

On Knowing the Station of Love Poems from the 78th Chapter of the Futūhāt Al-Makkiyyah of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi

translated by R.W.J. Austin

I

1. I clung to the one I love so passionately, though I know not how,
nor do I know for certain who it is that says, "I know not."
2. For my state is one of bewilderment, and my thoughts are all awry,
indeed, I am all perplexity and confusion.
3. There was I, for all my many protestations, expressing a love
which my inmost heart dealt harshly with.
4. In truth, I did not know whom I loved nor her name, nor yet did I
comprehend what was seething in my breast.
5. Until, finally, her veil was drawn back to reveal a face like the full
moon emerging from the dark clouds of night,
6. I said, 'Who may this be?' and I was told that it was the apple of
the eye of the heart, daughter of my brother the Eternal Resource. [[1](#)]
7. I proclaimed her majesty and that of her origin, and my night with
her exceeded even the Night of Destiny. [[2](#)]

II

1. God is too great to be overreached, being the sublime Beloved, the
completely depended-upon master.
2. The sun reaches us and we perceive it, there being a certain
sympathy and benefit between us and it.
3. It appears to us, when it is manifest, like a divine Self-revelation,
and none gets the better of it.
4. The light is too strong for us to properly determine its character.
so how much more so in the case of one Who is undeterminable and integral?
5. 'How' and 'how much' are words used of bodies, whereas in His case
it is not a matter of body, state or number.

III

1. By God, love is attributed to Man in a way which all our learning
is unable to grasp.
2. Love is entirely a matter of direct experience whose reality cannot
be acquired by learning. By God, is that not wonderful?
3. The very exigencies of love clothe me in the garment of opposites.

so that I am as one who is consciously unconscious.

4. Whether perceived as being in us or Him, love confirms the Reality's necessary being, although we are by no means similars.
5. I beg Gods forgiveness for what I say about Him: though I speak only in a spirit of gratitude to Him.

IV

1. My essential self is deeply concerned with her, although I do not perceive her with my eye.
2. Were my body's eye to see her, it would become utterly ravished.
3. When I inwardly espied her, I became subject to the rule of spiritual vision.
4. Spending the night bewitched by her, stupefied by love until dawn.
5. Oh what good was all my caution, if only it had been able to spare me
6. The effects of destiny and fate; but it served only to make me mad with love.
7. By God, how her shy, retiring beauty bewildered me with love!
8. What a lovely gazelle she was pasturing at Dhat al-Ghamr.
9. When she moans plaintively or nuzzles up, she captivates the minds of men.
10. She reveals moist glistening white teeth like scattered thin white clouds.
11. It is as if her breaths were great waves of perfumed musk, or as if she were the sun of the morning or the moon in her light.
12. If she unveils her face the shining morning light shows bright her face.
14. Or, if she lets down her hair its darkness, hides her.
15. Oh moon illuminating the dark night, take my heart.
16. And let my eye look upon you, since looking upon you is my good fortune. For my devotion to love of her stems from my experience of her presence.

Note: for a commentary on this poem. cf. my paper ["The Lady Nizam, an image of Love and Knowledge"](#), *JMIAS VII*, 1988 pp 35-48.

V

1. Did you but know. I am the object of an impulsive divine love, and passionate love, did you but understand, is the object of our devotion. [3]
2. If, indeed, you comprehend my aim, then praise God and learn!
3. What ails my people that they turn away from what I have to say?
Do they suffer from some inability to grasp what I am uttering?

4. How is it that my people are blind to what is manifest of my Beloved in my own being?
5. It is not that I am mad with love for any of His creatures, since I am in love only with my own essential divine being; so understand!
6. Since taking upon myself the divine, I have returned (to worldly consciousness) as a theatre of divine Self-manifestation. Thus have I become, so hold fast to me!
7. For. at your level of existence, I am the 'rope of God', so stay close to the 'door', serving as slaves. [4]
8. When I say. in my verses, that I am in love with Zainab, Nizam or 'Inân, then be apprised.
9. That (those names) are only fine, marvellous symbols, beneath which is a noble, distinguishing garment.
10. I am the garment on its Wearer, while the one Who wears it is not to be known.
11. What the garment contains is only that to which Al-Hallaj alluded one day, so rejoice! [5]
12. By love's life, were I to become aware of Him, He would utterly overwhelm me because of my acknowledging your presences. [6]
13. The divine being in its original reality is not seen in every instance of non-being. [7]

Notes

1. The very essence of the divine creative otherness.
2. Described in the Quran as better than a thousand months. It is said to be one of the last ten days of Ramadan, c.f. Qur XCVII
3. The word for "passionate love" is *hawâ*, c.f. Ibn Al-'Arabi's *Bezels of Wisdom* p. 246 ff.
4. C.f. Ouran III 102. The God-filled man becomes an object of aspiration and reverence.
5. d, 922 A.D. He was executed for proclaiming "I am the Reality" in a spiritual state of self-annihilation.
6. One cannot really be aware of God when anything else holds one's attention.
7. Not all created beings equally manifest the divine presence.

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