requires a sincere tongue. It is unbecoming for one like you to fall short in this regard.”<sup>3</sup>

“Cousin,” I said, “may I ask your name?”<sup>4</sup>

“Comfort for the eye,” she answered.

“*For me*,” I said.<sup>5</sup>

Then she bid me farewell and departed. Later on, I came to know her, frequented her company, and beheld in her subtleties of mystical knowings (may God find favor with her!) that no one could possibly describe.<sup>6</sup>

Appendix 3

**A P O L O G I A**

If I mention a ruin, a station, meadows, or the like; or say “her,” “o you,” “oh,” or “would it not be”; or speak of him, her, or the two of them; or mention men or women in the plural; or fate taking me upland to Najd or down to Tihām; a cloud weeping or a flower that smiles; my words to camel drivers bound for Hājjir’s moringa or Híma’s doves; full moons veiled in palanquins that pass into the distance; suns or maidens like stars; lightning, thunder, or the easterly breeze; winds from the north or winds from the south; a track, ravine, dune, mountain, phantom, or sands; a friend, journey, garden, hill, thicket, or holy land; maidens with breasts like rising suns or white marble figurines—; all these and whatever is like them (understand this!) contain lights and secrets brought by heavenly riders.

My heart and the hearts of those like me bear the mark of knowledge—  
holy witness that these words are true. So, turn your attention from the  
surface and look within—that you may know.

## Appendix 4

### IBN ‘ARABĪ’S POEM ON AL-ZAHRĀ’

At the gate to Madīnat al-Zahrā’, I recited the following verses, imagining the ruins of the caliphal palace there as an abode of birds and wild animals. Once it was a wonder of al-Andalus, hard by Cordoba. Let the wise remember and the oblivious take heed!

Empty chambers glimmer  
with sunset, desolate

At every side, birds wail,  
then pause, then renew their cry

To one who stood alone  
in anguish, I asked why

Why are you grieving so?  
For time now passed, he said,  
never to return

دِيَارًا بِأَكْنَافِ الْمَغِيبِ شَلَامٌ  
وَمَا أَنْ يَهَا مِنْ سَاكِنٍ وَهِيَ بَلْقُعٌ

يَنْوُحُ عَلَيْهَا الْطَّيْرُ مِنْ كُلِّ حَانِبٍ  
فَيَضْمُثُ أَخْيَانًا وَجِينًا يَرْجِعُ

فَخَاطَبْتُ مِنْهَا طَائِرًا مُتَقَرِّدًا  
لَهُ شَجَنٌ فِي الْقَلْبِ وَهُوَ مُرَوْعٌ

فَقُلْتُ عَلَى مَاذَا تَنْوُحُ وَتَشْتَكِي  
فَقَالَ عَلَى دَهْرٍ مَضَى لَيْسَ يَرْجِعُ

(Ibn ‘Arabī, *Sessions of the Righteous*  
[*MAB* 2:259–60]; Maqqarī, *Nafh al-Tīb* [1:123])

## Appendix 5

### CHRONOLOGY OF IBN ‘ARABĪ’S LIFE AND TIMES

- 1165 Birth of Ibn ‘Arabī in Murcia, Spain, on the 17th of Ramadan 565 H.
- 1171 Saladin abolishes the three-hundred-year Fatimid Caliphate, establishing the Ayyubid Dynasty. Death of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī.
- 1171–72 Ibn ‘Arabī’s family settles in Seville, northern capital of the al-Muwahhid (Almohad) Empire, which was based in the North African city of Marrakesh.
- 1180 Ibn ‘Arabī meets the philosopher and jurist Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in Córdoba.
- 1181 Ibn ‘Arabī embarks on the mystical path. Birth of Ibn al-Fārid.
- 1187 Saladin retakes Jerusalem.
- 1195 Ibn ‘Arabī in Tunis, frequents the Sufi shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī.
- 1195–97 Ibn ‘Arabī in Fez, experiences a series of mystical visions.
- 1188–89 Ibn ‘Arabī in Andalusia, farewell tour of his native land.
- 1199 Attends funeral of Ibn Rushd in Córdoba.
- 1201 Death of Ibn al-Jawzī, the Hanbalite preacher and author whose writings on the hajj were particularly appreciated by Ibn ‘Arabī.
- 1201–02 Ibn ‘Arabī in Marrakesh, then in Tunis, where he spends several months with al-Mahdawī.
- 1202 Travels to Cairo, visits tomb of Abraham in Hebron, al-Aqṣa mosque in Jerusalem, and Muḥammad’s tomb in Medina, before arriving in Mecca in July or August.
- 1202–04 Ibn ‘Arabī in Mecca, where he frequents the symposia of the scholar and pious devotee Ẓāhir bin Rustam of Isfāhān, re-

- ceives hadith transmissions through his sister, Fakhr al-Nisā', and encounters his daughter, Nizām.
- 1204 Death of Maimonides. Crusaders plunder Constantinople.
  - 1207 Birth of Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī.
  - 1209 Death of the Persian mystic Ruzbehān Baqlī in Shiraz.
  - 1211 Seljuk Turkish prince Kaykaus assumes rule over the Sultanate of Rūm in Anatolia, where Ibn ‘Arabī, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, and other mystics would find hospitality and support.
  - 1212 Ibn ‘Arabī in Baghdad, corresponds with Kaykaus. Birth of the poet and mystic Abū al-Hasan al-Shushtarī in Guadix (Wadi Ash) near Granada.
  - 1214 Ibn ‘Arabī composes *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*.
  - 1215 Ibn ‘Adīm reads portions of the *Tarjumān* commentary to an assembly of Aleppan notables.
  - 1215 Ibn ‘Arabī back in Anatolia, at Sivas and Malatya (Melitene), where he completes the *Tarjumān* commentary.
  - 1223 Ibn ‘Arabī settles in Damascus where he receives the support of the Ayyubid ruler.
  - 1225 Death of Abbasid caliph Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh, whose decades-long rule witnessed an explosive growth in organized Sufi networks.
  - 1229 Death of Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār. Rūmī’s family settles in the Anatolian cultural center of Konya.
  - 1232–37 Rūmī in Aleppo and Damascus. No historical evidence he met Ibn ‘Arabī.
  - 1235 Death of Ibn al-Fāriḍ in Cairo. Ibn ‘Arabī composes *The Ring-stones of Wisdom*.
  - 1236 Córdoba falls to the Reconquista.
  - 1237 Ibn ‘Arabī completes his *Great Dīwān*.
  - 1238 Ibn ‘Arabī completes the second edition of the *Meccan Openings*.
  - ca. 1238 Reputed birth of Yunus Emre, master of love poetry and mystical poetry in Turkish.
  - 1240 Death of Ibn ‘Arabī in Damascus, the 22nd of Rābī‘ al-Thāni, 638 H; November 10, 1240 CE.

## Appendix 6

### ESTABLISHING THE TEXT: MANUSCRIPTS, EDITIONS, AND METHOD

The manuscript evidence for Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings is exceptionally strong. By the time he arrived in Damascus in 1221 CE, Ibn ‘Arabī was accompanied by a faithful and expanding group of followers. They produced copies of his texts and recited them in his presence, often in the presence of others. During an occasion known as a “hearing” (*samā’*), Ibn ‘Arabī would listen to a copy of his text as it was read aloud. He would then make any needed corrections before approving the copy. Those present at the hearing would sign the new copy under Ibn ‘Arabī’s own handwritten, signed attestation of approval. In some cases, there would be more than one hearing for a given copy before the author would grant the final attestation of approval. These sessions served simultaneously as both editing and publishing workshops and as advanced seminars. Original copies, with Ibn ‘Arabī’s signed approval, are called “autographs.” Copies signed by those who were present at a hearing are themselves called “hearings.” Remarkably, Ibn ‘Arabī left a number of “holograph manuscripts,” that is, manuscripts that were composed entirely in the hand of the author—including most of his voluminous *Meccan Openings* and a significant part of his *Great Dīwān*.

Although there are no known surviving holograph or autograph manuscripts of the *Tarjumān*, there can be little doubt that Ibn ‘Arabī authored it. The *Tarjumān* poems are found in both *Sessions of the Righteous* and *Dīwān al-ma‘ārif*; they are consistent with the style of dozens of other nasib and ghazal poems in *Dīwān al-ma‘ārif*; several are quoted or referenced in *Meccan Openings*; and the *Priceless Treasures* commentary fits in with Ibn ‘Arabī’s wider mystical-philosophical oeuvre, both in terms of content and, crucially, in terms of Ibn ‘Arabī’s distinctive mode of literary expression. Over the past fifty years, scholars have identified and cata-

logged dozens of manuscripts for both works. A number of those manuscripts are of high historical significance and quality.

Historically significant manuscripts include information on the “original” from which the copy was transmitted down through centuries by copyists, often with the name of the final copyist and the date of that copy. In each stage of the transmission process, the copyist was expected to check his copy against the original or the copy from which he was working, often under the supervision of an acknowledged expert on the work and its transmission—in much the way modern, responsible editions are given careful proofreading, copyediting, and page-proof checks. Although copyists, as they would point out in their final comments, were humble, all-too-fallible humans, a robust set of manuscripts from different transmission families allows the *Tarjumān*’s modern editor considerable clarity in establishing the Arabic text, especially in view of the major advance in scholarship on Ibn ‘Arabī’s manuscripts that has occurred over the past decade. For recent work on the manuscripts of Ibn ‘Arabī, see Osman Yahya, *Histoire et Classification de l’Oeuvre d’Ibn ‘Arabī* (Damascus, 1964); Jane Clark and Stephen Hirtenstein, “Establishing Ibn ‘Arabī’s Heritage,” *JMIAS* 52 (2012): 1–32; Jane Clark, “Mystical Perception and Beauty: Ibn ‘Arabī’s Preface to *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*,” *JMIAS* 55 (2014): 33–62; and Stephen Hirtenstein, “In the Master’s Hand: A Preliminary Study of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Holographs and Autographs,” *JMIAS* 60 (2016): 65–106.

Below are the sources used for the establishment of this edition, beginning with the manuscript I have used as the base, and following with the other sources by order of their historical pedigree and copyist accuracy. This edition adopts the formally correct forms for broken plurals in preference to the manuscript base and printed editions based on it in which *yā'* replaced hamza, possibly under the influence of pronunciation in areas of Turkish and Persian influence, neither of which languages includes a *hamza* equivalent.

Although the sixty-one poems of the *Tarjumān* included in the first printed edition by Nicholson in 1911 are almost certainly authentic, and there is little ambiguity in the sequencing of *verses* within each poem, my current work finds that the sequencing of the last ten poems *within* the *Tarjumān* is not standard within the most reliable manuscripts. Ibn ‘Arabī may have transmitted the *Tarjumān* poems in different sequences

at different times, just as he may have produced various prefatory and commentary material at different periods. The influence of the Nicholson edition on subsequent printings and translations has established the modern expectation for how the *Tarjumān* poems are sequenced; and although the more historic and higher-quality manuscripts consulted for this edition offer a variety of sequences for the last part of the collection, I have seen no reason to complicate matters by departing from Nicholson's ordering of the poems.

## Manuscripts Consulted

RP Rāghib Pāsha 1453, 181b–202b

The manuscript, which is itself undated, bears a copy of a verification by Ibn ‘Arabī dated 614/1217. It begins with the prologue and versified apologia, followed by the *jāriya* preface, including poem 1. There follows the full text of poems 2–61, which is followed in turn with the epilogue. The text is composed in a clear script, with consistent accuracy and extensive vocalization, and is in excellent physical condition. The final poems are presented in the following order: 50, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 51, 52, 53. This document offers a window into the transmission process at the time of Ibn ‘Arabī and over the following centuries.

After the final verse, the text reads:

The author [Ibn ‘Arabī] of this book declares: “All the verses that I composed (*naṣamtu*) for this volume were completed with the help of God in a state of ritual purity during the ‘Umra visit as I mentioned earlier [in the months of Rajab, Sha‘bān, and Ramaḍān in the year 611 [Nov 1214–Feb 1215 CE]]—with the exception of the verses that begin with “I wish I knew if they knew whose heart they have taken” [poem 1], for that incident took place in the year 604 [1207–1208 CE]. Praise be to God and blessings and peace upon Muḥammad and his family. The text was completed on the fifth day of the month of Rajab the Bounteous (*al-ashabb*) in the year 614 [Oct–Nov 1217 CE] in the city of Malatya [Melitene] in the lands of the Greeks [Yunān, lands formerly held by the Byzantine Roman Empire]—may God have mercy on its writer (*kātib*), his parents, and on all of the community of Muḥammad, peace upon him.”

There follows a colophon that states:

Muhammad bin ‘Ali bin Muhammad bin al-‘Arabī al-Tā’ī declares, “This volume, *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, which I authored (*min inshā’i*), was recited before me by the most learned imam and scholar ‘Imād al-Dīn [J]abr bin ‘Alī bin ‘Alī al-Barmakī (may he find God’s favor), as I listened personally, during a single session (*majlis*). I approved for him a general permission (*ijāza*) to pass on my narrations (*riwāyātī*) and my written works (*muṣannafatī*) according to the usual stipulations among practitioners in this area (*ahl hādhā al-sha’n*); and I was pleased to bestow upon him that *ijāza* on the 3rd day of the month of Rajab the Unique (*al-fard*) in the year 614 [Oct 6, 1217 CE]—praise be to God and with blessings and peace on Muhammad and his family.”

It appears from the wording of the colophon that the session with Barmakī would have occurred on 5 Rajab, two days after Ibn ‘Arabī bestowed the general *ijāza* upon him.

M Manissa 6596, 78a–91a

This manuscript is undated but bears a note saying that it was taken from the personal copy of the work held by Ibn ‘Arabī’s most important companion and literary heir, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunawī. It is composed in clear script, although without the elegance of *RP*, and confirms *RP* in the vast majority of cases where variants of particular words exist. It breaks off abruptly after verse 5 of poem 31.

F Fātiḥ 5322, 1181–1511

The copy is dated 934 H. It begins with the *Dhakhā’ir* introduction (and 611 *nażamtu*), followed by the versified apologia and the *Qurrat al-‘Ayn* preface, and then proceeds with a full copy of *al-Dhakhā’ir*. The title page states that it was originally written in 622 H in the month of Jumādā al-Ākhira by Ibn ‘Arabī’s companion Ayyūb Badr al-Dīn al-Manṣur al-Muqrī (al-Miṣrī al-Jarā’idī). It also contains a replica of the shaykh’s attestation of approval (*ijāza*), which the shaykh would have written in his own hand on the original manuscript. (For an account of Ibn ‘Arabī’s transmission circles, see Addas, *Red Sulfur*, 245–70; on Ayyūb Badr al-Dīn in particular, *idem*, 265–68).

EM-a Evkaf Musezi 1713, 252–366

This copy is dated 873 H. The copyist states that it was copied from a manuscript that had been read out before Ibn ‘Arabī. It begins with a

piece of the prologue, apologia, and Qurrat al-‘Ayn preface, followed by *Dhakhā’ir*, followed by the rest of the prologue. The *Dhakhā’ir* text is complete, but as with RP, the final poems are sequenced in a manner that differs from that of Nicholson’s edition. The sequence in EM-a is as follows: 1–47, 49, 51, 54, 55, 57, 58, 48, 52, 50, 53, 56, 59, 60, 61. The title page states the copy was based on the original written by the same companion of Ibn ‘Arabī, Ayyūb Badr al-Dīn al-Manṣūr al-Miṣrī al-Jarā’idī, mentioned above. A colophon on the final page dates the copy to 873 H and affirms that the copy had been collated with the text that had been recited (apparently by Ayyūb Badr al-Dīn) before Ibn ‘Arabī and which had received his signed approval.

EM-b Evkaf Müzesi 1713, 367–69

This text begins right after *EM-a*. It consists solely of the Niżām preface and is dated 888 H.

P Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (Arabe BN 2583)

This copy of *Dīwān al-Ma’ārif* places the sixty-one poems of the *Tarjumān*, in the standard sequence, at the end of the *Dīwān* (ff. 250–73), along with the full *Dhakhā’ir* commentary for poems 1–14. The commentary ends with poem 15, verse 3 (f. 267r).

AS-a Ayasofia 1723 1–96

The copyist, Ilyās bin Shaykh ‘Abd al-Salām, dates his copy to 835 H. The manuscript, written in a clear dual-color script (with the poems in red), takes the following sequence: Niżām preface, part of the epilogue, apologia, Qurrat al-‘Ayn preface, *Dhakhā’ir*, and the part of the epilogue mentioning the two companions (Badr al-Habashī and Ibn Sawdakīn) that asked Ibn ‘Arabī to compose the commentary. The sequence of the final poems is: 31, 33–49, 54–55, 57–58, 32, 48, 52, 50, 53, 56, 59–61.

AS-b Ayasofia 1724, 1–127

The undated *AS-b* begins with the introduction to *Dhakhā’ir*, followed by the versified apologia and the Qurrat al-‘Ayn preface. There follows the first part of *Dhakhā’ir*, but the manuscript breaks off abruptly after verse 3 of poem 27. The title page contains an epigraph of several verses that are not found in the *Tarjumān*, including the “*inna al-hawā ‘ujmatūn*” poem that Ibn ‘Arabī included in his *Muḥādarat al-Abrār* (vol. 2, p. 476, of the 1968 edition referenced below).

K      Kutuhaya 111, 1a–73a

This manuscript of *al-Dhakhā'ir* is transmitted from an original copy made by Khalil al-Halabī bin al-Hājj Aḥmad al-Miṣrī on 18 Muḥarram 640 H in Damascus, in the *ribāṭ* (lodge) of al-Shimshānī (or al-Shimsānī). Despite its historical quality, elegant script, and dual-color arrangement (with the poems in red), the copy is riddled with errors. It takes the following sequence: prologue, *Qurrat al-‘Ayn* preface, apologia, *al-Dhakhā'ir* (in full), epilogue.

Printed Editions Consulted

*Reynold Nicholson 1911*      Nicholson used the manuscript Cambridge OR 1462/9 (Cambridge University Library) as the default text for his edition. It was in Nicholson's private collection at that time and dates from 1025 H (1616–17 CE). As Nicholson notes, it contains the text of the poems (in red ink) and the *Dhakhā'ir* commentary. Nicholson also points out “inscriptions on the last page certify that it has been twice diligently collated and corrected.” In addition to Cambridge OR 1462/9, Nicholson consulted and represents in his apparatus two other manuscripts: Leiden 875 (2) Warn., which he states contains “only the text of the poems, with a preface and is dated 922 H”; and Leiden 641 Warn., of which he writes that it “is dated 984 H and contains both text and commentary.”

*Sh*      The 1995 edition of *Dhakhā'ir* by al-Shuqayrī is based upon five manuscripts. They include a microfilm of a manuscript in Basra that is held at the University of Arab States and four manuscripts held in Cairo's Dār al-Kutub (Adab 6614 dated 969 H; Adab 4393 dated 904 H; Adab Ṭal'at 4089 dated 1273 H; and Adab Ṭal'at 4373 dated 1079 H), along with the Nicholson 1911 edition (Muhammad ‘Alam al-Dīn Shuqayrī, *Dhakhā'ir al-a'lāq: Sharḥ Tarjumān al-ashwāq* [al-Haram [Egypt]: al-‘Ayn lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buhūth al-Insāniyya wa-al-Ijtima‘iyya, 1995]). Al-Shuqayrī includes extensive introductory material and is careful to note and cite the hadith traditions alluded to by Ibn ‘Arabī in commentary. Shuqayrī also gives one of the manuscripts (Adab Ṭal'at 4089) the very same origin as that of *K* as described above: from 18 Muḥarram 640 H, written in the *ribāṭ* of al-Shimshānī, although Shuqayrī does not specify the name of the writer. He does state, however, that the copy he has inspected is riddled with errors.

*DS* The Beirut Dār Şādir edition (available in several undated printings), although useful and widely distributed, does not explain its manuscript base.

Manuscript and Printed Editions of *Sessions of the Righteous*  
(*Kitāb muhādarat al-abrār wa-musāmarat al-akhyār fī al-adībāt*  
*wa-al-nawādir wa-al-aḥbār*)

As mentioned, the large part of the *Tarjumān*, including almost all of its long poems, appears in *MAb*, which contains 34 of the 61 poems comprising 319 of the *Tarjumān*'s 576 verses. In addition to *MAb* (discussed above), I have studied the following:

*MAb1 TSM* Topkapi Sarayı Müzesi III: Ahmed Kitaplığı 2415. This manuscript of *Muhādarāt al-Abrār* is written in clear script. It is not reliable for the prose sections of the text, but the poems, including those from the *Tarjumān*, are more accurately represented.

*MAb2* The Cairo 1888 al-Maktaba al-‘Uthmāniyya edition. No editor named.

*MAb3* The Cairo 1906 printed at Maktaba al-Sa‘āda in Cairo by Mustafā al-Sayyid Aḥmad Tāj al-Kutubī in Ṭanṭā and his son Ibrāhīm Tāj.

*MAb4* The Beirut 1968 Dār al-Yaqṣa al-‘Arabīyya printed edition.

*MAb5* The Beirut 2007 Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya edition, edited by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Namarī, which is nearly identical to Beirut 1968, with the exception of the translator's introduction and the pagination.

The *Tarjumān* poems in *MAb*, in order of appearance, are as follows (with page numbers coinciding with those in *MAb4*):

1. Poem 8 [*MAb* 1:260–61]
2. Poem 36 [*MAb* 1:261]
3. Poem 44 [*MAb* 1:282–83]
4. Poem 21 [*MAb* 1:288–89, which is missing verse 5]
5. Poem 25 [*MAb* 1:289–90]
6. Poem 12 [*MAb* 1:290]
7. Poem 27 [*MAb* 1:290, introduced by “I was circling the Ka‘ba one night when I was overcome with a very sweet mood, and I said in

- complaint of the thirst I suffered during my desert journey, ‘Old shrine high above . . .’” (*tuftu laylan bi-l-bayti fa adrakanī t-ta’abu, fa qultu at’abu nafṣī ‘alā l-badīhati min ghayr rawiyyatin: yā ayyuhā l-baytu l-‘atīqu . . .*)]
8. Poem 13 [*MAb* 1:291]
  9. Poem 28 [*MAb* 1:291–92]
  10. Poem 5 [*MAb* 1:292–93]
  11. Poem 9 [*MAb* 1:293]
  12. Poem 34 [*MAb* 1:293]
  13. Poem 15 [*MAb* 1:318]
  14. Poem 11 [*MAb* 1:319–20, without the two suspect verses]
  15. Poem 33 [*MAb* 1:320]
  16. Poem 14 [*MAb* 1:338–39]
  17. Poem 10 [*MAb* 1:345]
  18. Poem 30 [*MAb* 1:345–47]
  19. Poem 7 [*MAb* 1:349]
  20. Poem 17 [*MAb* 1:360]
  21. Poem 32 [*MAb* 1:360]
  22. Poem 6 [*MAb* 1:360–61]
  23. Poem 29 [*MAb* 1:368–69, with a variant reading for verses 17–19]
  24. Poem 35 [*MAb* 1:369]
  25. Poem 18 [*MAb* 1:370]
  26. Poem 16 [*MAb* 1:386–87]
  27. Poem 1 with the Qurraṭ al-‘Ayn story [*MAb* 2:56–58]
  28. Poem 2 [*MAb* 2:58–59]
  29. Poem 3 [*MAb* 2:59, which is introduced by these words: “I once had a wife who was the solace of my eyes (Qurraṭ al-‘Ayn), but time and circumstances came between us. I recalled her and her residence at Ḥilla (or Ḥalba), near Baghdad.”]
  30. Poem 4 [*MAb* 2:59]
  31. Poem 41 [*MAb* 2:372–73]
  32. Poem 20 [*MAb* 2:386–87, introduced by “And among our poems on Niẓām (*wa lanā fi n-niẓāmiyyāt*) is . . .”]
  33. Poem 55 [*MAb* 2:438]
  34. Poem 57 [*MAb* 2:468]

The *Tarjumān* poems represented in *MAb*, according to Nicholson’s *Tarjumān* sequence: 1–18; 20–21; 25; 27–30; 32–36; 41; 44–45; 55; 57.

فقط لاتجحى ماترّى فـَهـَ

وَقَالَ أَيْضًا وَعَدَهُ

وَالْأَصْكَادُ دَهْنٌ

Poem 11 of Tarjumān al-Ashwāq (MS Ragip Paşa #1453,  
Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul).

## Appendix 7

### ANNOTATED CHRONOLOGY OF *TARJUMĀN* TRANSLATIONS

Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Tarjumán Al-Ashwáq: A Collection of Mystical Odes*. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911. Includes a complete Arabic text and translation along with a translation of most of the prefatory material and selected portions of the commentary.

Vicente Cantarino, *Casidas de amor profundo y místico*. México: Porrúa, 1977. In this anthology, devoted to poems by Ibn Zaydūn and Ibn ‘Arabī, the translator includes all 61 poems of the *Tarjumān*, along with an overview of their poetics, including metrics, alliteration and punning, and other features.

Sami-Ali, *Le Chant de l’ardent désir*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1989. This work consists of selections of poems and passages of poems from throughout the *Tarjumān*.

Maurice Gloton, *L’interprète des Désirs = Turjumān Al-Ashwāq*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1996. Includes full translations of all the poems and prefatory material as well as a nearly complete translation of the commentary. Gloton’s work broke new ground with the commentary and remained the only translation of it until the German-language translation by Wolfgang Hermann discussed below.

Michael Sells, *Stations of Desire: Love Elegies from Ibn ‘Arabi and New Poems*. Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2000. This volume includes translations of *Tarjumān* poems 1–19, 21, 24–25, 48, and 50.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Bewildered: Love Poems from Ibn ‘Arabī’s Translation of Desires*. Paris: The Post-Apollo Press, 2018. This volume includes translations of *Tarjumān* poems 1, 6–9, 11–13, 19–20, 22–23, 31–33, 36–37, 39, 41, 45–47, 49, 51, 55, 57, 59–61. [Note: The translations of *Stations of Desire* and *Bewildered* were based on harmonizing the selected poems into styles adjusted according to the interior exigencies of the given selection and in consideration of the intended readership; even as this present volume adopts a different style for the same reason.]

Carlos Varona Narvión, *El Intérprete de los Deseos* = (*Taryuman Al-Aswaq*), *Traducción y Comentarios*. Murcia: Editora Regional de Murcia, 2002. This is a complete translation of the poems and prefatory material, along with commentary selections (which are for the most part the same passages selected by Nicholson for translation), as well the translator's overview of the poetics, mystical resonances, style, and other aspects of the *Tarjumān*.

Georg Bossong, *Das Wunder von al-Andalus: Die schönsten Gedichte aus dem Maurischen Spanien*. Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005. In a rich selection of Arabic and Hebrew poetry from al-Andalus, the translator includes *Tarjumān* poems 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14, 26, 27, 57, and 49 along with Ibn 'Arabī's elegy for the palace of al-Zahrā' outside of Córdoba from *Sessions of the Righteous* (see appendix 4) as well as notes on rhyme, meter, and previous translations.

Mahmud Kanık, *Arzuların tercümanı*. İstanbul: Iz Yayınlari, 2006. A translation into modern Turkish.

R. Rossi Testa, *L'interprete delle passioni*. Milano: Apogeo, 2008. A translation of the *Tarjumān* poems as well as the excerpts of Ibn 'Arabī's commentary that had been translated by Nicholson into English.

Hamza Tanyas, *Arzuların tercümanı*. İstanbul: Kaknus, 2010. A translation into modern Turkish.

Alma Giese, *Urwolke und Welt: Mystische Texte des Größten Meisters*. Munich: C. H. Beck, 2015. This work includes a section (pp. 226–303) of translations of selected poems from the *Tarjumān* along with full translations of Ibn 'Arabī's commentaries on them. The poems selected are 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 24, 26, 27, 33, 35, 41, 44, 45, 53, 54, and 49.

Wolfgang Hermann, Ibn 'Arabi, Muhyiddin. *Deuter der Sehnsüchte (Turjuman al-Ashwaq): Band 1 (Gedichte 1–20)*. Trans. Wolfgang Hermann. Zurich: Edition Shershir, 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Deuter der Sehnsüchte (Turjuman al-Ashwaq): Band 2 (Gedichte 21–61)*. Zurich: Edition Shershir, 2013. Hermann's two volumes include fine translations of all the poems, prefatory material, and commentary, with extensive notes on the vocabulary, idiom, philological, and lyrical contexts for the poems. They also identify subtexts within the Qur'an, hadith, and early Arabic poetry, and provides extensive transliterations of key terms used within the poems and commentary.

A major contribution to the understanding of Ibn ‘Arabī and the essential work on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Priceless Treasures*.

Stefan Weidner, *Der Übersetzer der Sehnsüchte Liebesgedichte aus dem arabischen Mittelalter*. Salzburg: Jung u. Jung, 2016. Weidner translates the poems of the *Tarjumān* as well as the prefaces to them. His translation adopts a variable approach to the Arabic verses, which can entail moving between couplets, triplets, and quatrains within a single poem.

Ensemble Ibn Báya, Cofradía Shustari, Omar Metiouï, and Eduardo Paniagua, *Ibn ‘Arabī (Murcia 1165–Damasco 1240), El Intérprete de los deseos (Taryumán al-Ashwáq): Poems from the Tarjumān Selected by Pablo Beneito, with Translations into Spanish, English, and French by Carlos Varona, Reynold Nicholson, Henri Gloton, and Pablo Beneito*. Madrid: Pneuma, 2002.



## GLOSSARY

Note: Each word below is indicated first in anglicized form with stress accent markers meant to allow the word to fit into the English verse soundscape, and then by the word in formal transliteration. In Arabic usage, place-names usually contain the definite article, in contrast to English usage. Thus, the full Arabic name for ‘aqūq, in the second entry below, is *al-‘aqūq*, and so on for the majority of the Arabic place-names listed.

Ajyādī (*ajyād*, with grammatical suffix kept in the anglicized form of the word as it appears in the poems, for the sake of euphony). A height near Mecca overlooking the Ka’ba.

Aqūq (*‘aqūq*), Khawárnaq (*khawarnaq*), Sadīr (*sadīr*), and Sindād (*sindād*). Ancient castles in the regions between northeast Arabia and Iraq, the ruins of which exemplified the lost grandeur of the past.

Árafa (*‘arafa or ‘rafat*). The plain and adjoining mount near Mecca where Muḥammad gave his last sermon and where hajj pilgrims stand through the afternoon in remembrance of that event. At this time, the pilgrims also chant *labbayka*, “here I am for you,” the expression each person will utter at the final judgment.

Ālij (*ālj*). The vast dunescape in north-central Arabia, known more commonly today as the Nefūd.

Bilqīs (*bilqīs*). The name given by tradition to the Queen of Sheba, whose story appears in Q 27:15–44.

Bishr (*bishr*). The ghazal poet known for his love of Hind, a love that led him to be known as “Bishr Hind.” The romance of Bishr and Hind was included in Isfahānī’s *Great Book of Songs*.

Dhū al-Qarnayn (“the two-horned one”). Dhū al-Qarnayn, who appears in the Qur’an with mythic capabilities, was identified in Islamic lore with Alexander the Great (Iskandar, Iskander) or, alternatively, with King Cyrus of Persia. He is able to travel across the world from West to East on the cords (*asbāb*) of the heavenly firmament. He also con-

structs a great dam to wall off Gog and Magog (*yajūj* and *majūj*), the apocalyptic peoples or tribes who, once unleashed, will bring on the end-times.

Gháda (*ghadā*). A thick-trunked tree of the Arabian desert, valued for the shelter it provided and prized for use as cooking coals. In his commentary, Ibn ‘Arabī associates the tree with fire, and more specifically with the fire in the lover’s heart, and with the “burning tree” from which the divine voice addressed Mūsā.

Haditha (*hadītha*). A city in Iraq on the Euphrates River.

Hájir (*hājir*). A relay station in Arabia associated in the *Tarjumān* with the notions of “interdiction” and “prohibition.” There were at least two different stations by that name on classical pilgrimage routes from Iraq to Mecca and Medina. One was southeast of al-Ḥira in Iraq, toward the beginning of the Iraq-to-Mecca pilgrimage route. Ibn Jubayr includes it in his pilgrimage account, and Ibn ‘Arabī would have passed through it on his way to or from Mecca. The second, on the same route, is far to the southwest, a bit south of the central expanse of the Ḥālij desert, near the present-day city of Hā'il. The consonantal root of *hājir*, *h/j/r*, is associated not only with the meanings mentioned above but also with words for “stone.” The semicircular wall near the Ka‘ba is known as *al-hijr*. Al-Hijr is also a name for the city of Madā'in Ṣalih, the ancient Nabataean site in central Arabia. The site was associated in Islamic tradition with the city of Thamūd, destroyed when its people refused to follow the guidance of their prophet Ṣalih and instead committed a sacrilegious slaughter of the camel mare of God.

Halba (*halba*). A neighborhood in Baghdad.

Híma, al-Híma (*himā*). A *himā* is a sacred tribal pasture in Bedouin Arabia, marked with boundary stones, the transgression of which by another tribe would lead to war. In Ibn ‘Arabī’s poems, *al-himā* could be taken as a common noun, “the sanctuary” or “the private pastureland,” or as a place-name, as I have done by capitalizing it in the translation.

Ídam (*idam*). A name attributed to more than one site in Arabia that in the poetry of Ibn ‘Arabī and Ibn al-Fārid is associated with yearning for a past sense of belonging.

Idrīs (*idris*). An ancient Qur’anic prophet who was associated in later tradition with Enoch and in some significant instances with Hermes

Trismegistus, a god of wisdom at the heart of the late antique hermetic tradition. In the Arabic tradition, including the classical accounts of Muḥammad’s heavenly ascent (*mi’rāj*) as well as philosophical and Sufi writings, Idrīs is associated with the fourth heavenly sphere, that of the sun. In Islamic lore, Idrīs became an exemplar of learning and wisdom, credited, among other things, with the invention of writing.

Iskandar. See Dhū al-Qarnayn.

Jem (*jam'*). A site near Mecca, known more commonly as Muzdalifa, at which pilgrims reassemble for a time during their rigorous journey from ‘Arafāt back to Minā. The literal meaning of the word is “assembling, coming together.”

Karkh (*karkh*). The name given to a section of Baghdad on the west side of the Tigris River.

Kathīb, Sand Hill (*kathīb*, sandy hill). As with many other such words, *al-kathib* could be rendered as a common noun (the sandy hill) or a place-name (Sand Hill).

Khawárnāq (*khawarnaq*). See Aqūq.

Lá’la‘ or Lá’la‘i (*la’la‘*). Stone-Flash, one of many toponyms built upon natural features, along the lines of American place-names such as Flint-Rock, Rock-Creek, or Flint-Creek.

Láylā (*laylā*). The beloved in the poetry attributed to Qays ibn Mulawwih, the Bedouin poet said to have lived at or shortly after the time of the prophet Muḥammad. In the poems attributed to him, and in the romances about him (in Arabic, Persian, Ottoman, and other languages), Qays is said to have gone mad and ultimately perished for love of Laylā. He became known as Majnūn Laylā (Mad for Laylā). The epithet *majnūn* (mad) also carried the etymological sense of “jinned,” that is, possessed by the *jinn* (genies). The ghazals attributed to Majnūn, which address his beloved Laylā, were gathered into the *Great Book of Songs* along with tales of their star-crossed romance.

Lote, lote tree (*dāl*). A tree steeped in Arabian mythopoesis. It is associated with the times spent with the beloved and with a similar tree mentioned in the Qur'an as *al-sidr* (*sidr al-muntahā*), the *sidr* of the furthest boundary, that was associated with Muḥammad's prophetic vision (Q 53:14) and, through hadith traditions, with the highest reach of the heavens. The *sidr* (*Ziziphus lotus*) is most often translated as “lote tree.” *Ziziphus lotus* is also said to have been the baleful

tree of the Island of the Lotus Eaters in the *Odyssey*, but neither the Qur’anic *sidr* nor the *dāl* of classical nasibs bore fruit with narcotic-like properties. It has also been translated as Christ-thorn tree (though the Qur’an has no discussion of Jesus’s crown of thorns). Preservationist web pages from the Arabian peninsula feature pictures of the tree, often in praise of its medicinal properties. Botanical specialists have suggested that it corresponds to a particularly striking species of acacia with yellow puff flowers native to the Red Sea regions, *acacia vechellia seyal* (*talh*).

**Ma’zimáyn** (*al-ma’zimān*, in the nominative form). An area near Mecca, between ‘Arafa and Muzdalifa, at the boundary of the sanctuary area around Mecca and its immediate environs.

**Markh** (*markh*, *leptadenia pyrotechnica*, broom brush). A desert shrub that, as the name suggests, was valued for its use as kindling.

**Máyya** (*mayya*). The beloved in the poems of Ghaylān Ibn ‘Uqba, d. ca. 735 CE, also known as Dhū al-Rumma, who flourished in the Umayyad period and whose poetry may have served as a model for Ibn ‘Arabī’s more classically elegiac poems.

**Medina**, Sweet Medina (*madīna*, *tayba*, *yathrib*). The site of Islam’s first polity and of the home and grave of the prophet Muḥammad.

**Mína** (*minā*). The station of the hajj where pilgrims cast stones at three cairns (more recently large concrete pillars) representing evil tendencies or Satan; and where sheep, goats, or camels are sacrificed in memory of Abraham’s offering, made in place of his son. The ritual is carried out on the day known as the Holy Day or Eid of the Sacrifice (‘Īd al-Adḥā).

**Moringa** (*bān*, *moringa peregrina*). A tree native to the Red Sea and Arabian regions. It has wispy boughs and fragrant flowers that were visually striking within the Arabian steppe and dunescape. It was associated with the beauty of the beloved as well as times spent with the beloved in its shade.

**Najd** (*najd*). The highland plateau of north-central Arabia. It is associated with the world of love poetry, Majnūn Laylā, and the vivifying Eastwind. Najd is frequently contrasted to Tihāma, the lowland area that extends from Mecca or nearby Jidda southward along the Red Sea toward Yemen.

**Nāmūs** (*nāmūs*). The word can refer to a great spirit and is thought to be etymologically related to the Greek *nomos*. In Arabic Christian

traditions it refers to the spirit that descended upon the disciples at Pentecost. Although the term does not occur in the Qur'an, in Islamic traditions it was associated with the Qur'anic holy spirit (*al-rūh al-qudus*).

Náqa (*naqā*, white sands). The name of a site or sites in the Arabian peninsula that appears in nasib poetry as a station on the beloved's journey.

Násir (*násir*). Abbasid caliph Násir li-Dín Allāh, who ruled in Baghdad from 1180 to 1225 CE.

Pebble-Ground (*muḥaṣṣab*). The area around Muzdalifa where hajj pilgrims collect the pebbles to cast later in Minā.

Persica (*arāk*, *arāka*, salvadora persica). A small tree or shrub with a fragrant scent and small, reddish berries that are edible. The plant appears in the *Tarjumān* along with the moringa as a marker of beauty, lushness, and longing. Its root was used as a natural toothbrush (miswak) by the prophet Muḥammad, and such tooth twigs are still sold in souks today.

Râma (*rāma*). The name of a site or sites in Arabia, one of which was a way station on the pilgrimage road between Medina and al-Hira. The word can be etymologically associated with the Arabic word for “seeking.”

Sadîr (*sadîr*). See Aqūq.

Sal' or Splitrock (*sal'*). A mountain near Dhū al-Khulayfa overlooking Medina.

Sámiri (*al-sámiri*). A character who plays a key role in the Qur'anic account of the Israelites and the golden calf by casting dust from the footprint of the messenger (spirit or Jibrīl in Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation) onto the calf, making it low.

Sindād (*sindād*). See Aqūq.

Splitrock (*sal'*). A mountain overlooking Medina.

Sulaymān (*sulaymān*, Solomon). See Bilqīs.

Tamarisk (*uthayl*, a diminutive form of *athl*). The plural, *uthaylāt*, is translated here as “Tamarisk Stand.”

Táyba (*tayba*). An epithet for Medina that means “sweet place.”

Tháhmad (*thahmad*). A settlement in central Arabia made famous by a verse from the nasib of the pre-Islamic poet Tarafa's *mu'allqa* or “hanging ode.”

Tihāma (*tihāma*). See Najd.

*'Udháyb* ('udhayb). A site known for its abundance of fresh water and verdant surroundings. Ibn Jubayr mentions a verdant site by that name just southwest of the city of al-Ḥīra in Iraq on the pilgrimage route to the holy cities of Arabia.

*Yalámlam* (yalamlam). A site south of Mecca valued for its sweet waters. The sight became one of the four designated entry points (*muqīts*) for the hajj. There, pilgrims undertake the actions required to place them in a ritually pure state, such as dressing in white tunics and cutting their hair and nails.

*Wādilaqīq* (wādī al-'aqīq). There were several Arabian wadis known by this name, one of them located in or near the oasis city of Medina. By the time of Ibn 'Arabī, the toponym Wādī al-'Aqīq had come to represent, in poetry especially, the lost homeland and past happiness.

*Wajrā* (wajrā). A site associated with gazelles, lush vegetation, and times spent with the beloved—as in the nasib of the celebrated *mu'allqa* of the poet Labīd.

*Zámzam* (zamzam). The spring near the Ka'ba, which tradition holds was opened by God in response to Hagar's desperate search for water.

*Zarūd* (zarūd). A way station on the pilgrimage road from Iraq to Mecca, which is located between prongs of the desert extending south of the dunescape of 'Ālij. Unlike many of the sites mentioned in the *Tarjumān*, Zarūd can be found—with its ancient name intact—on the present-day map of Saudi Arabia.

## NOTES

### Translator's Introduction

1. His fuller name parses his heritage: Muhyī al-Dīn abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad bin ‘Alī bin Muḥammad bin ‘Alī al-Tā’ī al-‘Arabī al-Hātimī al-Mursī al-Andalūsī. Muhyī al-Dīn (“Reviver of the Faith”) is his honorific. Such honorifics were taken by Abbasid caliphs and other rulers, and, by the twelfth century, by prominent or aspiring individuals, such as poets, philosophers, theologians, soldiers, and scribes. Other attributes bestowed upon Ibn ‘Arabī include al-Shaykh al-Akbar (the equivalent to “doctor maximus” in the western Christian tradition) and al-Kibrīt al-Āhmār (Red Sulfur), the name for the key element in the alchemical transformation of base metals into gold. Muḥammad is his given name, the equivalent of the first name in modern Western societies. Ibn ‘Alī bin Muḥammad bin ‘Alī (son of ‘Alī, the son of Muḥammad, the son of ‘Alī) is his patronymic. Al-‘Arabī reflects his patrilineal descent back to the Arabian peninsula at the time of the prophet Muḥammad. Al-Tā’ī is a tribal designation, “of the tribe of Tayyi,” a tribe of pre- and early Islamic Yemen, elements of which migrated throughout the Arabian peninsula and beyond. Its most renowned member, Hātim al-Tā’ī, lived at the time of the Prophet and became a paradigm for truthfulness and eloquence in later literature. Ibn ‘Arabī traced his patrilineal descent back directly to Hātim, and Ibn ‘Arabī’s poet-persona in the *Tarjumān* refers to himself as a scion of Yemen. Al-Mursī (the Murcian) and al-Andalūsī (the Andalusian) are toponymics indicating the city and region in which he was born. Ibn ‘Arabī, alternatively Ibn al-‘Arabī, is his popular name. In the *Tarjumān* the poet-persona identifies himself as pure Arab in contrast to the pure Persian descent of his beloved, a contrast that the poet shapes as West and East. The choice of what to call him—Ibn ‘Arabī or Ibn al-‘Arabī—has generated a legacy of controversy and discussion. In his vast political and literary history of al-Andalus, al-Maqqarī (d. 1632) writes that the longer form Ibn al-‘Arabī was common in the Maghrib (the western areas that included al-Andalus as well as present-day Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and the northern parts of West Africa), while Ibn ‘Arabī became the

preferred form in the Arab East. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-Tib*, 8 vols., edited by İhsan ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), 2:175. In the print era, editions and translations of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works and works about him vary between the two designations, and that split is now deeply embedded in the bibliographical materials. It also continues to generate earnest debates over which version of the name is correct.

2. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Tāj al-rasā’il wa-minhāj al-wasā’il* [The Diadem of Epistles and the Way of Intercessions]. This work has not been translated in full. For a discussion of the work, with translations of some passages, see Denis Gril, “Love Letters to the Ka‘ba: A Presentation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Tāj al-rasā’il*,” *JMIAS* 17 (1995): 40–54.
3. Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Kitāb muḥāḍarat al-abrār wa-musāmarat al-akhyār fī al-adibāt wa-al-nawādir wa-al-ahbār* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968). This major work of Ibn ‘Arabī has not been translated. The full title might be rendered as “The Book of the Sessions of the Righteous and the Salons of the Select with Attention to the Literary Arts, Curious Tales, and Historical Reports.” See the “Notes on the Poems” concerning poems 1, 3, 20, 27, 29, and 55, which indicate the impact, sometimes profound, of *Sessions of the Righteous* for any assessment of Ibn ‘Arabī’s comments on and recollections of these poems.
4. For a critical edition of *Meccan Openings* (*al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya*), see *al-Futūhāt al-makkīyah li-Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī*, 12 vols, edited by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sultān al-Manṣūb (Sana‘, Yemen: al-Jumhūriya al-Yamanīya, Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 2010), hereafter referred to as *Fut.* For a translation of the “Treatise on Love” within that work (ch. 178 of *Meccan Openings*), see Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Traité de l’amour*, trans. Maurice Gloton (Paris: A. Michel, 1986). For the Arabic text of the “Treatise of Love” (*Fī ma’rifa maqām al-maḥabba*: “On Connaisse-  
nce of Station of Love”), see *Meccan Openings* (*Fut.* 5:582–624). For a translation of chapter 1, which depicts Ibn ‘Arabī’s encounter with the mystical youth at the Ka‘ba, see Ibn al-‘Arabī, *The Youth: The Figurative Made Literal*, book 1, trans. Eric Winkel (Self-published, 2016). Chapter 72 revisits the hajj and Ka‘ba themes: see *Ibn al-‘Arabī on the Mysteries of the Pilgrimage: The Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, trans. Aisha Bewley (Chicago: Kazi, 2009). For translations of *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*, see Ibn al-‘Arabī, *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, trans. Caner K. Dagli (Chicago: Kazi, 2004), and Ibn al-‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*,

trans. R. W. J. Austin (New York: Paulist Press, 1980). (In Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, the ringstone and its setting or bezel are molded on each other like the heart of the mystic and the manifestation of the divine manifestation, and are, in terms of form, one. The complexity of the theme in *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* has resulted in differing translations for the title of the work.)

5. Approximately half of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Great Dīwān* was published in Cairo in the nineteenth century and is known as the *Būlāq Dīwān* after the publishing house that produced it. Only in the past two decades have scholars rediscovered what appears to be a copy of *Dīwān al-Mā’ārif* in a Parisian manuscript collection. *Dīwān al-Mā’ārif* contains more than a thousand of Ibn ‘Arabī’s poetic compositions, most of which are in the mode of nasib and ghazal. All the *Tarjumān* poems as well as Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary on poems 1–13 and the first part of 14 are included at the end of that work. A full evaluation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s poetic oeuvre will require more time, but the basic genres, purposes, and styles within his greater *Dīwān* are beginning to emerge more clearly. One type of poem, which occurs most impressively in *Ringstones of Wisdom* and *Meccan Openings*, might be called gnomic. It offers a set of verses (often between eight and twenty in length) that combine ghazal and nasib with riddles, puns, and intimations of cosmological, ontological, and mystical insights. Such poems often appear at the beginning of a chapter or section. The body of the chapter serves as an unpacking of the poem, a reading of the poem, and a translation of the poem into a different mode of discourse, not without warnings that the meaning of the poem cannot be grasped through explication alone. In such poems, love and mystical *connaisance* (*shawq* and *ma’rifa*) are inextricably intertwined. Denis McAuley, in *Ibn ‘Arabī’s Mystical Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), has explored several genres of poems in the *Būlāq Dīwān*: (a) poems dedicated to chapters of the Qur’an; (b) response poems in which the poet quotes an earlier poet and composes his own poem that both honors the earlier poem and rivals it; (c) poems, all in the same meter and rhyme, centered on the divine self-manifestation; (d) a set of “ultra-rhyme” poems in which every verse ends with Allah; and (e) poems in the *mu’āsharāt* genre, ten-line poems in which “each poem represents one letter of the alphabet, each verse of the poem in question beginning and ending with that letter,” and

in which “Ibn ‘Arabī portrays himself as participating in the divine command that moves the heavenly spheres” (McAuley, *Mystical Poetics*, 12). Ibn ‘Arabī was also a pioneer of the Sufi garland poem (*muwashshaha*), which was perfected by his younger contemporary Abū al-Hasan al-Shushtarī. For a trilingual Arabic–Castilian–English edition and discussion of the garland poems of Ibn ‘Arabī, see Federico Corriente and Ed Emery, *Twenty-Seven Muwashshahaat and One Zajal by Ibn al-‘Arabī of Murcia* (1165–1240) (London and Zaragoza: School of Oriental and African Studies). The French scholar and Ibn ‘Arabī biographer Claude Addas called attention to the Paris manuscript of *Dīwān al-Ma‘ārif*, discussed Ibn ‘Arabī’s introduction to that work, and challenged the common assumption that Ibn ‘Arabī was more of a thinker than a poet. Julian Cook and Stephen Hirtenstein have put forth a reconstruction of Ibn ‘Arabī’s poetic oeuvre in light of the rediscovery of *Dīwān al-Ma‘ārif*. See Claude Addas, “A propos du dīwān al-ma‘ārif d’Ibn ‘Arabī,” *Studia Islamica* 81 (January 1995): 187–95, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1596025>; *idem*, “Ship of Stone,” in *Journey of the Heart*, edited by Johnny Mercer (Oxford: Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī Society, 1996): 5–24; *idem*, “L’œuvre poétique d’Ibn ‘Arabī et sa réception,” *Studia Islamica* 91 (January 2000): 23–38, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1596267>; Julian Cook and Stephen Hirtenstein, “The Great Dīwān and Its Offspring,” *JMIAS* 52 (2012): 33–91. More recently, Moroccan researcher Abdelillah Benarafa has published the detailed study on *Dīwān al-Ma‘ārif*, “Al-Shīr al-‘irfānī, dirāsa wa tāḥqīq fī ‘Dīwān al-ma‘ārif’ in *Al-‘Awda ilā al-matn al-akbārī*,” edited by Rizqī bin ‘Awmar and ‘Abd al-Qādir Bilgīth (Damascus: Dār Ninawa, 2018), 83–138. Benarafa’s study indicates that an edition of *Dīwān al-Ma‘ārif* is in the works.

6. For the life, travels, and writings of Ibn ‘Arabī, see the biography of the Murcian shaykh by Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn ‘Arabi*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993). Addas had published an earlier edition in French, *Ibn ‘Arabi, ou La quête du soufre rouge* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), but the 1993 edition has been expanded considerably. The other major biography in English is by Stephen Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn ‘Arabi* (Oxford: Anqa, 1999), which includes a vividly related and carefully sourced narrative of the shaykh’s life interspersed with meditations on his mystical teachings

and experiences. More recently, the Syrian scholar Muḥammad ‘Alī Ḥājj Yūsuf has offered a detailed biography in Arabic: *Shams al-maghrib* [The Sun of the West]: *Sirat al-shaykh al-akbar Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī wa-madhhabihi* (Aleppo: Fuṣṣilat li-l-Dirāsat wa-al-Tarjama wa-al-Nashr, 2006). On contentions over Ibn ‘Arabī in the centuries following his death, see Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).

7. Although some manuscripts vocalize the poetry or at least add vocalization where a word could be read in more than one way, authors, copyists, and publishers rarely vocalize prose, and the manuscripts of *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* do not vocalize the title. In what follows I will refer to the collection of poetry translated and discussed here simply as “the *Tarjumān*.”
8. For an in-depth study of the nasib, see Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasib* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). Although Stetkevych, who expresses irritation with Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary, shows little interest in the *Tarjumān* itself, his study illuminates the depth, range, and sensibility of the nasib tradition that informs and animates it.
9. Some urban poets, most famously Abū Nuwās (d. 814), instead of adapting the *atlāl* theme to the urban environment, parodied it along with the Bedouin cultures that they reflected originally. Yet this parody did not always entail a rejection of the nasib: indeed, only a poet who has interiorized the motifs and mastered its full range of possibilities would be able to parody it so artfully. In one of Abū Nuwās’s most exquisite poems, the poet-lover-urbanite aficionado of the good life and debauchery finds that at the end of his drunken revelry, the singing girls strike up a verse with nasib sentiment and the eyes of his poet and his fellow drinkers grow misty.
10. A few of the poems in the *Tarjumān* reflect the style of garland poetry, albeit within a classical metrical and end-rhyme format rather than stanzaic. The first part of poem 25 and the first part of poem 46 are cases in point.
11. Although the Arabic word *ghazal* is shared by the various traditions, American poets and readers have had their understanding shaped by the formally very different Persian poetry composed by the likes of Rumi and Hafez, Ottoman poets such as Na’ili (d. 1666), and Urdu

- poets including Ghalib (d. 1869) and Iqbal (d. 1877). Recent American engagement with non-Arabic ghazal traditions has been robust. Examples include: *Angels Knocking on the Tavern Door: Thirty Poems by Hafez*, trans. Robert Bly and Leonard Lewison (Harper Perennial, 1989); *Ghazals of Ghalib: Versions from Urdu*, Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, Aijaz Ahmad (editor), W. S. Merwin (contributor), Adrienne Rich (contributor), William Stafford (contributor), David Ray (contributor), Thomas Fitzsimmons (contributor), Mark Strand (contributor), William Hunt (contributor) (Oxford University Press India, 1994); and Robin Magowan, *The Garden of Amazement: Scattered Gems after Saeb* (West Brattleboro, VT: Longhouse, 2015). For several years, Coleman Barks's Rumi translations topped the American best-seller lists for poetry, and they remain immensely popular.
12. It was Ibn 'Arabī along with his contemporary, the Cairene poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235), who became most known for integrating the sites of the pilgrimage into the Arabian love poem. *Sessions of the Righteous* offers critical new insight not only on the poets that shaped Ibn 'Arabī's poetics of love most strongly, but also on prior developments in integrating the world of the pilgrimage into love poetry. Compositions by two poets, Sharīf al-Raḍī and Miḥyār al-Daylāmī—both of whom were major Shi'ite leaders in Baghdad and both of whom were in charge of the largest annual pilgrimage caravan to Mecca—dominate the poems cited by Ibn 'Arabī in *Sessions*. The quotations of their poems in *Sessions* open a window into the poetic imagination that grew up around the hajj in the years prior to Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Ibn 'Arabī. The following verses from Miḥyār al-Daylāmī, which make up just one of dozens of examples in *Sessions*, center on three of the most prominent stations of the beloved within the *Tarjumān*, Hājir, Himā, and La'la':

يَا لَيْلَةِ بَخَاجِرٍ  
إِنْ عَادَ مَاضِ فَازْجُعِي  
  
أَرْضَى بِأَخْبَارِ الْرِّيَا  
حَوْلَ بُرُوقِ الْلُّمَعِ  
  
وَأَيْنَ مِنْ بَرْقِ الْجَحْمِ  
شَائِمَةُ بَلَاغَلَعِ

O night that I passed in Hājir,  
if the past can return, return

I content myself with reports  
from the wind and lightning shimmers

But where in the flash over Himā  
is a sign for La'la'i?

(*Sessions of the Righteous*  
[MAB 1:191])

The third major contributor to the *Sessions* imaginary was the Hanbalite preacher and author of Baghdad, Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201), two of whose works Ibn ‘Arabī cites. Of special importance to the merging of pilgrimage and the lover’s quest was Ibn al-Jawzī’s work *The Awakener of Dormant Passion for the Noblest Places* (*Muthīr al-gharām al-sākin ilā ashraf al-amākin*). In it, Ibn al-Jawzī uses the full resources of the erotic poetic tradition to reflect and intensify the longing on the part of Muslims to make the hajj and, for those who have made the hajj, to return to Mecca and its environment after they have returned home from their pilgrimage.

13. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957): 249–50. Jonathan Culler integrates Frye’s remark into his analysis of the “embarrassment of apostrophe” within post-Romantic poetics. See *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981): 135–54. He also notes Geoffrey Hartmann’s discussion of the almost-always vocative and optative nature of William Blake’s poems to the seasons and the ritual character of whatever descriptive element there is. See Culler, *Pursuit*, 139; Geoffrey Hartman, *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 193. For a related study, with less focus on the Romantics and apostrophes to nonhuman addressees, see William Water, *Poetry’s Touch: On Lyric Address* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
14. For the poetic feature of turning in Ibn ‘Arabī’s contemporary, Ibn al-Fārid, see ‘Abbās Yūsuf Ḥaddād, *al-Anā fī al-shi‘r al-Ṣūfī: Ibn al-Fārid unmūdhajan* [The “I” in Sufi Poetry: the Case of Ibn al-Fārid] (al-Lādhiqiyah, Syria: Dār al-Hiwār, 2005), 163–76.
15. For one example, see Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the*

*Šūfism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Princeton University Press, 1969), 138–39.

16. Wolfgang Hermann offers a promising suggestion regarding Niżām and Qurrat al-‘Ayn: if Niżām was the daughter of the scholar from Isfahān by a Christian wife, then although she was raised as a member of the family and offered the highest educational possibilities, she would still have been, in legal terms, a *jāriya* and a daughter of the Christian Rūm. See Muhyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *Deuter der Sehnsüchte (Turjuman al-Ashwaq)*, 2 vols., trans. Wolfgang Hermann (Zürich: Edition Shershir, 2013–16), 1:11–13.
17. Classical Arabic poetry redounds with words for “young women,” who were, by societal definition, unmarried. Many of the terms indicate that the woman was a virgin. Others were less specific. As with the Hebrew word *almah*, ambiguity in this regard could lead to different interpretations—most famously with the millennia-old debate between Jewish and Christian exegetes around the *almah* that Isaiah predicted would bring forth a messiah. Christian exegetes read the word as indicating a young virgin woman (a prefiguration of the Blessed Virgin), and Jewish exegetes insisted that the word did not refer specifically to a virgin—only to a young woman. Ibn ‘Arabī referred to the young woman who confronted him at the Ka‘ba as a *jāriya*, a word with a semantic ambivalence most comparable to the English maid/maiden/maidservant/handmaiden. The word *jāriya* denoted a young woman slave, and in that role many would have been household servants. Yet their role was by no means limited to such humble circumstances. Educated and artistically talented *jāriyas* became central actors within elite culture as masters of the poetic and musical repertoire. Some became the equivalent of modern “divas,” with large and passionate circles of followers, particularly within urban circles and in the courts of rulers. In addition to taking the role of famous vocalists, lute-players, musical arrangers, and poets in their own right, *jāriyas* took on another distinctive role—that of the pious *jāriya* savant. Such *jāriya*-savants had become a feature in Sufi accounts of earlier saints or “friends of God.” The most famous, Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya of Baghdad (lived ca. 800), features in numerous such stories, upbraiding and instructing the great Sufi masters of her time. One particularly renowned Rābi‘a story, which is featured in *The Lives of the Saints* by Ibn ‘Arabī’s contemporary Farīd al-Dīn ‘Attār,

depicts the Ka‘ba itself going out to meet Rābi‘a during her pilgrimage, even as the great Sufi sage of the time is left standing, stunned, where the Ka‘ba would normally be. *Farid al-Dīn ‘Attār’s Memorial of God’s Friends*, translated and introduced by Paul Losensky (NY: Paulist Press Classics of Western Spirituality, 2009), 100–102. In *Sessions of the Righteous*, Ibn ‘Arabī transmitted several accounts of *jāriya* divas, but he also included accounts of *jāriya* savants at the Ka‘ba, encountering, humbling, and instructing great Sufi masters such as Junayd (d. 910). Some of these accounts bear striking similarity to the story of his encounter with Qurrat al-‘Ayn, which he also included in *Sessions*. For the accounts of *jāriya* savants and *jāriya* divas, see *Sessions of the Righteous: MAb* 1:199–204; 1:222–29 which also includes the story of a master female poet who is also a freewoman and therefore (in accordance with the norms of the time) recites her erotic verses from behind a curtain; 1:317–18; 1:338; 1:348 (on a Rūmī princess-savant and the Ka‘ba); 1:389. Of particular relevance to the *Tarjumān* prefaces is the story of Ibn ‘Arabī’s encounter at the Ka‘ba with a voice that shouted out and proceeded to interrogate him on the subject of love and mysticism: *Sessions of the Righteous* (*MAb* 1:255–57). For Ibn ‘Arabī’s encounter with Qurrat al-‘Ayn at the Ka‘ba, see *Sessions of the Righteous* (*MAb* 2:255–59). Some *jāriya* savant accounts retold by Ibn ‘Arabī appeared in an earlier work by Ibn al-Jawzī, *Safat al-Safwā* (The Select of the Pure). Ibn ‘Arabī mentions that work explicitly in the introduction to *Sessions of the Righteous*, though he also notes his reception of these stories through oral transmission, and he often cites at least the last transmitter in the *isnād* by name.

18. In the *Tarjumān* and Ibn ‘Arabī’s own autobiographical prefaces and commentary, as well as his remarks on the *Tarjumān* poems in *Sessions of the Righteous*, we can see an Islamicate myth unfolding before our eyes. By “myth,” I do not mean a story that is false but one that is more than true in purely biographical or historically verifiable terms, and that in literary and imaginative power extends beyond the range of mere facticity.
19. *Priceless Treasures: A Commentary on Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*. Its full title within the manuscript traditions is *Al-Dhakhā’ir wa al-a'lāq fi sharḥ tarjumān al-ashwāq*, but late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century printed editions changed the title from *Al-Dhakhā’ir wa*

*al-a'lāq* (literally, “Precious Items and Lockets”) to *Dhakhā’ir al-a'lāq* (“Precious Items of the Lockets”), which became the de facto title in the years that followed.

20. “My commentary on these verses was prompted by the request of my dear companions, Badr al-Ḥabashī and Ibn Sawdakin. They had heard a jurist in the city of Aleppo denying that these verses expressed lordly secrets and divine inspirations, claiming instead that the shaykh who composed them wished to veil their intent out of concern for his reputation as a man of religion and righteousness. I authorized a commentary, and the judge Ibn ‘Adīm read it before an assembly of jurists. When my critic heard it, he repented and renounced casting aspersions upon the verse of ghazal and *tashbīb* composed by Sufis and the divine secrets expressed in them.” See the Shuqayrī edition of *Priceless Treasures: Dīwān dhakhā’ir al-a'lāq*, edited by Muḥammad ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Shuqayrī (al-Haram [Egypt]: al-‘Ayn lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buhūth al-Insāniyya wa-al-Ijtima‘iyya, 1995), 175–76. The manuscript traditions vary in the placement of these remarks. Some attach them to the Qurrat al-‘Ayn preface, some place them at the beginning of the commentary, some attach them to the end of the commentary (appendix 2).
21. For the possibility that Raymond Llull may have played a role in popularizing themes of Sufi love poetry and Sufi commentary in fifteenth-century Spain, see Luce López Baralt, *San Juan de La Cruz y El Islam* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1985): 369–77. For a close comparison between a poem by John of the Cross and poem 30 of the *Tarjumān*, see Georg Bossong, “Sprache, Mystik, Intertextualität bei Ibn ‘Arabī und San Juan de la Cruz,” in Katherina Maier Troxler and Constantino Maider, eds., *Fictio Poetica: Studi italiani i ispanici in onore di Georges Güntert* (Florence: Franco Cesati, 1998): 141–67. For a recent close study of John’s poetry and commentaries, see Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Christian Mysticism*, vol. 6, part 2: *Mysticism in the Golden Age of Spain (1500–1650)* (New York: Crossroads, 2017): 230–45.
22. The saying, known as “the hadith of supererogatory devotions” (*ḥadīth al-nawāfiḍ*), is well attested in such classical hadith compilations as *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*. For sources for the hadith, see William Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (Paris: Mouton, 1977), 173–74. Ibn ‘Arabī included the hadith in his own

collection of divine sayings, which he collected from the religious scholars of his time through personal chains of oral transmission. See *Divine Sayings: The Mishkāt al-Anwār of Ibn ‘Arabī*, Arabic text and English translation by Stephen Hirtenstein and Martin Notcutt (Oxford: Anqa, 2004), p. 88 (translation); p. 51 (Arabic text). For a contextualization of this and other key hadiths in the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī, see James Morris, *The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn ‘Arabī’s Meccan Illuminations* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2005), 163–78.

23. For a discussion of the complete human being and the mirror image in the mystical thought of Ibn ‘Arabī, see Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chapter 4 (“Identity Shift and Meaning Event”), 63–89.
24. For a biography of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, see Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn Al-Fāriḍ, His Verse, and His Shrine* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).
25. A critical study of the *Tarjumān*’s poetry can be found in Sulaymān ‘Aṭṭār, *Al-Khayāl wa-al-shi‘r fi taṣawwuf al-Andalus: Ibn ‘Arabī, Abū al-Hasan al-Shuṣhtarī, wa-Ibn Khamīs al-Tilimsānī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1981).
26. The meters employed in the *Tarjumān* are, by order of frequency: Ṭawīl (19), Kāmil (11), Basīṭ (9), Mutaqārib (6), Ramal (6), Rajaz (5), Khafīf (3), Wāfir (2), Sarī‘ (1). The meter-poem match is as follows:

Tawīl	3, 4, 7, 11, 12, 14, 21, 32, 35, 36, 38, 43, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 57, 58
Kāmil	8, 9, 13, 18, 22, 24, 26, 27, 29, 34, 56
Basīṭ	2, 6, 10, 17, 39, 46, 49, 60
Mutaqārib	16, 23, 31, 41, 54, 59
Ramal	1, 5, 15, 30, 37, 42
Rajaz	19, 25, 28, 45, 48
Khafīf	20, 40, 44
Wāfir	33, 61
Sarī‘	47

Poem 30 has also been ascribed the closely related Madīd meter, and poem 61 to the Hazaj meter. See, for example, *Dīwān Dhakha’ir al-A’lāq* (Priceless Treasures), edited by Muḥammad ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Shuqayrī (al-Haram [Egypt]: al-‘Ayn lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buhūth

- al-Insāniyya wa-al-Ijtimā'iyya, 1995), which provides the meter identification as the beginning of each poem.
27. For a translation that attempts to re-create the Arabic meters within English, see *The Seven Golden Odes of Pagan Arabia Known Also as the Moallakat*, translated from the original Arabic by Lady Anne Blunt, done into English verse by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (London, 1903).
  28. For examples of the intensive use of *jinās* in the *Tarjumān*, see the notes to poems 4 and 42.
  29. For a personal chronicle of the arduous pilgrimage journey to Mecca by an Andalusī acquaintance of Ibn ‘Arabī, see Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr: A Medieval Spanish Muslim Visits Makkah, Madinah, Egypt, Cities of the Middle East and Sicily*, trans. Roland Broadhurst (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2001). Ibn Jubayr traveled the same pilgrimage route from Iraq to Medina and Mecca as Ibn ‘Arabī. See in particular his depictions of stations on the pilgrimage route mentioned within the *Tarjumān*: page 213 on Ḥājir, 214 on Zarūd, 215 on al-‘Udhayb, and 218 on al-Bāriq.
  30. *Sessions of the Righteous* (*MAB* 2:476). The poem also appears in *Dīwān al-Ma’ārif*, though with a different introductory comment: “The spirit is Greek (*yunānī*) and the thought-flash (*al-khāṭir*) is Arab.” See Benarafa, “Al-Shi’r al-‘irfānī,” 116.

### Appendix 1: Nizām Preface

1. This preface begins with the kind of formal Islamic prologue that was standard for books and treatises. Such prologues had two parts, one offering praise to God and the second offering praise to the prophet Muḥammad. Yet such prologues were more than pious formalities. The manner in which the author praised God and the Prophet previewed the subject matter of the book in question. Thus, in the preface to the *Tarjumān*, Ibn ‘Arabī praises God as both the beautiful and the lover of beauty, then praises the beauty of the world that reflects the beauty of its creator, and, finally, refers to lovers as being annihilated in contemplation of that beauty. The second part of the prologue asks blessings for Muḥammad, who manifested the beauty of God most perfectly, with special attention to the beauty of his exemplary life.

2. “Intimates”: ‘*ārifin* (literally, those who know someone or something in a personal, intimate, or experiential way).
3. Ibn ‘Arabī gives the fuller name of the shaykh as Makīn al-Dīn Abū Shujā’ Zāhir bin Rustam bin Abī al-Rajā’ al-Isbahānī.” “Isbahān” was a common alternative spelling for Isfahān. “God rest his soul” (the idiomatic English equivalent of *rahimahu allāh ta‘ālā*). By adding this expression after the name, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that Makīn al-Dīn was deceased at the time he composed this preface. Ibn ‘Arabī repeats the expression a few lines later after mentioning Makīn al-Dīn again, a repetition I have omitted for stylistic reasons.
4. Abū ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī (d. 892) was the author of one of the six major Sunni hadith collections, *al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*. He is not to be confused with al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 869), a Sufi author whose works played a major role in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings on saintship.
5. “*Al-balad al-amīn*” is a Qur’anic epithet for Mecca and its environs.
6. “Sun Splendor”: literally, “Essence of the Sun and Splendor” (*Ayn al-Shams wa al-Bahā’*)
7. “The scholars, worshippers, itinerants, and renunciates”: ‘*ālimāt, ‘ābidāt, sā’iḥāt, zāhidāt*.
8. “Stunned into silence”: *a‘jazat*. This word evokes the doctrine of the inimitability of the Qur’an with the suggestion that Niẓām’s speech, like God’s word in the Qur’an, reduces to silence anyone who would try to imitate it.
9. Qass bin Sa‘da was known as a Christian priest and orator praised by the prophet Muhammad. Some of the oratorical locutions attributed to Ibn Sa‘da show strong stylistic similarities to early Meccan suras of the Qur’an. Ma‘n bin Zā’ida was a noted Muslim warrior during the Abbasid period. Samaw’al was a Jewish Arabic poet of the pre-Islamic era renowned for his loyalty. Ibn ‘Arabī’s choice of a Christian, Muslim, and Jew as those exceeded by Niẓām would seem to echo themes in poems 2 and 11 and, as Hermann suggests (vol. 1, 42n24), was likely intentional.
10. “In this volume”: *fī hādha al-juz’*. Ibn ‘Arabī may be referring here to the *Tarjumān* as “one volume” of his poetic oeuvre or “Greater Dīwān.”
11. “Fitting”: *lā‘iq*. This particular Arabic word appears here as well as in the *Qurrat al-‘Ayn* preface. Here the poet defends his verses as having

been expressed in a fitting manner. In the *Qurrat al-‘Ayn* preface, the young woman concludes each of her criticisms by asking if the verse in question was a fitting thing for a shaykh like Ibn ‘Arabī to compose.

12. “The virgin most pure”: *al-baytūl al-a‘dhrā’*. Literally, “virgin, virgin”: the second word for virgin, *a‘dhrā’*, is employed in the hadith collections to refer to the virgin Maryam, the mother of Jesus.
13. “Treasures and Lockets”: *al-dhakhā’ir wa al-a‘lāq*, the exact phrase that would form the title for Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary. Elsewhere I use the shortened form *Priceless Treasures* to refer to the commentary itself as a text.
14. Throughout this section of the preface, Ibn ‘Arabī has referred to himself using a conventional, formal plural. Most translators have taken “our custom” to refer to the manner in which Sufis or pious renunciates composed, quoted, employed or interpreted amatory verses, but it could also be translated as “my custom” and thereby refer to Ibn ‘Arabī’s own accustomed practices in regard to ghazal and nasib.
15. *The end for us is better than the beginning*: a near-verbatim quote from Q 93:4, “And the end for you is better than the beginning.”
16. Q 35:14.

## Appendix 2: *Qurrat al-‘Ayn* Preface

1. The *jāriya* criticizes Ibn ‘Arabī for questioning whether or not the loved one knew whose heart they had possessed, pointing out that anyone who has something knows what it is they have. The critique is based upon the Arabic word family */r/f*, which indicates a particular kind of knowing, a personal, experiential knowing (similar to the French *connaître*) that contrasts with */l/m*, which designates a more objective kind of knowledge (as with the French *savoir*). The lover and mystic have knowledge (*ma‘rifa*, *‘irfān*) in this personal sense. So of course they know whose heart they have possessed, she explains. On the other hand, Ibn ‘Arabī’s exclamation “Would I knew” is indeed an appropriate expression of his own lack of *ma‘rifa*.
2. “A sincere tongue”: *lisānu sidqin*, a Qur’anic phrase. In Q 19:50, the divine speaker states that he has bestowed a sincere tongue on Ibrāhīm, Iṣhāq, and Ya‘qūb (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). In Q 26:84, Abraham prays to be made a paradigm of sincere speech for posterity.
3. Although Ibn ‘Arabī has introduced the *jāriya* as an exemplar of

modesty, wit, and tact, she proceeds through her rebuke of each of the four verses with brutal frankness.

4. Ibn ‘Arabī employs the word “cousin” (*bint al-khāla*) as a form of polite address to a young woman who has no family ties to him.
5. “Comfort of the Eye”: *qurrat al-‘ayn*. The expression could also be rendered “balm of the eye,” “cooling of the eye,” “solace of the eye,” “joy of the eye.” It conveys a combination of joy and relief that cannot always be reduced to one or another of the possible English renditions. The expression or equivalents to it appear several times in the Qur’ān. In Q 25:74, there is reference to those who pray, “lord, grant us wives and children who will be a comfort for our eyes.” In a more universal context (Q 32:17), the divine voice states that “no soul knows how much contentment of the eye (*qurrat al-‘ayn*) is secretly stored up as a reward for what it does.” See also Q 33:51: “That is likely to comfort your eye, and you will grieve no more.” When the virgin Maryam seeks refuge from her birth pangs near a palm tree, a voice calls to her telling her that a spring has been opened up and the palm tree is bearing dates, and calls her to “eat, drink, and let your eye be cooled” (Q 19:26).

Most important for this preface are the Qur’ānic passages regarding the infant Mūsā. After Musa’s mother places him in an ark and sets him loose on the waters, he is discovered by members of Pharaoh’s household. At that point (Q 28:9), Pharaoh’s wife tells her spouse not to kill the infant, “for he will be a comfort for the eyes—for me and for you” (*qurrat al-‘ayn lī wa laka*). In the end, Mūsā is returned to his distraught mother. At that point, the divine speaker addresses Mūsā: “We returned you to your mother that her eye might be comforted and she grieve no more” (Q 20:40). When Ibn ‘Arabī responds to Qurrat al-‘Ayn by saying “for me,” his response can be read a kind of proposal or flirtation, but it is also a quote from the Qur’ān that would, if read according to the implicit analogy it evokes, place Qurrat al-‘Ayn in the position of Mūsā and Ibn ‘Arabī in the position of Pharaoh’s wife.

6. “Subtleties of mystical knowings”: *latā’if al-ma‘ārif*. I have used “knowings” here as a substantive in a manner parallel to Julian of Norwich’s “showings.” The two terms differ in important senses, of course, but both use a substantive gerund to shake loose aspects of intimacy that more common English terms lack.



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