

CHESTER BEATTY MONOGRAPHS

No. 5

THE POEM OF THE WAY

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

FROM THE ARABIC OF

IBN AL-FĀRĪD

BY

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LONDON

EMERY WALKER LIMITED

41 GREAT RUSSELL STREET

1952

PJ 7755
I18 N31
1952

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD
BY CHARLES BATEY, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

SHARAF AD-DĪN ʿUmar ibn ʿAlī as-Saʿdī, familiarly called Ibn al-Fāriḍ or the Notary's Son, was born at Cairo in A.D. 1181, ten years after the final extinction of Fatimid rule in Egypt, and six years after the formal recognition of the accomplished fact of Saladin's supremacy. His life of a little less than fifty-four years fell within a period of great military, political, and intellectual activity. He himself had but few material adventures; dedicated from early manhood to the mystic's way of withdrawal from the world, he was utterly satisfied in later days to remember with ecstatic pleasure the pilgrimage he made to the Sacred Places of Arabia, and to meditate upon the union with the Spirit of Muhammad which he then experienced. When he died on 23 January 1235, he left behind him the memory of a holy life surrendered to the Will of Allah, and a small collection of exquisite poetry.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ's greatest and most justly celebrated work is the *Naẓm as-sulūk*, the 'Poem of the Way' which is here translated. This has been described by R. A. Nicholson as 'not only a unique masterpiece of Arabic poetry but a document of surpassing interest to every student of mysticism'. The original consists of 760 couplets all rhyming together upon the verse-ending -ti, a fact which explains its alternative title *at-Tā'iyat al-kubrā* ('The Greater Ode in T'). It was extremely rare for Arab poets to exceed even 100 couplets in a single poem; the epic length of the *Naẓm as-sulūk* is entirely without parallel, and considered only as an example of rhyming virtuosity it must be accounted most remarkable. The metre is *ṭawīl*, scanned as follows:

saqatnī | ḥumaiyā l-ḥub|bi rāḥa|tu muqlatī
 wa-ka'sī | muḥaiyā man | 'ani l-ḥus|ni jallatī

The great theme of the poem is the mystic's quest for and realization of his identity with the Spirit of Muhammad, and thereby the absorption of his individual personality into the Unity of God. Ibn al-Fāriḍ brought to the treatment of this theme, the focal meditation of the Muhammadan mystic, a great wealth of metaphysical learning and poetic imagery. His

style, like that of some modern poets, presupposes in the reader a ready familiarity with a wide repertory of reference; and this fact, combined with a deliberate complexity and intricacy of syntax, often leads him into obscurity which is at times barely comprehensible. He was moreover heir to a literary tradition which prized highly extravagant embellishment of rhetoric; for example, in the first line of his poem which has been quoted above there is a conscious verbal pattern in the occurrence of the words *ḥumaiyā* and *muḥaiyā* (this figure is known to the theorists as *jinās maqlūb*), and in the juxtaposition of *rāḥatu* ('hand') and *muqlatī* ('The pupil of mine eye'). Scarcely a line of the entire poem is without some ornament, and in some lines the decoration is as fine and tightly woven as filigree.

The aesthetic effect created by this sharp contrast between the repetition of strongly dominating themes and their almost endless elaboration in minute detail of patterned variation is precisely similar to the impression conveyed by a monumental building decorated with delicate arabesque tracery. The resemblance is not accidental; for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's style, not excelled in its kind by any other Arab poet, represents the consummation of the same artistic impulse which culminated (with building materials instead of words and images) in the Alhambra's perfect balance between strength and subtlety. It obviously follows from this brief appreciation that his poetry is untranslatable, if by translation is meant the reproduction in the foreign language of not only the meaning but also the artistry of the original.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ thus presents a peculiarly stubborn problem to one who seeks to render what he says and how he says it into another idiom. Despite the help—if that be not a euphemism—offered by the several Arabic commentaries which claim to hold the key to his frequent enigmas (and in their more candid mood the commentators admit themselves defeated not seldom, and put forward merely tentative solutions), it must still be confessed that the poet's intentions are on occasion intellectually undiscoverable. There are passages in which he seems to write in a kind of sensual trance, fascinated by the shapes and sounds of the words with which he is playing, struggling desperately to arrange them into some semblance of sense. Even in his most opaque moods, however, he never fails to rescue his reader from total bewilderment by a following line or

two of almost transparent simplicity, so that the thread of the argument need never be wholly lost. This alternation of darkness and clarity creates a sustained tension and excitement in the reader's mind, unfortunately not at all communicable to those unable to follow the original.

The first European scholar to attempt the translation of this poem was the German orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. He printed an edition of the text in the beautiful *nastaliq* fount belonging to the old Imperial Press of the Hapsburgs, and he put what he understood Ibn al-Fāriḍ to mean into rhyming German verse. This enterprise, which came out at Vienna in 1854, has been summarily dismissed by R. A. Nicholson, most charitable of scholars, as worthless; a fair verdict on a brave failure. S. I. di Matteo, the Italian amateur, made the second trial in 1917; he had the humility not to attempt rhythm or rhyme, but his scholarship was unequal to the task, and the gentle C. Nallino tore it to shreds in a very learned review. Then R. A. Nicholson marshalled his mature and experienced powers to the third endeavour; his honest literal version of three-fourths of the poem, expertly and illuminatingly annotated, forms the concluding section of his brilliant *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1921). Finally, Maria Nallino found among her father's papers after his death an unpublished prose translation, similar in scholarly austerity to R. A. Nicholson's, of a little more than one-half of the whole; and this has now been printed.

Though I had long been fascinated by the *Naẓm as-sulūk* and all too well apprised of its difficulties, it never occurred to me that I should chance my hand also at its interpretation, until I happened to hit upon a manuscript of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poems in the library of my generous friend Mr. A. Chester Beatty, a copy which substantially antedates all other known codices; I have given a description and transcription of this manuscript elsewhere. By one of those strange coincidences which almost persuade a man to believe in destiny, I had the luck at about the same time to pick up in an obscure bookshop a copy of the very rare edition (published in the East in 1876) of the oldest and most detailed commentary on the poem, that written during the latter half of the thirteenth century by Saʿīd ad-Dīn al-Farghānī, an instrument which had not been available to R. A. Nicholson. With these two new sources of information in my hands, I felt a little less diffidence about the

possibility of taking the interpretation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ one further stage; and having studied the evidence now before me, I resolved to make the fifth attempt.

My first essay was to render the poem into a line-for-line equivalent in a sort of loose *ṭawīl*, so far as that lilting rhythm can be imitated in our unquantitative English; and I published a fragment after this fashion in my *Sufism* (Allen & Unwin, 1951). But it quickly came home to me that liberties like these could not well be taken with poetry so mannered and elusive as Ibn al-Fāriḍ's. The pedestrian prose-renderings of R. A. Nicholson and C. Nallino, admirable products of high scholarship that they were, advised me against following that path if Ibn al-Fāriḍ were ever to be read by more than a handful of erudites. Von Hammer-Purgstall had signposted a monumental warning against rhyme. There remained our great English heritage of blank verse, a medium equal to every shade of darkness or clarity the craftsman could desire; and that was the making of this try. If I have abandoned as inappropriate the line-for-line technique, at least I have striven deliberately to match obscurity with obscurity, and light with light; seeking at the same time to shadow the sustained tension which I have remarked as so outstanding a feature of the original.

This version as it stands stark is therefore frequently unintelligible without recourse to the notes appended to it. If these notes do not resolve every purposed tangle, this is because I have set myself to rival Ibn al-Fāriḍ's own enigmas, the solutions of which are to be sensed rather than reasoned. I feel myself to have sensed solutions to every riddle, keeping always clearly in my mind the strongly dominating themes which are the poem's massive framework.



TRANSLATION

- T**HE pupil of mine eye stretched forth its hand
To grasp my bowl (her matchless countenance
Transcending mortal beauty) and therefrom
Poured me the fever and the flame of love,
- 5 While with my glance I gave my friends to think
Draining their juice it was that filled my soul
(And I intoxicated) with deep joy;
Yet having eyes to drink, I could dispense
With that my goblet, since her qualities
- 10 And not my wine inebriated me.
So in the tavern of my drunkenness
The hour was ripe that I should render thanks
To those the lads by whose conspiracy
My passion could be perfectly concealed
- 15 For all my notoriety. But when
My sober mood was ended, boldly I
Requested union with her, being now
No more inhibited by clutching fear
But wholly unrestrained in love's expanse;
- 20 And privily, as when a bride unveils
Before her bridegroom, I disclosed to her
All my heart's story, having none to share
And spy upon my joy, no lingering trace
Even of self-regard. So, while my state
- 25 Attested my torn passion, as between
Annihilation in discovery
Of her my love, and re-establishment

Shocked by the loss of her, I pleaded thus:
 'Give me, ere love annul in me a last
 30 Poor relic of myself, wherewith to look
 Upon thee—give me but one fleeting glance
 As turning casually upon thy way!
 Or if thou wilt not that I should gaze
 At thee, grant to mine ear the blessed grace
 35 Of that *Thou shalt not* wherein ere my time
 Another once rejoiced; for I have need
 Imperious, in my spirit's drunkenness,
 Of that twice sobering, by which my heart
 Except for passion were not fragmented—
 40 And if the mountains, and great Sinai
 Itself among them, had been made to bear
 The burden of my anguish, even ere
 The revelation of God's splendour flashed
 They had been shattered—passion tear-betrayed,
 45 Ardour augmenting those the inward flames
 Whose sick-bed fevers made an end of me.
 So was the Flood of Noah as my tears
 When I make moan, the blaze of Abram's fire
 My passion's scorch. (Only my sighs prevent
 50 My overwhelming in that surge of tears,
 Only my tears deliver me alive
 From my sighs' holocaust.) And for my grief,
 Jacob expressed but the least part of it,
 And all Job's sufferings a fraction were
 55 Of my dire torment; as for those who loved
 Constantly unto death (in legend famed),
 Their final agony might scarce have served
 To be the prelude of my tragedy.
 Or had the guide heard in his ear my sigh
 60 When in the throes of throbbing sicknesses
 That tortured this my passion-wasted flesh,
 Haply my grief might have recalled to mind
 The critical distress of travellers

Stranded untimely, when the caravan
 65 Is reined, the racing dromedaries strain
 Unto the track. Affliction unrelieved
 Hath harassed and destroyed me utterly;
 Emaciation hath revealed the last
 Deep-hidden mystery of my truest self.
 70 For, drunken of my wasting, I regaled
 My new-found intimate, the attentive spy,
 With all my secrets, and the detailed score
 Of my most private life. An abstract thought,
 No more, was all that I appeared to him,
 75 My essence being brought to such a pass
 As he might not descry it, so the woes
 Of burning love obliterated it;
 And though my tongue spake not, the fluttering thoughts
 Within my soul whispered into his ear
 80 The secret of those things my soul had sought
 The most especially to hide from him.
 Thus to my thought his ear became a mind
 Wherein my thought revolved, and thus his ear
 Sufficed him for the lack of visual sight;
 85 Thus he bore news to all within the tribe
 Openly of my innermost affairs,
 Being right intimate with my estate,
 As if the angels who record all deeds
 Had come down out of heaven to inspire
 90 His heart with knowledge of whatever tale
 Is written on my scroll. Nor had he known
 What I was veiling, what dark mystery
 Well-guarded in my bosom lay concealed,
 Save that my body's curtain being drawn
 95 Disclosed that secret of my inmost soul
 It had till then most strictly screened from him.
 And in my secret too I had remained
 Invisible to him, but that the sigh
 Gaped by emaciation's feeble lips

100 Divulged it: so it was the malady
 Whereby I had been hidden from his eyes
 Itself displayed me—truly passion brings
 All things most paradoxical to pass.
 But then my agony surpassed all bounds:
 105 The whispered thoughts within my soul, like tears
 That had betrayed me, smitten by that pain
 Dissolved to nothingness. Had loathsome death
 Purposed to seize me, it would not have known
 To find me, being made invisible
 110 By my resolve to hide my love for thee.
 Torn between longing and intense desire
 As now thou turnedst thy back repelling me
 And now revealedst thyself before my gaze,
 I wholly passed away; and were my heart
 115 Restored me from thy court, as being now
 Annihilated, never had it yearned
 For such a lodge of exile. This I tell
 To thee in part is but the frontispiece
 Of my long story, and below it lies
 120 A sequel far beyond me to declare.
 So in my impotence I hold my tongue
 On many things, that never by my speech
 Shall be enumerated; and did I
 Open my lips, I could but tell of few.
 125 My cure itself was nigh to perishing,
 Nay, passion doomed its death: the cooling draught
 That would assuage my thirst found raging yet
 The fever of my drought unquenchable.
 My heart was grown more ragged than the robes
 130 Of my long-suffering, nay more, my self
 Itself was linked in naughting with my joy;
 So, had I been revealed in verity
 Unto my visitors, and had they learned
 Scanning the Tablet what was left of me
 135 By ardent passion, nothing more their eyes

Would have beheld of me except a ghost
 Pervading yet a dead man's cerements.
 And since the hour my tracks were blotted out
 And I became a wanderer distraught,
 140 My mind was filled with vain imaginings
 About my being, and my thought yet failed
 To light on my existence. Afterwards
 My spirit's state, as loving only thee,
 Subsisted of itself, my proof whereof
 145 Is that my vital spirit did exist
 Long ere my frame corporeal was knit.
 And so I told the story of my love
 For thee, not grown impatient of my woes
 Or restless in the turmoil of my mood,
 150 But to dispel my spirit's agony:
 For comely is it to show fortitude
 Before one's foes, unseemly to display
 Aught but incompetence to the beloved.
 (And yet the excellence of my fortitude
 155 Prevents me from complaining, though indeed
 Had I protested to mine enemies
 They would have satisfied my deep complaint.)
 That I endure with patience, loving thee,
 The burden of that love, shall issue fair
 160 Hereafter win; but that I should endure
 To lose thee, that were little praiseworthy.
 Now every pain in love, if it appear
 From thee, to it I offer all my thanks
 And no complaining; whatsoever woe
 165 Befalls me is a grace, let my resolve
 Be but secure, my knotted vows yet tied;
 Yea, though the torments of too ardent love
 Assail me, they shall be for dear love's sake
 Reckoned as blessings. All my misery
 170 And tribulation, being wrought by thee,
 I count a benefaction, and to wear

The garment of affliction for thy sake
 Is grace abounding. That eternal bond
 Of loyalty to thee hath made me view
 175 As best of treasures what is given me
 As from the worst of fellows: railing one,
 The other slandering—the former seeks
 To guide me into negligence astray,
 The latter babbles still his jealous lies
 180 About me and about. I stand opposed
 Against the first's reproach for awe of God,
 As equally by caution moved I stand
 Beside the second's pettiness and spite.
 And never terror of encountered woe
 185 Deflected me from following thy path,
 Nor all the malice there afflicting me.
 Nor was it self-restraint that made me bear
 All that beset me on thy dear behalf
 To qualify me for applause, or prove
 190 My love deserving praise: thy loveliness,
 That summoneth all hearts to worship thee,
 Decreed that I should suffer and with joy
 What I have told, and all the furthest reach
 That stretches sequel to my history.
 195 And this was all: that thou didst show thyself
 To me in thy most perfect attributes
 Exceeding mortal beauty, and didst make
 Affliction my adornment, free entire
 For me to wear, the which, as come from thee,
 200 Proved my most fair and glorious ornament.
 He who is lured by loveliness, behold
 How from the most delightful life his soul
 Is yielded up to death most willingly:
 But any soul that thinketh not to meet
 205 Suffering in love, and offereth itself
 To passion thus, findeth itself rebuffed.
 No spirit given over to repose

Ever won true affection; loyalty
 Escapes the spirit loving ease of days.
 210 Ease—how remote it lieth from the life
 Of constant lover! Eden's heavenly bowers
 Are set about with dreads most horrible.
 Mine is a noble spirit—offer it
 Rewards beyond the boundaries of desire
 215 But to forget thee, yet it could not dare
 To let thy memory go; be it removed
 Far from thy side, by exile, hatred, scorn,
 Abscission of all hope, it would not yield
 The precious prize of love I call my own.
 220 I have no other way that I may go
 Going from love away, and if I swerve
 One day therefrom, I shall forswear my faith;
 Or had a stray desire for other love
 Than thine chanced in my mind though unawares
 225 Then were I proved apostate, self-condemned.
 Thine be the arbitration in my case:
 Do what thou wilt, for never have I yearned
 To turn away, but only unto thee.
 Now by that firm-knit love between us twain
 230 Wherein no fancy ever intervened
 Of abrogation (O most solemn oath);
 And by the covenant of holy troth
 Which thou didst take, what time I had not yet
 Appeared in manifest and outward guise
 235 As of a spirit clad in my clay's shade;
 By that primeval pledge, unaltering
 Since first I took it, and the latter bond
 Too sacred to be loosed by ardour dimmed;
 By the uprising of those lights that shine
 240 Upon thy countenance, before whose gleam
 Resplendent every moon is lost to sight;
 By that thine attribute of absolute
 Perfection, whence the loveliest, shapeliest form

In all creation manifest derives;
 245 As by thy quality of majesty
 That doth my torment unto pleasure turn
 And make my very slaying seem most sweet;
 As by the secret of a loveliness
 Thy emanation, the sole origin
 250 And perfecting of every elegance
 In all the world for ever visible;
 As by a beauty every intellect
 Leadeth into captivity, my guide
 Unto a passion wherein grace most fair
 255 My humbling was, for thy exalting's sake:
 As last by an idea in thee (the which
 Transcendeth beauty) through itself I viewed,
 Too subtle to be seen by vision's eye—
 Thou truly art my heart's desire, the goal
 260 Of my long quest, the far and final end
 Of my soul's search, my choice and chosen one.
 It is my bounden duty to cast off
 All modesty, for thy sake (though my kin
 Scorn to draw nigh me), yea, immodesty
 265 Is now my sacred law; and no true folk
 Of mine they are, while they will disapprove
 My recklessness, and manifest their hate,
 And see fit to abuse me, for thy sake.
 Nay, those my kindred are (within the fold
 270 Of love's religion) who do truly love
 And, loving, are content with my disgrace
 And my dishonour deem most excellent.
 Then let who will be wroth, save only thee:
 It cannot hurt, so be it they approve
 275 Of me who are the nobles of my tribe.
 If but some part of thy fair attributes
 Be thought as apt ascetics to enchant,
 The whole of thee my fascination is.
 I never was bewildered, till I chose

280 Thy love to be my faith; and ah, if thou
 Wert not the cause of my bewilderment,
 How great would my bewilderment have been!
 'Nay, thou hast sought another's love, not mine',
 She answered. 'Thither blindly purposing
 285 Thou didst forsake my straight and narrow way:
 Dupe of a soul puffed up with vain desires,
 Prey to imposture, in whate'er thou saidst
 Thou puttest on the infamy of a lie,
 Daring to covet the most precious boon
 290 And thine a wayward soul that passed its bounds
 In arrogant aggression. How indeed
 Shouldst thou attain affection's best, my love,
 By mean pretence, the worst of qualities?
 Shall dim Suhá be seen of eyes born blind,
 295 Confused into oblivion of their goal?
 'Twas thy vain hopes deceived thee, until thou
 Hast taken up thy stand upon a point
 Transcending thy true rank, what time thy foot
 Exceeded not its small environment;
 300 Thou wast ambitious to attain a height
 How many folk have stretched their necks towards
 And been struck off! Thou camest unto tents
 Not to be *entered upon netherwards*
 Whose doors are barred against the like of thee
 305 Come knocking. Thou wouldst whisper privily
 Into mine ear, for which high privilege
 (A glory scant indeed to realize)
 Thou broughtest for thine offering empty gauds,
 Aye, and with shining face, not letting slip
 310 The least part of the honour thou wouldst hug
 In earth and heaven, seeking my pure love
 Thou camest to me thus. If thou hadst been
 A thin-drawn line marking the vowel i
 Beneath the dot of b, be it through me,
 315 Thou shouldst have been exalted higher far

Than thy unaided strength might struggle to,
 There to perceive not worth a single thought
 What formerly thou thoughtest of account,
 And all thy preparation scarce enough
 320 To count provision. Clear the roadway runs,
 For all who are right-guided, unto me:
 'Tis men's desires for ever blind men's eyes.
 Now it is time that I disclose to thee
 The nature of thy passion, and for whom
 325 Thou languishest, as so thy false pretence
 To love me is disproved. True, thou art sworn
 To ardour; but thy ardour is thyself,
 Whereof in demonstration I would cite
 Thy sparing of thyself an attribute
 330 Yet to survive. Till thou hast passed away
 Wholly in me, thou hast not loved me true,
 And till my form is manifest in thee
 Thou hast not passed away. Then have thou done
 With false pretending love; summon thy heart
 335 To other occupation; drive away
 Thy error with *that state more excellent*.
 Avoid the courts of union: far indeed
 True union is, and never was as yet
 Thou livest: if thou art sincere, then die!
 340 For such is love: thou gainest never goal
 In love, except thou die. So choose thou that:
 Die, or let go my love, and leave me be.'
 Whereat I said to her: 'Behold, my soul
 Waiteth upon thee; it is thine to take;
 345 What matters it to me, that it should hap
 Within my hands? I am not one to hate
 Death for dear love; faithful unto the end
 Is still my wont; all else my nature scorns.
 And what might now be said of me, except
 350 "Such a one died of love"? Or who is there
 Can guarantee me this, my soul's desire?

Yes, it would please me well to have my term
 Determined, yearning yet and union yet
 Not mine, if so my lien on thy love
 355 Be shown well-founded; or if I should fail
 In fact to prove some claim on thee (too high
 Such honour being), it sufficeth me
 For boast to be suspected of thy love.
 And if I die, unsuspect, of my grief
 360 Yet shalt thou not have wronged me, since my soul
 Delights in martyrdom; enough for me,
 If thou shalt shed my blood and I not count
 As martyr, that the motive of my doom
 Be known to thee. My spirit, as I think,
 365 Scarce merits to be spent as price to win
 Union with thee, for any difference
 Betwixt reserve and prodigality
 With so slight asset. I am well at ease
 Before the threats of death, whose terrors else
 370 Shake down the fragile pillars of man's joy.
 Thou didst not wrong my soul in slaying it;
 Rather thou gav'st it succour, if thereby
 Thou didst destroy my life-blood, and if true
 This omen is, thou hast exalted me,
 375 Enhanced my worth, marked up my market-price.
 Lo, I invite thy doom, and bid thee work
 Thy pleasure: I seek not my span of days
 To be prorogued. Whate'er thou threatenest
 I take as fairest promise, which fulfilled
 380 Fulfils the aspirations of a friend
 Who standeth firm before whatever blow
 Save to be sundered far from his beloved.
 So I have come to hope what other men
 Shrink from in fear: succour therewith the soul
 385 Of a dead man prepared for endless life!
 Now let me be her ransom, by whose grace
 I did aspire to love, treading the path

Of them who went before me, and refused
 All laws of life but mine. In every tribe
 390 How many fell her victims, slain by grief,
 Who never won upon a single day
 Even one glance at her! How many men
 Like me she slew of passion, and had she
 Gazed in compassion on them, every one
 395 Had stood revived! Now if she make my blood
 Lawful to shed, and that I loved her well,
 Upon the heights of exaltation, yea
 The pinnacles of honour she hath set
 My rank secure for ever. By my life,
 400 If I do lose my life in loving her
 I win the bargain; if she waste my heart
 Yet shall she after heal it whole again.
 I was humiliated in the tribe
 Through her, until I found myself, in their
 405 Esteem, too mean-aspiring to attain
 The least worth striving; my subservience
 To them debased me to obscurity
 Matching my feebleness, so that they deemed
 Me too contemptible to serve their will.
 410 So I have fallen, after all my pride,
 Down from the heights of glory to the deeps
 Of degradation; lost my self-respect,
 Men no more press my gate, nor put their hopes
 In my authority; no neighbour comes
 415 To me for shelter from the world's despite.
 It is as if I had been never held
 In honour by my fellows, but was still
 Despised, alike in hardship and in ease.
 Had any asked, 'Whom lovest thou?' and I
 420 Boldly declared her name, they would have said,
 'He means another, surely', or 'Poor man,
 A demon madness hath assailed his brain!'
 But had it not been possible to be

For her abased, passion would not have been
 425 So sweet to me, and had I never loved,
 Abasement would have never been my joy
 And glory. Now my state, because of her,
 Is thus adorned: the reason of one crazed,
 The health of one oppressed by malady,
 430 Humiliation's pride. In secrecy
 My spirit whispered to my secret heart
 How it desired to love her, where my mind
 Could not be spy; for I did fear the tale
 Might so transport my rest, that my shed tears
 435 Would babble in their fashion and declare
 My precious secret. Thus one part of me
 Sought to deceive another, guarding close
 This thing within me, though in truth my lie
 In hiding it proved my veracity.
 440 And then, as my first thought refused to show
 This secret to the ribs within my breast,
 I kept it from my meditating heart;
 I strove my all for its concealment, and
 So well that I forgot it, and was moved
 445 Quite to forget concealing this same thing
 My spirit whispered to me. Now if I
 In planting these desires shall pluck the fruit
 Of suffering, O wonderful the soul
 That in desiring suffers! Of all hopes
 450 Moving the loving soul, that is most sweet
 Whereby the one who caused it to recall
 And to forget doometh its suffering.
 She took a part of me and set it guard
 For her against me, watching my heart's thoughts
 455 If they drew near with love; and if they steal
 From my imagination secretly
 Into my mind, naught hindering, in awe
 And reverently I cast down my head.
 Mine eye is closed, if I essay one glance,

460 And be my hand stretched out familiarly
 To touch her, 'tis restrained; in every limb
 Of me is a like eager reaching out,
 And a like fearful drawing back by force
 Of veneration. So my mouth and ear
 465 Exhibit in me all the jostling signs
 Of rivalry, that manifest as in
 Self-sacrificing mercy on my soul:
 As when my tongue recites her name, if then
 Mine ear displays its quality thereto
 470 And is not deaf, my tongue straightway is stilled,
 Or if my tongue bestows upon my heart
 The mention of her, being not the slave
 Of silence, then mine ear becometh stopped.
 Jealous am I for her, being distraught
 475 With love of her, yet knowing my poor worth
 I do disown my jealousy. My soul
 Is rapt thereafter in an ecstasy
 Of perfect joy in her, though even yet
 I cannot hold my spirit innocent
 480 Of inwardly conceiving a desire.
 Mine ear beholds her, far indeed though she
 Be from mine eye, in the pale visitant
 Of phantom blame, the while I lie awake;
 Or let her name be mentioned, then mine eye
 485 Deemeth mine ear too lucky, and my rest
 Envieth that she did efface in me.
 I led my leader, in reality,
 And all mankind behind me stood arrayed:
 Whither I faced, there my true facing was.
 490 My sight saw her before me as I prayed,
 My heart meanwhile beholding me *imam*
 Of my *imams*; and this scarce wonder was
 That he who led the prayer led towards me,
 Since she, the *qibla* of my *qibla*, lodged
 495 Within my heart; and all directions six

To me had been directed, and therewith
 All acts of piety and pilgrimage
 Greater alike and lesser. (Unto her
 At Abram's station I perform my prayers
 500 And therein witness that to me she prayed:
 We twain are one at prayer, prostrating one,
 United, to his own reality
 In each prostration.) None had prayed to me
 Except myself, neither were my prayers said
 505 In every genuflexion save to me.
 Then how long shall I hug to me my veil?
 Lo, I have rent it, as 'twas in the bond
 Of my primeval compact I should loose
 The curtain's locks. This gift of loyalty
 510 To her was given me upon that day
 When no day was, ere she appeared to me
 At the high covenant, in my primalcy:
 This loyalty I gained neither by sight,
 Nor hearing, nor acquiring, nor the pull
 515 Of nature, but I was distraught with her
 In the supernal world of the Command
 Where naught is manifest: I drained the cup
 Of high intoxication, ere by birth
 In this created world. The attributes
 520 Dividing us, whereof none there survived,
 Love here annulled and naughted utterly.
 And I discovered with my inward eye
 That which I had rejected from myself
 Issuing unto me, and out of me
 525 Proceeding forth; and I did contemplate
 Myself by those same attributes whereby
 I from myself was veiled, alike when I
 Was present, and in occultation too;
 And I was whom I loved without a doubt,
 530 That same for whom my soul had to myself
 Referred me; while my self myself had loved

Distractedly and unawares, although
 In contemplation not in ignorance
 Of where the truth resides in this affair.
 535 And now the time is come that I should tell
 In more particular what I have said
 Succinctly, and more briefly summarize
 What I have detailed, that I may spread forth
 My wider scope. My taking her to love,
 540 Thanks to our unity, bestowed on me
 Rare subtleties and most exceptional
 To lovers' habitude. The slanderer
 Slanders me to her, but for my own sake,
 While he who blames me on account of her
 545 Manifests in her presence and through her
 The goodly counsel he intends for me.
 I give her thanks abounding (and before
 She never hated me), while she accords
 Me bounteous kindness because my love
 550 Was proved sincere. I offered up myself
 To win her favour, counting it for her
 Alone, and hoping for no recompense
 From her; but she did draw me nigh to her.
 Forthwith I proffered all that should be mine
 555 In my hereafter, with whatever she
 Might think to give me; in sincerity
 I left behind me all regard for that,
 Being unwilling my self-interest
 Should be the beast to bear me unto her.
 560 In poverty I sought her, yet was rich
 In having poverty my attribute,
 Wherefore I cast away impoverishment
 Alike and riches. When to jettison
 My poverty and wealth assured to me
 565 The merit of my quest, I thrust aside
 My merit also, and therein appeared
 Evident my good fortune: she who would

Reward me (and naught else) became my prize.
 And now through her, but never through myself,
 570 Continued I to guide to her all those
 Who of their own sweet will had gone astray
 From passion's path; and she the true guide was.
 Leave then to her, my friend, thy heart's desire;
 Give her thy leading-rope, a soul at peace
 575 In her. Be empty of all selfish whims;
 Rise from thy slough; thereafter stablish thee
 Firm-fixed, and thou shalt flourish mightily.
 Keep on the way of righteousness; draw nigh,
 Hold firm to her; direct thee unto her
 580 Obedient, with the goodly penitence
 Of a true, contrite heart. Return right soon;
 Answer her (for she calleth), and refrain
 To say, 'Tomorrow I will gird my loins
 In earnest resolution to arise'.
 585 Be sharp of edge as trenchant Time itself,
 For hatred lies in 'haply'; and beware,
 Say not 'Perchance', that is a malady
 Most perilous. Rise up to please her well;
 Labour, nor seek for respite or relief;
 590 Yield not to weaknesses that let the hour
 Of duty pass. Though thou art palsied, walk,
 And rise, though thou be broken; for thy lot
 Is worthlessness, if thou defer resolve
 Unto the day of health. Go boldly forth;
 595 Put forward all for sake of which thou sat'st
 Among the laggards; issue from the chains
 Of idle heeding of the idle show.
 Cut with the sword of resolution strong
 'I shall'; if thou run swiftly in the race
 600 Thou shalt win respite; giving of thy all
 Thy soul shall win to fortune infinite.
 Turn thyself unto her: to her direct
 Thy steps, in utter bankruptcy: herein

I have comprised (if thou wilt but accept
 605 My testament) all counsel that I know.
 No rich man ere drew nigh to her, for all
 His striving, nor remote from her thereby
 Any remained who poverty preferred:
 Such is the law of love, which all obey
 610 Who have to do with love—a band of men
 Fulfilled their compact, and were paid in full.
 When blows the gale of self-sufficiency
 It strips the man of substance; had it fanned
 His poverty, the tender plant would thrive.
 615 The right hand richest in prosperity
 Reaps the reward of cutting knives, if it
 Be outstretched eagerly in love, to clutch
 At union. Whatsoever works are pure
 And pious, let them all be unto her
 620 Wrought, and escape thereby from self-regard
 In that thy poverty. Do thou oppose
 The promptings of vain talk, and free thyself
 From the impediments of empty claims
 Whose purpose is in truth the quest of fame:
 625 The tongues of those men call most eloquent
 Of gnostics, having given voice to all
 Expressible in words, are fallen dumb.
 What things thou hast not uttered, thou thereof
 Art apt possessor, but so long as thou
 630 Speakest, a stranger: wherefore hold thy peace!
 In silence lies a way wherein resides
 The dignity of a remainder; yet
 Whoever deems that dignity the best
 Object of silence, doth become its slave.
 635 Then be thou sight, and see; ear, and retain;
 Be thou a tongue, and speak; since union is
 The most direct of paths. Follow thou not
 Him who is led into a vain conceit
 By his base soul, that thereby takes control

640 Of all his actions, waxing powerful.
 Leave all but her, and set aside thy soul
 Which is among her foemen; refuge take
 Against it with the doughtiest of shields.
 My soul ere now reproachful was; when I
 645 Obeyed it it rebelled, let me rebel
 And it obeyed me. So I brought it down
 To drink of what the easier draught were death,
 And wearied it, till it might give me ease.
 And it became disposed to bear what loads
 650 Soe'er I charged it with, and was sore grieved
 If I should lighten them; I tasked it well,
 Nay, I took care my soul should task itself
 And found strange fondness for my suffering,
 Forsook all pleasures in amending it
 655 And strove to set it far from its old wonts,
 Until it was at rest. No more remained
 Of terror yet before it, but I rode
 Boldly upon it, for so long as I
 Witnessed my soul was still unpurified.
 660 Each station I traversed upon that way
 Was an ascetic exercise, the which
 I fully realized in servanthood.
 Till now I had been passionate for her;
 But when I yielded up what I desired
 665 She did desire, and love me, for herself.
 So I became a loved one, nay, in love
 With my own self, yet not upon the mode
 I said before my soul is my beloved;
 Through her I issued from myself to her
 670 Nor to myself came back; and one like me
 Holds not to any doctrine of return.
 Generously I set my soul apart
 From my forthgoing, and consented not
 That it should ever more consort with me;
 675 For all, while I was made unconscious of

My soul's detachment, in such fashion that
 No manifesting of an attribute
 Jostled me in my presence; and when she
 Appeared, 'twas given me to contemplate
 680 My occultation, and I found myself
 There to be she in the unveiling of
 My privacy; my being was effaced
 In my beholding, and I was detached
 From my beholding's being, blotting out
 685 And not establishing. And I embraced
 (In the sobriety that subsequent
 To my intoxication came on me)
 That I had contemplated, even in
 The blotting-out of what was to behold,
 690 What time it was to be beheld anew.
 In the sobriety that followed on
 The blotting-out, I was not else but she;
 When she unveiled herself, my essence took
 My very essence for investiture.
 695 And now I will display my origin
 In that my unity, and bring to end
 My final ending in the bending low
 Of my high exaltation. In the time
 When she unveiled herself, she did unveil
 700 All being to my gaze, and I did see,
 Self-seeing, her in all things visible.
 My attribute, since we are not called two,
 Is likewise hers, my aspect, seeing we
 Are one, her aspect. When her name is called
 705 I answer, and if I am summoned she
 Replies to him who calls me, crying *Lo*
Labbaika! If she speaketh, it is I
 Who do converse, as likewise when I tell
 A history 'tis she that doth narrate.
 710 Removed between us twain has been the *ta*
 That marks the second person, and in its

Removal stands my raising up above
 The sect who separate the one from one.
 But if (it being to deliberate
 715 A matter so remote) thy mind refuse
 To take as feasible and to affirm
 The possibility to see two one,
 I will unveil and demonstrate to thee
 Hints to this view erst hidden, that shall prove
 720 Plain as expressions unequivocal.
 Now to this matter. Since it is no time
 For ambiguity, I will expound
 In words sufficient strange the truth thereof
 With twofold explanations, drawn the one
 725 From hearing, and the other one from sight.
 I will confirm my speech with evidence
 Citing the parable of one who speaks
 The truth (and my sole stay is verity)—
 A cataleptic woman, by whose mouth
 730 Another (she by madness being touched
 And of a devil seized) informeth thee:
 In language that upon another's tongue
 Proceedeth, evidences of the proofs
 Of what we say stand proven clear and true,
 735 Since it is known for certain that the one
 Who uttereth the strange things thou dost hear
 Is other than herself, though in the sense
 Of sense, true, she herself did utter them.
 Hadst thou been one, thou wouldst have come to feel
 740 By mystic intuition this I said
 As true; but (didst thou know it) thou art prone
 On secret polytheism, with a soul
 Far-strayed from truth's right-guidance, and in love
 Whoso to union with the one he loves
 745 Impediment discovers, falls to burn
 A polytheist in the consuming flames
 Of separation from his heart's beloved.

'Twas only otherness did mar in thee
 This high estate; if its pretension were
 750 Truly effaced from thee, thou shalt stand firm.
 So was I for a while, before the veil
 Of that confusion was removed, not yet
 Released from dualism: now by loss
 In contemplation reuniting me,
 755 Now scattering me in discovery
 Of being. Whilst my intellect, attached
 To my self-presence, separated me,
 My deprivation (being rooted out
 In my self-absence) joined me up anew.
 760 I thought sobriety my lowest point,
 And drunkenness my ladder up to her,
 And my annulment the remotest reach
 Of my approach to the lote-boundary;
 But when I cleared the cloud from me, I saw
 765 Myself recovered, and the eye in me
 Refreshed by the essence; and no more
 Stood I in need of drunkenness, since I
 Was now recovered (being separate
 A second time); henceforth my union is
 770 One with my unity. (Then labour thou
 Within thee, and thou shalt behold of thee
 Beyond what I have pictured a great peace
 Born of a calm secure.) So, after I
 Had laboured, I beheld that I beheld
 775 Contemplatively, and that guided me
 To me, was I, nay, I myself was proved
 Mine own ensample: when I stood, I stood
 Before myself, nay, when I turned I turned
 To me, as likewise to myself I prayed
 780 And I was my own Kaaba. Be thou not
 Entranced by thy sensation or beguiled
 By thy self-admiration, dedicate
 To the confusion sprung of heedlessness.

Forsake thou separation's error, since
 785 Union produceth guidance, as that sect's
 Who after oneness strained in rivalry.
 Boldly proclaim, Beauty is absolute,
 Nor deem it finite as awhile bemused
 By tinsel ornament. Whatever youth
 790 Is comely, or whatever maid is fair,
 Their beauty of her loveliness is lent
 For them to wear; of her was Lubna's Qais
 Distraught, nay, every lover—as Majnún
 Laila's poor madman, or as Azza's fond
 795 Kuthaiyir—each and every one of them
 Yearned after her ambiguous quality
 Clothed in a form of beauty, radiant
 In beauteous form. Nor was there other cause
 Save that she showed her in phenomena
 800 They thought were other, yet she did reveal
 Herself herself in them. She showed herself
 By veiling, and herself concealed from view
 Through manifest phenomena, by way
 Of variable tints in every time
 805 Of issuing upon the stage of life.
 Thus at the first creation she appeared
 To Adam in the outward guise of Eve
 Before the rule of motherhood began,
 And he desired her ardently, that he
 810 Through her might be a father, and the rule
 Of sonship (through the husband and the spouse)
 Might be established: thus the origin
 Of mutual love between the outward forms
 While yet was there no opposite, with hate
 815 To stand between them. Ceased she never since
 To manifest (and hide) for various cause
 According to the times, in every age:
 In every form of ambiguity
 She showed herself to lovers, wondrous fair

820 Her shapes of beauty. Now as Lubna she
 Appeared, now as Buthaina, and again
 She was called Azza, Azza well-beloved.
 Other than she these were not, nor became
 Other: in her transcendent loveliness
 825 She hath no partner. So by virtue of
 Oneness (as she displayed herself to me
 In all her beauty, clad in others' forms)
 I too appeared to her in every swain
 Swayed by sweet love for beauty of a youth
 830 Or maiden fair, bewitching; nor were they
 Else than myself (though they preceded me
 In passion), since through all the ancient nights
 I went before them. In my love of her
 The folk are no way other than myself;
 835 But I appeared through them in every shape
 Ambiguously—this time I was Qais,
 Anon Kuthaiyir, and again Jamil
 Buthaina's lover; I to outward eye
 Revealed myself in them, yet inwardly
 840 I veiled myself in them. Then if thou wilt
 Marvel at this unveiling by a mask!
 No idle fancy this: those the beloved
 And these the lovers—men and maidens all
 Were our appearances, wherein we showed
 845 Ourselves in all our love and beauty bright.
 Each youth who ever loved, that youth was I,
 And she was his beloved, whoe'er he be,
 All being names of vestures, nothing more—
 All names, whereby myself in truth was named,
 850 And I myself unto myself appeared
 Through a self-hidden spirit. Evermore
 I ceased not to be she, and she was I
 Without distinction; nay, my essence loved
 My essence. There was naught in all the world
 855 Beside me, save myself; besidedness

Never occurred to my sagacious mind.
 Now by this hand I swear: it was not that
 My soul had fear of other than myself
 Or hoped for any other's charity,
 860 Nor that it did anticipate the shame
 Of some obscuring of my high renown
 Or sought the glory of men's faces turned
 In gratitude to me, but solely this
 I purposed—by my valour to repel
 865 The adversary come to make assault
 On the high stations of my succouring friends;
 And for this cause alone I turned again
 To the accustomed acts of piety
 And took for my accoutrement the states
 870 Meet for discipleship. I had recourse
 To my old godliness again (and I
 Had flung aside all modesty long since);
 Abandoning the gay abandon of
 My wild dilation, I betook myself
 875 To the contraction of a chaste reserve.
 I fasted all my day as one who hopes
 For a reward in heaven; all my night
 I watched in prayer, as fearing chastisement;
 I occupied my hours with litanies
 880 (Waiting on inspiration), silently
 (As meet and proper), in devout retreat
 (So reverence required). I went apart
 From my familiar haunts, as one who breaks
 Migrating links of old companionship,
 885 And chose my own society, alone.
 I meditated scrupulously on
 What lawful was to strictest abstinence,
 Guarding my strength, no more, in setting right
 My provender; I spent abundantly
 890 The riches of contentment, satisfied
 With a mere minimal sufficiency

Of worldly pleasure. Thus I trained my soul
 With discipline, proceeding to unveil
 What sensual habitudes had overlaid:
 895 Thus I fulfilled my high resolve, to live
 Detached in utter abstinence, preferred
 In my devotion to attain the rank
 Of answered prayer. Yet when did I recant
 My statement 'I am she'? Or when should I
 900 Profess—far be it from the like of me!—
 She came to dwell in me? I do not seek
 To pass thee over to some occult thing,
 To some absurdity that would imply
 Negation of all perspicacity:
 905 How should such tales of error me affright,
 Seeing my certitude remaineth based
 Squarely upon the Holy Name of Truth?
 Behold, the faithful archangel, when first
 Our Prophet's inspiration came on him,
 910 Came to our Prophet in the fleshly form
 Of Dihya: tell me then, was Gabriel
 This Dihya, when he manifested thus
 To our true Guide to guidance? That he knew
 Beyond contention the identity
 915 Of him he saw, proveth superior
 His consciousness to theirs who stood him by.
 He saw an angel that revealed to him;
 The others saw a man, full reverend
 As one who kept the Prophet's company.
 920 In the more perfect of these visions twain
 I have an indication, which acquits
 Of all pretences incarnationist
 My simple creed. 'Tis not to be denied
 The Scripture speaks of *covering*, and I
 925 Go not beyond the twain authority
 Of Holy Book and Apostolic Word.
 This much of knowledge I have given thee:

If thou desirest its unveiling, come
 Seek thou my path, and make beginning now
 930 Of following my Law; for Sadda's fount
 Springs from a water whose abounding well
 Is found in me; tell not to me the tale
 Of some mirage a-shimmer in some waste!
 Behold the ocean, wherein I have plunged
 935 While those aforetime halted on its shore
 Guarding the locus of my sanctity:
Draw ye not nigh the orphan's property—
 That is a reference to a hand held back
 When it was stretched to take it; and none else
 940 Beside me ere attained to aught of it
 Except a youth, who never ceased to tread
 Upon my steps in hardship or in ease.
 Then stray not from the traces of my path,
 And fear the cloud that shadows o'er the heart
 945 Who chooses other than myself; strive on
 Upon my very road; her friendship's vale,
 O friend of heart serene, runs in the march
 Of my command, and enters 'neath my sway.
 For lo, the kingdom of love's high degrees
 950 Is my possession; the realities
 My army are, and lovers every one
 My subjects. Youth impassioned! I have gone
 Apart from love, as one who deemeth love
 To be a veil (for passion is beneath
 955 My grade), and I have overpassed the bounds
 Of amorousness; love is now become
 Even as hate; henceforth my journey takes
 For starting-point the terminus of my
 Ascension unto oneness. Then be glad
 960 In passion: thou hast seized supremacy
 Over the best of creatures, who serve God
 In every nation. Gain these heights; be proud
 Surpassing the ascetic, whose ascent

Was won by outward works, and by a soul
 965 Self-purified. O'ertake the heart oppressed
 By its great load of ancient precedents
 And intellectual wisdom, which cast off
 'Twould make but little weight. Take unto thee
 The heritage love's kinship hath secured
 970 Of the sublimest gnostic, whose chief care
 Was to prefer his aspiration leave
 Its mark upon mankind. Be haughty; sweep
 The clouds beneath thee with thy lover's skirts
 Trailed o'er the topmost of heaven's Milky Way
 975 In pride of union; wheel thou round about
 The grades of oneness, neither turn aside
 Unto a squadron that have spent their lives
 To other end. The solitary sword
 Of oneness is himself a mighty host,
 980 The rest a rabble vanquished by a proof
 Most eloquent; seek its significance
 To win thee nigh, then live therein, or die
 Worn out upon the quest, still following
 A folk who strove before thee to that goal.
 985 For thou art worthier of this glory high
 Than he who labours zealously in hope
 And fear; no wonder, if thou shake thy sides
 Swaggering past him in supreme delight
 And sweetest joy, seeing the qualities
 990 Thereto attributed, and the names thereof—
 How many men that were obscure before
 Those have elected, and these lifted up!
 Yet thou, there where thou art, art still afar
 From me: the Pleiades do scarce consort
 995 With lowly Earth. Thou hast been step by step
 Led to thy Sinai, and hast attained
 Beyond thy sphere, whither thy soul ne'er dreamed
 To adventure: here thy limit is: here stay,
 Or if thou do advance beyond this term

1000 Soever little, thou shalt be consumed
 With flaming brands. Exalted is my rank
 Beyond e'en envy's emulating grasp:
 High o'er thy range soars my beatitude.
 All men are Adam's sons, but I alone
 1005 Among my brethren have attained supreme
 Sobriety of union; for mine ear
 Is Moses' ear, my heart intelligenced
 By the most glorious vision of an eye
 Ahmadian. Of every spirit mine
 1010 The Spirit is; whate'er of beauty thou
 Beholdest in the universe doth flow
 Out of the bounty of my natural clay.
 Leave then to me the knowledge that was mine
 Especially ere I was manifest
 1015 (And my companion-prophets knew me not
 Yet in the seed); assign me not the name
 Desirer in that company, for he
 Yclept Desired-of-her (as being rapt)
 Hath need of my protection. Banish all
 1020 Such names of honour from me; mouth them not
 Babblingly; they are signs all fashioned forth
 By one I formed. Withdraw my soubriquet
 Of Gnostic; for the Holy Book declares
 If thou approvest *bandying of names*
 1025 Thou shalt be hated. My least follower
 Received in his heart's eye in nuptial joy
 The virgin-brides of gnosis; he hath plucked
 The fruit of mystic knowledge from a branch
 Of understanding that by following me
 1030 Flourished (and springeth of my nature's root),
 So, being asked of any concept, he
 Answereth wondrous sayings which transcend
 All comprehension, yea, too subtle are
 To be imagined. Neither call thou me
 1035 The One Brought Nigh (out of that company),

Which epithet I hold (in virtue of
 Union achieved) most sinful severance:
 My joining is my separating, my
 Approximation is my distancing,
 1040 My love is my aversion, and my end
 Is my beginning. For her sake indeed
 (By whom I have equivocated on
 Myself, yet I intended none but me)
 I have stripped off my name, my epithet,
 1045 My style of honour, and advanced beyond
 Where those aforetime halted, and such minds
 As by material gains were led astray
 Perished. There is no attribute in me
 (For mere description is all attribute
 1050 As name is but a sign); if therefore thou
 Desirest to allude to me, make use
 Of styles of honour, or of epithets.
 And then I mounted up from 'I am she'
 To where is no unto: all being I
 1055 Perfumed with my returning. I came back
 From 'I am I' for inward wisdom's sake
 As for those outward ordinances I
 Established for my calling. The far goal
 Of those enraptured neophytes of her
 1060 Passion, and the extremest reach of these
 Passion desired, is where I stood before
 Before I turned: the apogee of them
 Who (as they thought) outstripped me is in truth
 The lowest depth of earth that bears the trace
 1065 Of my tread's fall: the topmost pinnacle
 Beyond allusion, whence in higher climb
 None may ascend, is where my foot first fell.
 None knoweth, save he knoweth of my grace,
 Nor any speaketh in existence all
 1070 Except upon my praise. No wonder then
 If I am master over all who went

Before me, having grasped the firmest stay
 To Taha. My saluting her is thus
 But metaphorical; my greeting is
 1075 From me unto me, in reality.
 Now the most excellent I found in all
 My loving her, when passion first began
 (And that my passion every marvel showed)
 Was my appearing (and I first concealed
 1080 My state) reciting in exultant joy
 For her, my state no longer being hid:
 'She stood revealed before me, and I saw
 True resolution in the breaking of
 My erstwhile penitence; the agonies
 1085 I suffered for her sake were fair excuse
 As judged my reason; my security
 Against my body's wasting of her love
 Was the desires of hope, the which at first
 She freely gave, but after miserly.
 1090 The body's restoration (sickness-won
 In loving her) is health indeed thereto:
 The soul's destruction is true chivalry.
 My death in passion's ecstasy for her
 Is sweetest life, and if I do not die
 1095 In love, I live for ever in death's throes.
 Then O my heart, in amorous transport melt,
 And O my ardent pains, dissolve me so;
 O fire within my vitals, straighten by
 Thy flames the curvatures of my bent ribs;
 1100 O my fair fortitude, unfaltering
 Accord thee with her pleasure whom I love,
 Nor succour Fate to triumph over me.
 O my long-suffering, as obedience
 Unto her love requireth, still endure
 1105 (May faintness overpass thee!) every woe;
 O wasted body, seek oblivion
 Of any cure; O liver, who will be

My warrant thou shalt not be wholly crushed?
 My sickness, let no single gasp survive
 1110 In me, for I have scorned the indignity
 Of living on, that so I may be spared
 To live with her in glory. O my health,
 Our old companionship hath come to end,
 And thy association with one dead
 1115 Among the living is as banishment.
 O all that languor yet hath spared of me,
 Depart: no refuge in my crumbling bones
 Remains for thee. O any part of me
 I haply might imagine to address
 1120 With O the vocative in my heart's heart,
 I am become familiar now to be
 Estranged from thee. Whate'er thy pleasure is
 (And death itself be lighter to endure)
 I am content therewith, since love aflame
 1125 Hath made me so contented. For my soul
 Was vexed not love destroyed it all in pain,
 Since such impatience had been following
 Ensample not mine own. In every tribe
 Whatever living man because of her
 1130 Is as one dead, believeth to be slain
 Of passion is most gloriously to die.
 In her are all desires united; none
 Thou seest but is ardent for her, naught
 But ardour knowing. If upon a day
 1135 Of festival she casteth off her veil,
 The eyes of every tribe crowd eagerly
 To view her beauty; for their spirits yearn
 To glimpse the meaning of her loveliness,
 What time their pupils in a garden dwell
 1140 Filled with her beauty. I count every day
 My festival, whereon I contemplate
 With jocund eye the loveliness of her
 Sweet countenance; and every night, if she

Draw nigh, is that miraculous Night of Power,
 1145 And holy Friday every day we meet.
 My running to her is a Pilgrimage,
 And every standing suppliant at her door
 Equals a standing on Mount Arafat.
 Whatever of God's lands is her abode
 1150 I count it not (so fair 'tis to mine eye)
 But Mecca. Whatso place embraceth her
 Is Sacred Precinct; every house she dwells
 Within I deem a House of Holy Flight,
 Where she inhabits a Jerusalem
 1155 Whose joyous vision cools the fever of
 My burning heart. Where'er she trails her robe
 There is my Furthest Mosque, my fragrant scent
 Whatever sod her feet have trodden on.
 Haunts of my joys, watch-tower of my desires,
 1160 Boundaries of my longings, safe retreat
 From all my fear—such are the loved abodes
 Where Fate came not between us, neither Time's
 Vicissitudes us parted treacherously,
 Nor did the days endeavour to disperse
 1165 Our union, nor the nights doom cruelly
 Our sundering. No sudden overthrow
 Calamitous assailed us at the dawns,
 No accidents of Fortune spake with us
 Upon disaster. Not with blasphemy
 1170 Discourged the slanderer anent repulse
 And banishment, nor the reviler spread
 His slimy whisperings of severance
 And consolation. Waked not watcher's eye,
 Nor ceased mine own to watch me for her sake
 1175 And love's account. No time was singled out
 For joy above another: all my times
 Were seasons of rejoicing and delight.
 My day was all a vesper, if its first
 Soft hours exhaled a sweet response from her

1180 Unto my greeting; and my night therein
 Was dawn entirely, when the redolence
 Of a sweet breeze was wafted unto me
 From her within those hours. If e'er at night
 She came to me, my month was all through her
 1185 Converted to a wondrous Night of Power
 Exultant in her visitation: if
 She ventured nigh my dwellings, all my year
 Was temperate Spring in meads luxuriant.
 If she be pleased with me, my life is all
 1190 A season of sweet fancy, and the age
 Of amorous youth. Truly, if she unites
 The sum of beauties in a single form
 All subtle meanings I behold therein:
 Truly, my heart has gathered all desire
 1195 For them, a passionate glow informing thee
 Of every youthful ardour. Why should I
 Not vaunt myself (on her account) above
 All who pretend to passion? Why should I
 Not overleap all limits in my boast
 1200 Of such high honour and felicity?
 For lo, I have obtained from her above
 What ever I expected, or could hope
 Such near propinquity, and sundering's self
 Humiliated by her grace o'erwhelming me
 1205 With benefits surpassing all desire.
 At morning as at evening I was seized
 With love for her, and in what beauty she
 Went forth at dawn, so came she back at night:
 Had she bestowed on all humanity
 1210 Save Joseph of her beauty but a part
 In no prerogative excelled he them.
 I brought and laid upon her beauty's hand
 The whole of me, and her benevolence
 Accepting the exchange doubled to me
 1215 My every union; every particle

Of me beheld her beauty, and therewith
 In every glance rotated every eye;
 My every subtlety applauded her
 On every tongue prolonged in every word;
 1220 I drew her perfume in with every nerve
 Comprising every nostril breathing in
 All wafts of air for ever; every part
 Of me (wherein was every ear contained
 Of every listener attentive) heard
 1225 Her words; my every portion kissed her veil
 With every mouth whose touch held every kiss.
 Had she dissolved my body, she would see
 In every separate atom every heart
 Inhabited by every human love.'
 1230 And now the thing most strangely excellent
 I found in her, and the munificence
 Of revelation lavished upon me
 (And that unveiling drove away all doubt)
 Is that with union's vision I behold
 1235 My every adversary is in truth
 My true confederate, and his repulse
 Even as affection: he that did revile
 Loved (and reproached) me (all of jealousy),
 And he who slandered was distraught for her
 1240 And therefore wronged me, spying upon me.
 'Tis seemly then I thank the slanderer,
 While the reproacher well her goodness knows,
 And all are marks of my beneficence.
 Others than I praise others; others turn
 1245 (Not I) from self to others gratefully;
 I thank myself; the goodness springs from me
 Unto myself; my self alone concerns
 Itself with this my being one with her.
 And there be matters veiled, the veil whereof
 1250 Through a recovering sobriety
 Was wholly raised for me, yet they remained

Concealed from all beside me: none may noise
 These things abroad save forfeiting his blood,
 What though allusion a significance
 1255 Possesses that expression ne'er defined.
 The mystic comprehends me when I speak
 Obliquely (not requiring what I say
 Should be explicit) lest one trip me up.
 Now the beginning of my exposé
 1260 Is those same twain who sought to be the means
 Of parting me (though union doth defy
 My separation): they are one with us
 In union's inner truth, albeit we
 In outward segregation count as four.
 1265 For truly she and I are essence one;
 The twain who slandered her, and turned away
 From her, are attributes self-manifest.
 The one the theatre of spirit is
 Guiding contemplatively to the rim
 1270 Of its uprising, manifest in mould
 Spiritual; the other succoureth
 The soul, the which he urgeth with a song
 To her companions existentially
 In form material; and he who knows
 1275 Like me the figures as they truly are,
 No infidelity confuses him
 Upon his guidance, when he would remove
 Doubt's grave perplexities. My essence then
 Embraces with delights particular
 1280 And general the sum of all my worlds
 In broad replenishment of unity.
 Bounteously it poured its overflow
 While yet was no capacity to gain,
 And ere the world was ready to receive
 1285 It was prepared to give. So in the Soul
 The forms of existentiality
 Rejoiced, while in the Spirit were refreshed

The spirits of the world contemplative.
 My state of contemplation (as between
 1290 The slanderer who to his rising runs
 And the reproacher succouring his friends
 With goodly counsel) witnesseth my state
 In mystic ecstasy, the twofold draw
 Of the decree of my eternal home
 1295 And of that place wherein my judgement is
 Enacted; and the correspondence of
 The twofold images the senses five
 Impart confirmeth by proof positive
 The negative of ambiguity.
 1300 Before my purpose, listen while I tell
 The mystery my spirit secretly
 Received from them, and did communicate.
 Whenever the idea of beauty in
 Whatever form appeareth, or the voice
 1305 Of one bowed down by grief is lifted up
 In loud lament to text of Holy Writ,
 My thought beholdeth her with fancy's eye
 And with the ear of my intelligence
 My memory heareth her; my faculty
 1310 Imaginative as in pictured thought
 Presents her to my spirit, sensibly
 My understanding deems her at my side.
 Then I do marvel at my drunkenness
 Withouten wine, and very inwardly
 1315 I maken joy, rejoicing of my self;
 Danceth my heart; the tremble of my limbs
 Clappeth as one who chaunteth, and my soul
 Melody maketh. Still my spirit was fed
 With manifold desires, my faculties
 1320 For all their weakness striving to their goal
 Till they were fortified. Herein I found
 What things soe'er had being did conspire
 To aid me (though the aid was of myself),

So that my every organ might unite
 1325 Me with her, and the root of every hair
 Comprise my union; that the robe of our
 Estrangement might be stripped (yet found I it
 Naught other than familiarity).
 Now note (and turn away from formal lore)
 1330 How sense transmits to soul what she reveals
 By inspiration unpremeditate:
 Whene'er a breeze borne through the night from her
 Wafteth at dawn sweet-scented, to my soul
 It bringeth her remembrance, and mine ear
 1335 Respondeth joyfully when doves do sing
 And warble through the forenoon on green boughs
 The selfsame message; if at eventide
 The lightning-flashes recollect her tale
 And do convey it to my heedful sight
 1340 Mine eye is gladdened; that sweet memory
 The wine-cups lavish on my lips and throat
 Touching and tasting when the bowl comes round
 To me at night; and so my heart conveys
 Her recollection (as an inward thing)
 1345 Unto my ribs through this external means
 Delivered by my members' messengers.
 And he who in the assembly chants her name
 Brings me before her, and the while I hear
 With all my being I do gaze on her:
 1350 My soul soars to the heaven whence my soul
 Was breathed in me, what time my theatre
 Soul-fashioned stoops unto its earthly kind.
 So part of me is drawn to her, and part
 Draws to itself, and in each draw a tug
 1355 Of mortal agony: the cause whereof
 Is but my spirit calling back to mind
 Its essence true as from her spirit breathed
 When she inspired it. So my spirit yearned
 To hear the allocution all alone

1360 While in the barrier of this dust confined
 And each was tugging, tugging at my reins.
 An infant will inform thee of my state,
 Though he grow up a stupid, by some sort
 Or revelation inspirational
 1365 And native insight; in his swaddling-clothes
 Tight-wrapt he whimpers, longing fretfully
 To be delivered from excessive pain;
 Soothed by soft lullabies, he lays aside
 All weariness that had afflicted him
 1370 And listens to his soother silently
 Harking; the sweet speech sways him to forget
 His bitter grief, recalling to his mind
 That secret utterance ages long ago.
 So by his state he illustrates the state
 1375 Of mystic ecstasy, proof positive
 Confirming to the dance the negative
 Of imperfection; when the lullaby
 Stirs him to yearning, till he fain would fly
 Unto his primal home, rocked to and fro
 1380 He is appeased, the while his nurse's hands
 Swing him a-cradle. I myself have felt
 In ecstasy that agonizing tug
 (As when the chanter's modulated tones
 Bring her to mind, or the shrill singer's notes)
 1385 He knows, who in life's final agony
 Is cruelly wracked, the messengers of death
 Dragging unto themselves his soul a-gasp.
 So he who being driven to depart
 Suffereth anguish, comparable pain
 1390 Knoweth to his distressful ecstasy
 Who yearneth for his comrades; as the soul
 Of that one leaneth after that whereby
 It manifested, so my spirit soared
 To its high origins. My spirit passed
 1395 The gate that barred my trespassing beyond

Union, and soared whither no union's veil
 Remaineth. Whoso chooseth in my train
 That gate to be his quest, let him like me
 Ride resolute in purpose masterful.
 1400 How many an unfathomable deep
 I plunged into (ere I did penetrate
 That gate), whereof the meanly suppliant
 For wealth was never sprinkled by so much
 As one short gulp! Now I will show thee it
 1405 Within the mirror of my words, if thou
 Art resolute: give heed to what I say:
 Unstop the hearing of the inward eye.
 And I spat out all boastful utterance
 (For jealous scruple), all self-interest
 1410 In whatsoever action, all regard
 In any deed for goodly recompense,
 All preservation of my ghostly states
 From stain of self-adornment, all my fine
 Sententious eloquence—I banished all
 1415 With true resolve disinterestedly,
 As likewise my rejecting all regard
 For my rejecting in whatever part.
 Therefore my heart a temple is, wherein
 I dwell; before it, as from out of it,
 1420 The manifesting of my attributes
 (As of my occultation), and of these
 My right hand is a pillar, kissed within
 Myself and, for wise purpose, in my mouth
 The kiss proceeding from my *qibla* falls.
 1425 About myself in spirit and in truth
 My circumambulation is; I run
 From my Safá unto my Marwa, all
 My face's sake; within a sanctuary
 (That is my inward) all my outward part
 1430 Is safe, what though my neighbours round about
 Are in dire danger to be snatched away.

By solitary fasting from all else
 But me my soul was purified, and gave
 As alms my grace's superfluity.
 1435 The doubling of my being in my state
 Contemplative became, when I awoke
 Out of my slumber, in my unity
 Single; as in the duties general
 Of Holy Law my travel is, so too
 1440 Is the night-journey of my inmost soul
 Unto myself from truth's particular.
 For all my godhead I do not neglect
 The ordinances of my theatre,
 Neither forget I in my manhood him
 1445 Who made my wisdom manifest. From me
 The bonds were firmly knotted on the soul,
 By me the boundaries of sense set up.
 There came to me a messenger from me
 Sore troubled by my wilfulness, concerned
 1450 Compassionately for my well-being;
 Therefore I executed the command
 Given me by my soul upon my soul
 Which, taking over charge of its affairs,
 Turned not its back. Since that primeval time
 1455 Of the High Covenant, before the age
 Of my created elements, before
 The warning was delivered men should be
 Ready for resurrection, to myself
 I was a messenger myself dispatched
 1460 Unto myself, my essence being led
 By my own signs to me. When I transferred
 The soul from the possession of its earth
 (By right of purchase from her) to the realm
 Of Paradise—and well the soul had fought
 1465 And died a martyr's death for the beloved
 And, having paid in full, had won the joy
 Of covenanted contract—then my soul

Soared with me (since my union was complete)
 Beyond its heavenly immortality
 1470 (Neither was I content to lean towards
 The earth of my vicegerent); how indeed
 Should I consent to enter underneath
 My own possession, like my kingdom's friends,
 My followers, my party, my true train?
 1475 For neither is there heaven, but therein
 An angel from the light within my heart
 Bestoweth guidance by my sovereign will,
 Nor any territory, but thereon
 Out of my outward's superfluity
 1480 Falleth a drop, from whence the clouds outpour.
 Beside my dawn the far-diffusing light
 Is but a flash; great Ocean like a drop
 Beside my fountain-head. All me all me
 Each seeks the other and is turned toward;
 1485 Part me part me is drawing as with reins.
 He who is over under, over all
 Under him being, to his guiding face
 Is all direction turned submissively;
 Earth's under is the ether's over since
 1490 That I did *cleave* is *closed*; and cleavage of
 The closed is but the outward of my way.
 Confusion is not, since that union is
 Certainty's essence; nor direction is,
 For space is separation's difference;
 1495 Nor number is, since numeration cuts
 Like a sword's edge; nor time, for limiting
 Is polytheism of determinant;
 Nor any rival, this world or the next,
 Dooming destruction unto that I built
 1500 And whose commandment ruleth my command
 In exercise of judgement; opposite
 None in both spheres of life, for *thou shalt see*
Among created beings not a sign

Of *incongruity* in equal shape
 1505 And form of being. From myself appeared
 As to myself what I unto myself
 Rendered ambiguous, and whatsoe'er
 Appeared through me from me to me was made
 To come reverting; in myself I saw
 1510 Those *bowed in worship* to my theatre,
 And so I realized myself to be
 The very Adam unto whom I bowed;
 Among High Heaven's angels I discerned
 The spiritual rulers of the earth
 1515 Equal alike in rank. My comrades craved
 From my *horizon nigh* their guidance true.
 Yet from my second separation was
 The union of my unity shown forth;
 And in the swoon whereby my sense was crushed
 1520 My soul fell down before me, to revive
 Ere Moses' penitence. There is no there
 After reality is realized,
 Since I recovered out of drunkenness
 And since the cloud that veiled reality
 1525 By new sobriety was cleared away:
 The end of self-effacement after which
 Was my conclusion being as the first
 Of a sobriety, both circumscribed
 By a like finitude. In one same scale
 1530 I measured one obliterated (rapt),
 Erased, annihilated, against one
 Cut off and severed in sobriety
 (Of sense): the dot upon the *ghain* of *ghain*
 (The cloud) was wiped from my sobriety,
 1535 The vigilance of '*ain* (the eye) of '*ain*
 (The essence) cancelled out my blotting-out.
 Whoever in sobriety doth miss,
 In blotting-out discover, is not apt
 (Due to his alternation) to be fixed

1540 In true propinquity. Equal alike
 The drunk and sober are, as qualified
 Respectively by mark of presence or
 By brand of hemming; not my folk are they
 On whom successive fall the attributes
 1545 Of ambiguity, the vestiges
 Of any remnant; who inherits not
 From me perfection, he imperfect is,
 A turner-back, and bound for chastisement.
 Naught is in me conducive to disguise
 1550 Of any remnant, shadow none is mine
 To doom me to returning: and yet what
 May heart deliver in the form of thought
 Or tongue give mouth to in the mould of speech?
 Extremes all reconciled were met in me,
 1555 The carpet of all other evenly
 Rolled up by rule of all-equality;
 Annihilated the duality
 Of being existential, so became
 My existentiality (in the
 1560 Continuance of my unicity)
 Being contemplative. What is above
 (The Primal Emanation) reason's range
 Is like to what remaineth underneath
 (The final fistful) dogma's Sinai:
 1565 It was for this the Best of all mankind
 Forbade us to prefer him (worthy though
 He was) to Jonah. I have signified
 By all the means expression yields; and what
 Was covered up, I have made wholly clear
 1570 By the last subtlety. The *Am I not*
 Of yesterday not other is to him
 Who cometh on tomorrow, since my dark
 Became my dawning and my day my night:
 The mystery of *Yea*—to God belongs
 1575 The glass of its unveiling, as to affirm

Union's reality is to deny
 All withness. Now no darkness covers me,
 No wrong have I to fear: the bounty of
 My light hath quenched the fire of my revenge.
 1580 And time is not, except where time is not
 (As time is reckoning by crescent moons),
 Ready to reckon up the being of
 My being; one imprisoned in the bounds
 Of Time beholdeth not what lies beyond
 1585 His Hellish dungeon in the Paradise
 Of immortality. The heavens turn
 On me: stand thou, and marvel at their Pole
 Encompassing them, not a central point
 (No more) as poles materially are!
 1590 No Pole was there before me unto whom
 I should succeed (transcending three degrees),
 What though the Poleship of the Pegs derives
 From Rank of Substitution. Trespass not
 Beyond my straight-drawn line, for mysteries
 1595 Lurk in the angles: seize this fairest chance.
 From me in me love's loyalty appeared
 Within the seed; for me of me the milk
 Of union's breasts was poured abundantly.
 And the most wonderful of all I saw
 1600 In the beloved's presence (and it sore
 Amazed me) (and my heart's amazement sprang
 From the inbreathing of the Holy Ghost)
 (And she had shown her beauty to my gaze
 So that I was confounded of my mind
 1605 Nor did maintain through my bewilderment
 My outward ornaments) most wonderful
 I say of all I saw was this: that I
 Through her became oblivious of myself,
 To such a point that I presumed myself
 1610 Other than me, nor sought the path direct
 Leading to my presumption of myself.

And my (in her) oblivion baffled me,
 And I recovered not my consciousness
 Nor followed my desire, because of my
 1615 Presumption; I became distraught for her,
 Engrossed with her; and whomsoe'er she makes
 Distraught in occupation with herself
 She renders too unmindful of himself.
 So occupied was I, that I forgot
 1620 My first preoccupation to forget
 Myself: if I had perished for her sake
 I would not have so much as been aware
 Of my transition. Of the marvels of
 That ecstasy distracting in desire
 1625 Bewildering my reason this is one:
 Enslaving robbery oblivion-like.
 I asked her of myself, whenever I
 Encountered her, and inasmuch as she
 Bestowed on me my guidance, she misled
 1630 My questing steps; I sought her from myself,
 Though she was all the while beside me; I
 marvelled how she was hid from me by me.
 And I ceased not from going to and fro
 With her within me; for my senses were
 1635 Intoxicated, and the wine they drank
 Her beauties; still I travelled on and on
 Through certainty's degrees—its knowledge first,
 Second its essence, third the truth thereof—
 Reality my trail and travail's end.
 1640 I quested me from me, that I might guide
 Myself upon my tongue to that which sought
 Guidance of me, in my unceasing quest;
 I begged myself to shift the barrier
 By lifting up the veil, for I myself
 1645 Found in myself my only means to come
 Unto myself; I looked into the glass
 Of my own beauty, that I might behold

The loveliness of my own being in
 My contemplation of my countenance.
 1650 And if I mouthed my name, I leaned towards
 Myself attentive, silent, all desire
 For who might make me hear my name pronounced
 By my own utterance; I clapt my hands
 Upon my bowels, that perchance I might
 1655 Embrace her in my laying on of hands
 Self-clasping; I ran eagerly towards
 My very breaths, that haply I might find
 Myself (and I desirous they should pass
 Me by) within them, since they passed my way.
 1660 Until at last there flashed upon my sight
 From me a lightning-gleam; my dawn shone forth
 In splendour; all my darkness fled away.
 Here I attained a height the intellect
 Recoils before, and here my junction was,
 1665 And my uniting, to myself from me.
 I beamed with joy (for I had reached myself)
 Full of a certainty protecting me
 From the necessity to bind my pack
 And saddle to a journey. I myself
 1670 Guided me to myself (as of myself
 Had been my quest) and unto me my soul
 Showed me the way by means of my own self.
 The curtains of the shroud of sense when I
 Uncovered (and it was the mysteries
 1675 Of my fore-ordinance had rung them down)
 I shifted the soul's barrier from her
 By lifting up the veil, and she it was
 Answered my quest. The cleansing of the glass
 Of my own essence (polishing away
 1680 Of my own attributes the rust) was I
 Myself, the rays encompassing that glass
 Likewise from me proceeding. I myself
 Made me behold myself, since there was naught

Beside me in my being, to decree
 1685 Intrusion of my being's unity.
 And when I named my name, my namer made
 Me hear it; and my soul (with banished sense)
 Listened attentive, and pronounced my name.
 And I embraced myself, yet not by way
 1690 Of limbs attached to ribs; nay, I embraced
 My own identity. I made myself
 Perceive my spirit, and the fragrance of
 My exhalation did perfume the breaths
 Of the bruised ambergris. The whole of me
 1695 Transcended all association in
 The quality of sense, yet in myself
 Stood my transcendence, since I unified
 My essence: to applaud my attributes
 Because of me assists my praiser to
 1700 Extol me, for my attributes to praise
 My self is to condemn me. Therefore who
 In my companion sees my quality,
 And thereby sees me, never shall alight
 At my abode; for I do veil myself.
 1705 Likewise through me to recollect my names
 Is waking vision; to remember me
 Through them, the dream of night light-slumbering.
 So he who through my actions knoweth me
 Knoweth me not, but he who knoweth them
 1710 Through me possesseth knowledge of the truth.
 Accept thou then the knowledge of the signs
 Of these the attributes most principal
 (Attached to outward waymarks) from a soul
 Well versed in it; take the intelligence
 1715 Of those the names of the essence (that reside
 In the inward worlds) a spirit offereth
 That giveth indication of the same
 Thereby. As metaphorically said
 The manifesting of my attributes

1720 Out of my members' names (whereas my soul
 By true arbitrament is named thereby)
 Is marks of knowledges traced on the veils
 Of forms, illuminating what resides
 Beyond the sense-perception in the soul.
 1725 Again, the manifesting of the names
 (Said actually) of my essence from
 My heart's ribs' attributes, for mysteries
 Whereby the spirit was rejoiced, is hints
 Of treasures shadowing the inward truths
 1730 Of mystic reference, set all about
 By secrets hidden in the heart's profound.
 And their effects in all the world at large
 Together with their knowledge (and the things
 Existent by possession of the same
 1735 Not independent are of those effects)
 Are item that there is a gathering
 Of fair renown through powers of control,
 Item the spectacle of reaping praise
 For favours universal. Theatres
 1740 Are these for my displaying: I appeared
 In them (though never from myself was I
 Hidden) before the physical abode
 Of my epiphany. For be it speech
 (And all of me a tongue that tells of me),
 1745 Or sight (and all of me in me an eye
 For observation meant), or ear (and all
 Of me an ear attentive to the call
 By vocative) (and all of me a hand
 Strong to repel destruction)—all these four
 1750 Were inward meanings of such attributes
 Establishing what lies beyond the garb,
 Names of an essence that divulged abroad
 What sense reported. The control of these
 By one who guarded first the Covenant
 1755 (That with a soul that watches over them

With loyal love) is proved in carollers
 Of vaunting song, in necks outstretched to rouse
 From slumber, in signs manifest of joy,
 In rainclouds charged with hoped-for bounteousness.
 1760 Their dedication by the one who last
 Tied firm the Compact, with a soul that scorned
 The arrogance of scorn, is brought to light
 By gems of information, radiances
 Of junction, outward tidings, vanquishers
 1765 Of violence. Their outward making known
 From one who sought for prudence illustrates
 The nature of a spirit generous
 With its own being: doubled litany,
 Meanings of true nobility, abodes
 1770 Of deep enigmas, bases of a fact.
 Their exaltation inwardly by one
 Sincere of purpose proves the turning back
 Of a soul well-content to contemplate:
 Noblest of signs, marvels of purity,
 1775 Most coveted of goals, battalions
 Of martial valour. To the garb of flesh
 From them (by virtue of attachment in
 The station of Islam arising from
 Islam's sage ordinances) there ensue
 1780 Arrows of ordinances, subtleties
 Of wisdom, reinforcing verities,
 Diffusion's delicacies. To the sense
 From them (by virtue of true-proving in
 The station of true faith arising from
 1785 Faith's active signs) are given cloistered cells
 For meditations, flashing lights of thought,
 Temples enshrining traces visible,
 Subduers of unthinking. To the soul
 From them (by virtue of assumption in
 1790 The station of good deeds arising from
 Traditions of the Prophet) are vouchsafed

Nice informations, bounties generous,
 All scrolls informative, successors to
 Godly regard. To the all-unity
 1795 (From the beginning 'As if thou' unto
 The end 'If thou dost not' arising from
 The sign of visionhood) eventuate
 Showers of grace reactionary, troops
 Of high transcendence, unions' incidence,
 1800 Lions of battle-order. Their resort
 In the world visible (that makes demand
 Upon the sense) is what the soul of me
 Perceives: as chapters of expressive speech,
 Receipt of greeting, taking in of hints,
 1805 Roots of donation. In the world unseen
 Their rising-place is the repeated gifts
 Of bounty from myself unto myself
 I have discovered: joyous tidings of
 Confession, intuitions of regard,
 1810 Secrets of outward traces, treasures
 Of propaganda. In dominion's world
 Their locus is my being rapt by night
 Particularly (what no other was
 Of all my family): academies
 1815 Of Holy Scripture, emulation's keeps,
 Seed-beds of exegesis, cavaliers
 Invincible. Their lighting area
 Uprising out of revelation's east
 (A revelation dazzling to the sight)
 1820 Within the world of high omnipotence
 Is thrones of unitarian belief,
 Attainments of approximation, paths
 Of glory-crying, angels strong to aid.
 Their fountain-head of overflowing grace
 1825 In every world, to fill a spirit's need
 Rich in recovery, is benefits
 Of inspiration, seekings after ease,

Profits of benefaction, tables spread
 With generous abundance of good things.
 1830 The whole of me performing what the Path
 Provideth, in the manner that the Truth
 Of me required, when I had joined the rift
 So that the cracks that split the unity
 (Through difference of attribute) (no more
 1835 Dispersed) were closed, and naught remained (to cause
 Estrangement) as between myself and my
 Firm trust in love's familiarity,
 I realized that we in truth were one
 And the sobriety of unison
 1840 Confirmed the blotting-out of scatteredness.
 My all: a tongue, an eye, an ear, a hand:
 To speak, to see, to hear, to seize withal.
 Mine eyes conversed, the while my tongue beheld,
 My hearing uttered, and my hand gave ear;
 1845 My hearing was an eye considering
 Whate'er appeared, mine eyes an ear to heed
 Silently if the folk broke forth in song;
 Upon my benefits my tongue became
 A hand, as too my hand became a tongue
 1850 For converse and for preaching; so my hand
 Became an eye, to see whate'er appeared,
 Mine eye a hand outspread wherewith to strike;
 Mine ear became a tongue in my address,
 My tongue an ear for silent listening;
 1855 The smell too had its rules agreeable
 To general analogy as in
 The fusion of my attributes, or by
 Reversal of the case. No limb in me
 Was specialized as being singled out
 1860 To the exclusion of the rest for one
 Description, as to wit a seeing eye:
 My every atom, notwithstanding its
 Own singularity, itself comprised

The sum of all the organs' faculties,
 1865 Whispering and attending, consequent
 On contemplation of one taking charge
 (By virtue of a hand omnipotent)
 Disposing of his whole totality
 In one brief moment. So it is I read
 1870 The various knowledge of all learned men
 Summed in one word, and with a single glance
 Reveal to me all beings in the world:
 I hear the voices of all men at prayer,
 And every language, in a space of time
 1875 Less than an instant's flash: I summon up
 Before me, what could scarcely be conveyed
 From its far distance, ere mine eye can wink:
 So in one inhalation I breathe in
 The perfumes of all gardens, and the scent
 1880 Of every herb clutching the breezes' skirts:
 And I review all regions of the earth
 Before me in one thought, and with one bound
 Traverse the seven layers of the skies.
 Bodies of those in whom no more remains
 1885 The barest remnant, unified with me,
 Become as light as spirits, being all
 Encompassed by that union; whosoe'er
 Is sovereign, or charitable, or
 Mighty in onslaught, only through my aid
 1890 And subtle contact to that power attains;
 Nor walked he on the waters, neither flew
 In air, nor plunged his body in the flames,
 Save by my will possessing him; and he
 Whom I have aided of my very self,
 1895 Through such a subtle contact, in a trice
 Disposes of his own totality.
 Thus, he who with his whole totality
 Followed my union, in an hour or less
 Recited the Koran a thousand times

1900 From end to end: had but a breath of grace
 From me possessed one dead, straightway his soul
 Would have been given back, restored to him.
 Such is the soul: if it throw off desire
 Its faculties are multiplied, and give
 1905 To every atom its activity.
 Let union then suffice thee—not by way
 Of separation bi-dimensional,
Videlicet space measured, finite time.
 Thus Noah rode the tempest, and was saved
 1910 With such his kinsmen as with him escaped
 In the Ark; for him the flooding waters sank
 Responsively, and he their billows clave
 To Mount al-Judi, where the vessel berthed.
 Thus Solomon with his two armies swept
 1915 Above the face of earth, the wind's broad back
 Beneath his carpet; and before the eye
 Might quiver, Bilkis' throne from Sheba far
 Was wafted to his presence toillessly.
 Thus Abraham subdued his foeman's fire
 1920 That by his radiance was transformed for him
 Into a flowering field of Paradise;
 And when he called the birds (and they had been
 Slaughtered) from every mountain-peak, they came
 To him obediently. Thus Moses' rod
 1925 Cast from his hand swallowed those terrors of
 Enchantment that pressed hard upon his soul;
 And at a blow therewith out of the rock
 He made those fountains gush that watered all
 Continuously flowing, to the sea
 1930 Cleaving their course. Thus, when the messenger
 Cast Joseph's shirt upon old Jacob's face
 Declaring he should come to him again,
 He saw him with those eyes that sorely wept
 (Ere his approach) in longing for his son
 1935 Till they were blinded. Thus among the folk

Of Israel a table was sent down
 From heaven (Jesus praying), and was spread;
 He made the blind to see, and healing hands
 Laid upon leprosy's contagion, and
 1940 Turned with a breath the clay into a bird.
 (The secret of that inward potency
 To which reacted outward things is this
 My fashioned words (permitted as by God)
 Communicated to thy heedful ear.)
 1945 And in the time when prophecy had failed
 The secrets of all these another brought
 To us revealing, and to be a seal
 On them; nor any one of them, but called
 His people by our Prophet's grace, and as
 1950 Our Prophet's follower, unto the Truth.
 Our doctor is a prophet such as they,
 And he among us who his fellows calls
 Unto the Truth in true apostleship
 Labours: in this our time Ahmadian
 1955 Our gnostic is as one of them, endued
 With firmness, holding to God's ordinance.
 And what in them was called a miracle
 After our Prophet's age became a grace
 Bestowed on his vicegerents and his saints.
 1960 His family sufficed the race of man,
 With his companions, and their followers
 The leaders of the faith in after time,
 So that they needed not new Messengers.
 Their graces were a part of his bequest
 1965 To them, exclusively, to be their share
 In every excellence. Of such as rose
 (After the Prophet's death) to the defence
 Of true religion: Abu Bakr made war
 Against that false Hanífa's family;
 1970 And Sáriya by Omar was besought
 (Although the Dwelling was by no means nigh)

To refuge in the mountain; and Othmán
 Was not distracted from the Book he read
 What though the people passed to him the cup
 1975 Of death to drain; and Ali set out clear
 What texts were difficult to comprehend
 By exegesis, that in virtue of
 A knowledge won him as executor;
 And all the rest like stars, whoever chose
 1980 To follow any of their guiding lights
 Was led to safety by his counsel wise.
 Saints who believed on him, although their eyes
 Never beheld him, are elect in true
 Affinity, as kin of brotherhood;
 1985 Their spiritual nearness unto him
 Is as his yearning after them in form—
 Then marvel at a presence that prevails
 In absence! Those the people who received
 The Spirit, called the peoples in my name
 1990 To tread my road, and thereby overcame
 All who derided and denied my proof:
 They all, dependent on my prior truth,
 Revolve upon my circle, or descend
 Along the pathway of my watering-place.
 1995 And though in outward form I be a son
 Of Adam, yet within him is a truth
 Bearing me witness to my fatherhood.
 My spirit, being voided of the bar
 To showing forth in all maturity,
 2000 Was nurtured in illumination's breast:
 My cradle-meditation was upon
The Prophets; while my elements were formed
 My tablet was Preserved, my favourite text
The Victory; ere I was weaned (and yet
 2005 A little while and the religious dues
 Should bind my outward form) I set the seal
 On the expositors of every law

Religious by my code—for they, and those
 Who held their doctrines, were upon my track
 2010 Nor any way transgressed the path my steps
 Now trod: the blessedness of those who called
 The former generations unto me
 Lieth in my right hand, as in my left
 The ease of them who followed latterly.
 2015 Think not the matter stands without me: none
 Ever attained to leadership of men
 Except he joined my service. But for me
 No being existential would have been
 Brought into being, none contemplative
 2020 Existed, never loyal covenants
 Would have been known. None lives, except his life
 Derives from mine; and every willing soul
 Obeys my will. None speaks, except his tale
 Is fashioned of my words; none sees, except
 2025 With my eyes' sight; none listens silently
 Except he heareth with my ears; none grasps
 Save with my strength and might. In all the world
 Created nothing speaks or sees or hears
 Save me alone. In this compounded realm
 2030 I manifested a reality
 In every form, that thereby was adorned
 In beauty; and where my phenomena
 Revealed not such reality, therein
 I yet was imaged incorporeally;
 2035 And what clairvoyantly the spirit sees
 Unveiled, there I was subtly hidden from
 The overburdened thought. In merciful
 Expansion I am all desire, whereby
 The hopes of all who dwell upon my earth
 2040 Are wide-expanded; but in terrible
 Contraction I am reverential awe
 Entire, and wheresoe'er I turn mine eye
 All things revere me; yet where these twain states

Unite, I am all nearness. Wherefore come,
 2045 Draw nigh to these my bounteous qualities!
 And in that place where in is at an end
 I cease not to discover of myself
 Through the perfection of my natural
 Predisposition all the majesty
 2050 Of my self-contemplation; in that place
 Where in is not I ever contemplate
 The beauty of my existential self
 Yet not with vision ocular. If thou
 Be mine, seek union with me, and blot out
 2055 The separation of my fragmenting,
 Nor unto nature's darkness swerve aside.
 Receive the signs my wisdom hath inspired
 To shift from thee the vain imaginings
 Of sensual conjecture. Be thou free
 2060 Of him who to metempsychosis holds
 (Albeit proving in his proper self
 Souls may migrate to occupy the flesh
 Of animals), and hold thyself aloof
 From his false theories; leave him to his claim
 2065 That human spirits do inhabit plants—
 If it were true souls move to minerals,
 Such would be his appropriate habitat
 In every cycle everlastingly!
 Now this my coinage of parables
 2070 Time and again, to illustrate my state
 For thee, a favour is I thee accord.
 Consider as-Sarúji's picaresque
Makámas; ponder well how he disguised
 Himself, and thou wilt surely find it good
 2075 To take my counsel; thou wilt recognize
 Whatever outward shape or form the soul
 Assumes, the soul is inwardly disguised
 In sense. If as-Sarúji's author wrote
 Fictitiously, yet truth speaks parables

2080 Thereby, what though the soul be frivolous.
 Wherefore be understanding; justice do
 Unto thy soul, whilst with thy sense regard
 Thy acts phenomenal. If thou wouldst have
 Thy soul unveil itself, then contemplate
 2085 What thou beholdest indisputably
 Shown in the burnished mirrors: is it else
 Than thou appears in them, or dost thou look
 Upon thyself through them, the visual rays
 Being reflected? Listen how thy voice
 2090 After it dies to silence is returned
 To thee anew by lofty castle-walls:
 Is it another that there talks to thee,
 Or hearest thou words from thy echo voiced?
 Tell me, who passed his learning unto thee
 2095 The while thy senses had been lulled in sleep?
 Ere thy today, thou knewest not what chanced
 Upon thy yesterday, nor what shall hap
 Tomorrow; yet this morn thou art possessed
 Of knowledge what befell men long since gone
 2100 And mysteries of others yet to come,
 And boastest of thy ken. Supposest thou
 It was another that conversed with thee
 In slumber's sleep upon the divers kinds
 Of noble knowledge? Nay, 'twas but the soul
 2105 Busied with her own world, oblivious
 To mortal being's theatre the while:
 Itself unveiled itself unto itself
 In the unseen: assumed a sage's guise
 Who guided it to comprehension of
 2110 Ideas most wondrous. For the sciences
 Were graven on the soul, and it was taught
 Their names aforetime, and therewith inspired
 By ancient fatherhood: the soul was not
 Blessed by such knowledge as deriveth from
 2115 Otherness' separation, but enjoyed

The things itself dictated to itself.
 And if the soul ere sleeping had been stript
 Thou wouldst have contemplated it, like me,
 With a true eye: its normal stripping (first)
 2120 Confirms its being (secondly) stript off,
 To wit, in the hereafter: so hold fast,
 Be not of those much study hath made mad,
 Sapping their reason, and unsettling it.
 For far beyond all lore traditional
 2125 There lies a knowledge, that is far too fine
 For soundest understandings to attain
 In their remotest reach; which I myself
 Received from me, and from myself derived,
 My soul with my own gift supplying me.
 2130 And be thou not all heedless of the play:
 The sport of playthings is the earnestness
 Of a right earnest soul. Beware: turn not
 Thy back on every tinselled form or state
 Illogical: for in illusion's sleep
 2135 The shadow-phantom's spectre brings to thee
 That the translucent curtains do reveal.
 Thou seest forms of things in every garb
 Displayed before thee from behind the veil
 Of ambiguity: the opposites
 2140 In them united for a purpose wise:
 Their shapes appear in each and every guise:
 Silent, they utter speech: though still, they move:
 Themselves unluminous, they scatter light.
 Thou laughest gleefully, as the most gay
 2145 Of men rejoices; weep'st like a bereaved
 And sorrowing mother, in profoundest grief;
 Mournest, if they do moan, upon the loss
 Of some great happiness; art jubilant,
 If they do sing, for such sweet melody.
 2150 Thou seest how the birds among the boughs
 Delight thee with their cooing, when they chant

Their mournful notes to win thy sympathy,
 And marvellest at their voices and their words
 Expressing uninterpretable speech.
 2155 Then on the land the tawny camels race
 Benighted through the wilderness; at sea
 The tossed ships run amid the billowy deep.
 Thou gazest on twain armies—now on land,
 Anon at sea—in huge battalions
 2160 Clad all in mail of steel for valour's sake
 And fenced about with points of swords and spears.
 The troops of the land-army—some are knights
 Upon their chargers, some stout infantry;
 The heroes of the sea-force—some bestride
 2165 The decks of ships, some swarm the lance-like masts.
 Some violently smite with gleaming swords,
 Some thrust with spears strong, tawny, quivering;
 Some 'neath the arrows' volley drown in fire,
 Some burn in water of the flaming flares.
 2170 This troop thou seest offering their lives
 In reckless onslaught, that with broken ranks
 Fleeing humiliated in the rout.
 And thou beholdest the great catapult
 Set up and fired, to smash the fortresses
 2175 And stubborn strongholds. Likewise thou mayst gaze
 On phantom shapes with disembodied souls
 Cowering darkly in their dim domain,
 Apparelled in strange forms that disaccord
 Most wildly with the homely guise of men;
 2180 For none would call the Jinnis homely folk.
 And fishermen cast in the stream their nets
 With busy hands, and swiftly bring forth fish;
 And cunning fowlers spread their gins, that birds
 A-hunger may be trapped there by a grain.
 2185 Ravening monsters of the ocean wreck
 The fragile ships; the jungle-lions seize
 Their slinking prey; birds swoop on other birds

Out of the heavens; in a wilderness
 Beasts hunt for other beasts. And thou mayst glimpse
 2190 Still other shapes that I have overpassed
 To mention, not relying save upon
 The best exemplars. Take a single time
 For thy consideration—no long while—
 And thou shalt find all that appears to thee
 2195 And whatsoever thou dost contemplate
 The act of one alone, but in the veils
 Of occultation wrapt: when he removes
 The curtain, thou beholdest none but him,
 And in the shapes confusion no more reigns.
 2200 And thou dost realize when he reveals
 That in thy darkness thou wast guided by
 His light to view his actions. Even so
 I too was letting down the curtain of
 The spirit's obscuration in the light
 2205 Of shadow as between myself and me,
 That in my work creative now and now
 Again I might appear by slow degrees
 To my sensation, to accustom it;
 Conjoining to my task the play thereof
 2210 That to thy understanding I might so
 Bring nigh the targets of my far-off aims.
 A mutual resemblance links us twain
 In our two theatres, although in truth
 The showman's case resembles not my own.
 2215 His figures are the media (with the screen)
 Whereby his action is made manifest:
 When he appears, they vanish and are naught.
 So in its acts my soul resembles him;
 My sense is like the figures; and my screen
 2220 The body's vesture. So, when I removed
 The curtain from myself, as he raised his,
 So that my soul appeared to me unveiled—
 And now already risen was the sun

Of the contemplative, and full of light
 2225 The existential; now already loosed
 By me the knots of my soul's tethering—
 I slew that lad, the soul, whiles setting up
 The wall to guard my laws, and staving in
 My ship; I turned with my replenishment
 2230 O'er all created life at every while
 According to the actions then required.
 But for my veiling in my attributes,
 The things wherein my essence is displayed
 Were burned to ashes in my glory's gleam.
 2235 The tongues of every being (if but thou
 Hast ears to hear) bear witness I am one
 In ceaseless eloquence. There hath come down
 (Touching my oneness) a Tradition sure
 In whose transmission by successive mouths
 2240 No shadow of infirmity resides,
 Telling God loves His creatures, after they
 By labours supererogatory
 Or due performance of religious rite
 Draw nigh to Him; the point that reference
 2245 Bids men observe is clear as noonday's sun
 In the Divine 'I am to him an ear'.
 I used all means to that uniting, till
 I found myself united; and indeed
 The intermediation of the means
 2250 Was one among my guides; I unified
 Thereafter touching those the means, and so
 I lost them; and the link of unity
 Of all approaches did avail me best.
 And then I stripped my soul of both, and it
 2255 Became a unit (that had never been
 In truth at any time aught else but one).
 I dived into the seas of union—nay
 I plunged in them, in all my loneliness,
 And brought to surface every peerless pearl,

2260 That I might hear my acts with seeing ears
 And look upon my words with listening eyes.
 So if the nightingale amid the grove
 Lamenteth, and the birds in every tree
 Warbling respond to her; if flautist play
 2265 Upon the pipe harmonious to the strings
 Swept by the singing-girl, the while she chants
 Tenderest verses, and at every trill
 The spirits thrilled ascend to Paradise—
 Then I delight me in each masterpiece
 2270 Of my creative art, declaring free
 My union and sweet intercourse from all
 Association with all otherness.
 The gathering of recollective praise
 Through me converteth to a reader's ear;
 2275 For me the vintner's tavern gapeth still
 Open as a scout's eye; no hand but mine
 Tied virtually the girdle infidel,
 Or be it loosened in acknowledgement
 Of me, my hand performed the loosening.
 2280 And if the mosque's *mihráb* be lighted up
 By the Koran, no church's massive pile
 Is wasted with the Gospel open there,
 No synagogue wherein the Torah's scrolls
 Moses delivered to his chosen folk
 2285 Are nightly read by rabbis at their prayers.
 And if in idol-house the devotee
 Bows down to stones, rush not in zealous rage
 Beyond the disavowal faith requires:
 Many a one unspotted by the shame
 2290 Of polytheist idol-mongering
 In spirit worships Mammon. Every man
 With ears to hear, to him my warning voice
 Hath come; in me the pleas of every sect
 Are proved acceptable. *The eyes strayed not*
 2295 In any faith, the thoughts ran devious

In no denomination. Those who yearned
 Heedlessly for the sun lost not the way
 Seeing its shine deriveth from the light
 Of my unveiled effulgence. Or if fire
 2300 The Magians worshipped (and, as tales report,
 Its flames were quenched not in a thousand years),
 They meant not aught but me, what though their quest
 Went other ways, and manifested not
 A vowed endeavour: they had once beheld
 2305 The radiance of my light, and did suppose
 It was a fire, and so they went astray
 From the true guidance, following its rays.
 But for the veil that wraps existence round
 I would have said—But my observance of
 2310 The laws that govern all phenomena
 Keepeth me silent. 'Tis *no idle sport*;
 The creatures were not made, *to wander off*
At random, though their actions go not straight;
 According to the branding of the names
 2315 Run their affairs; the wisdom that bestowed
 Upon the essence divers attributes
 Drives them conformably to God's decree,
 'I care not, and I care not'—by these words
 Disposed into two handfuls, one for bliss,
 2320 The other unto misery consigned.
 So let the soul be known for what it is
 Or not: the clear discrimination in
 This issue is recited every morn.
 Indeed, the knowledge of the soul derives
 2325 Out of itself: so did my soul dictate
 Unto my senses all I hoped to know.
 Had I declared all one, I would have swerved
 And sloughed my union's signs, my handiwork
 Associating equally with me.
 2330 I am not blameworthy, if I proclaim
 My gifts, and on my followers bestow

My grand endowment: that dispenser of
 The mystic union, when he greeted me
 At *Yea or nearer*, pointed me a bond
 2335 Of spiritual kinship. From his light
 The lantern of my essence shone on me;
 My eve in me was radiant as my morn.
 And I was made to see myself, myself
 Yet here; and I was he; and I beheld
 2340 That he was I, that light my radiance.
 In me the holy vale was sanctified,
 Where I bestowed my putting off of shoes
 On my companions, an unstinted gift.
 And I beheld my beams, and was their guide—
 2345 O wondrous soul, that shines upon that light!
 I founded firm my Sinais, and there
 Prayed to myself, and all my wants fulfilled:
 My essence was my interlocutor.
 My moon set not; my sun ne'er sank from sight;
 2350 By me are guided all the shining stars
 Upon their courses; all the planets swim
 About my heavens as my will controls
 All things I own; my angels prostrate fall
 Before my sovereignty. And in the world
 2355 Of recollection still the soul doth own
 Its ancient knowledge my disciples pray
 That I bestow on them. Haste then to my
 Eternal union, wherein I have found
 The greybeards of the tribe as little babes!
 2360 For these my fellows living in my age
 Drink but the dregs that I have left; and those
 Ahead of me, the merits men in them
 Applaud are but my superfluity.

NOTES

'And when thy Lord took of the sons of Adam from their loins their seed, and made them to witness against themselves, Am I not your Lord? They said, Yea, we witness it . . .' (Koran vii. 171).

For the Muhammadan mystic after the teaching of al-Junaid (who died in A.D. 910) and of his later contemporary al-Hallāj (whom the lawyers crucified in A.D. 922) the spiritual life of the individual began before the dimensions of space and time were ever fixed, at the first projection by God from Himself of a category of being external to Himself, subsistent in and through Himself. So the Sufis interpreted the words of the Koran which have been quoted above: on that pre-eternal occasion Man entered into a covenant with God to acknowledge Him as his only Lord, and to deny all other masters and loyalties.

Thereafter God created the Idea of Muhammad, a Sufi counterpart of the First Intelligence of the philosophers; a Tradition affirmed that Muhammad was in existence at a time when Adam was as yet 'between water and clay', that is to say, unfashioned in the physical world. Out of the Idea of Muhammad, the Reality of Realities, the entire material universe was created; in that Idea, all things external to God have their being.

The Sufi's great quest is to realize in this limited world and this life of finite being his identity with the Spirit of Muhammad; once that quest has been achieved, he inevitably passes away from his creaturely attributes and attains to full recognition of the Unity and Unicity of God. This completes the cycle of his individual history; he has then returned to 'the state in which he was before he was'. Yet he is not annihilated as an individual; rather his individuality has become transformed; whereas formerly it was a temporal attribute, thenceforward it is as eternal as the Attributes of God. It is not the case that God dwells in him; that view would be condemned as incarnationism; on the contrary he dwells in God, and is aware that he subsists only through God.

This union with God does not, however, continue with the mystic throughout the remainder of his earthly life as a continually conscious experience; it is a brief moment of glory, a sudden glimpse of celestial bliss won in ecstasy. If the body could perish in that instant, the soul might survive at once and for ever united with its Creator; but the body does not die, and the flesh reassumes its dominion over the spirit inhabiting it. The lover is separated a second time from his Beloved, and all the rest of his days he is yearning passionately for renewed, eternal union.

Such in brief is the background to the opening scene of this poem. The mystic, surrounded in the circle of meditation by his fellow Sufis, focuses his thoughts upon the incomparable beauty of the Beloved. The inward eye of contemplation, in that interplay of the internal organs of spiritual sensation which is a favourite theme of the poet, becomes a hand to pour into his soul the wine-fever of ecstatic love; the bowl containing the wine is the Beloved's beauty. He reveals the nature of his emotions to his friends, pictured conventionally as handsome youths, trusty guardians of the secret of his

tremendous passion; yet it is not the kind of beauty they understand and represent, physical beauty, but the perfect spiritual beauty of Muhammad which is the true cause of his rapture (1-15).

As his spiritual inebriation more and more masters his self-control, he puts fear aside and, with all consciousness of his companions' presence blotted out, addresses himself directly and nakedly to the Beloved; but as yet he has not wholly passed away from awareness of his own individuality, which ever and again obtrudes itself to stand between him and complete self-surrender (16-28).

In this state of violent agitation he begins his colloquy. He begs the Beloved to look just once upon him, that he may now be assured of Her regard for him before he is annihilated. This lover's prayer, imitating the stock vocabulary of the erotic poets (who are ever fearful of wasting away to death ere knowing that their passion is reciprocated), recalls to his mind a like plea addressed to God by Moses, who did not indeed see the Creator but was rejoiced to hear His Voice declaring 'Thou shalt not see Me' (Koran vii. 139) as if in a momentary recovery of consciousness, before the blinding light of the Divine Presence shattered Mount Sinai (29-40). The poet declares that the burden of his lover's suffering would have crushed the mountains even before God's revelation destroyed them. Bethinking him of his surging tears and burning sighs (which, by a favourite poetic figure, in the conflict of the elements cancel out each other's destructive qualities), he compares the former with the Flood of Noah and the latter with the fire into which (according to Koran xxi. 68) Abraham was cast by the idolaters. In this same mood of scriptural reminiscence he likens his grief to that of Jacob bereaved, as he supposed, of his beloved Joseph (Koran xii. 84), and his torment to the sufferings of Job; and of all those lovers famed in Arab story as having died of their unrequited passion (41-58).

His distress is similar to that of travellers stranded in a desert and refused a place in the departing caravan. So emaciated is he as a result of his sufferings—a familiar theme of poetic hyperbole—that the deepest recesses of his inmost heart stand revealed; in the intoxication of overpowering grief he discloses his lover's secret to his most dangerous enemy, the Spy. (Thus the poet introduces the first of the traditional *dramatis personae* of erotic verse.) That passion which his true friends had loyally kept guarded (as we remember from lines 13-15) thus became known and notorious to all the tribe: the poet weaves an intricate pattern of metaphysical subtlety to describe how the Spy has won intimacy with all his thoughts, and how it is his passion itself which has betrayed him (59-103).

But matters have gone farther than this; the lover claims to have passed entirely away, so that even death would not be able to find him if purposing to slay him. Neither has he any longer any desire to be restored to himself; nor has he any longer the power to describe his innumerable pains. The traditional Visitors (another stock figure), even though they read upon the celestial Tablet of Destiny the truth of his case, would find no more of him than a ghost (104-37). In this condition of utter obliteration he fails even in his wildest imaginings to discover any trace of his individual existence in the world of phenomena; he has returned to that state 'in which he was before he was', when his spirit was indeed in being, before the creation of the physical universe and of his own perishing body (138-46).

Using a succession of favourite conceits and figures, the poet justifies this recital of his agony, giving thanks to the Beloved for the woes he patiently endures: the Beloved's gift of tribulation is indeed to be reckoned by the lover as a great benefaction and abounding grace (147-73). Remembering the Covenant into which he entered before time was (Koran vii. 171), he is grateful to be the target for the malice of those two familiar characters of the love-play, the Railer and the Slanderer—the former seeking in the guise of a sincere friend to dissuade and divert him from his passion, the latter jealously carrying lies about his sincerity to the Beloved. He indeed resists the Railer, but pretends agreement with the Slanderer in order that others may not pry into his secret joy (174-86). He endures not so as to win applause, but as a necessary condition of adoring the Beloved's beauty, once more named as the cause of his cherished affliction (187-200). The lover of beauty must be ready to die for love's sake, and he, as a true and loyal lover, rejects all lesser loves in entire surrender to the Beloved (201-25).

It was a convention of erotic writing that the poet should at this stage swear by all that he holds most dear that his declaration of love is sincere and true. Ibn al-Fāriḍ follows the custom in a series of solemn oaths, in the course of which he remembers once more the Pre-eternal Covenant, and also the 'latter bond' accepted as a follower of the revealed religion of Islam (229-38). He swears too by the threefold Divine Attributes of Perfection, Majesty, and Loveliness, each of which has its apparent effect in the phenomenal world, as also by that Spiritual Beauty which is too subtle to be apprehended by the outward vision, that his Beloved is his one and only quest (239-61). He is prepared to suffer the obloquy of men in his utter abandonment of reserve, and to cast off the last shreds of modesty (as the conventional lover does *in extremis*): while those of lesser passion love the Beloved for part only of Her Attributes (the poet means the Attribute of Mercy, to the exclusion of the Attribute of Wrath), he loves Her for Her Whole Self: She is the entire and only cause of his lover's bewilderment (262-82).

The Beloved is made to reply to this impassioned declaration, and does so tauntingly after the fashion of those lovers' dialogues which were a familiar feature of erotic poetry. She roundly denies the lover's claim to worship Her exclusively, accusing him of lying imposture. As readily might his deluded spirit find the narrow way leading to true love, as a man born blind perceive the dim and distant star Suhá. His pretences far exceed his capacity to attain. Referring obliquely to God's obscure prohibition against 'entering upon your houses netherwards' (Koran ii. 185), which the poet interprets as meaning to seek admission to the Beloved's Presence by false claims of worthiness, She adds further (with the same Scriptural passage in mind) that the doors to that Presence are also barred against the like of him (283-305).

The truth is, She declares, that the lover refuses to surrender the least part of his self-regard. Using the language of the alphabet, she says that had he but humbled himself to become as it were the thin stroke marking the vowel *i* beneath the dot of the letter *b* (the commentators offer a metaphysical explanation of this, but perhaps the reference is rather to the opening vowel of the phrase *bismi llāhi*, 'In the Name of God', with which every Sura but one of the Koran begins), this act of self-abasement would have exalted him far higher than all his pretentious ambitions. The road to attainment runs straight enough, but men's eyes are blinded by their selfish desires (306-27).

The lover's claim to love the Beloved is easily disposed of. His boasted love is mere self-love, as is demonstrated by the fact of his suffering even the least remainder of his individuality to survive. Total passing-away from self is proved by that mystical transfiguration in which the lover is seen to be clothed only in the Attributes of the Beloved; the poet doubtless has in mind the classic definition of spiritual union as 'passing away from human attributes into the Divine Attributes'. The Beloved therefore bids the lover have done with false pretences: the choice before him is simple—either let him die to self, that 'state more excellent' (Koran xxiii. 98) and the only condition of true love, or let him abandon the quest and trouble the Beloved no more (328-42).

The lover refuses to accept this rebuke. He begs the Beloved at once to take his soul to Herself: he knows that true love means death to the lover, and his only ambition is to win the classic epitaph, 'He died of love'. If he may not attain this highest honour of all, yet he will be content to be suspected of loving Her; still more, he will rejoice to die unhonoured, not even to wear the martyr's crown (to which according to an apocryphal Tradition the mystic lover dying of his love would be entitled), provided the cause of his death—the fullness of his devotion—is known to the Beloved. His life is in any case too mean a thing even to be mentioned as being expended, in comparison with that prized union with the Beloved which he hopes to purchase thereby; and if the Beloved makes this the price to be paid for the supremest honour lover can dare to covet, She indeed enhances his market-value (343-76). Death holds no terrors for him: let the Beloved work Her will. As the old love-poets used to say, such a threat from the Beloved is accepted by the lover as a most fair promise. Other men shrink from death: he welcomes it, as the gateway to immortal life in union with the Beloved (377-85).

This concludes the dialogue. The poet now dilates further upon the themes of the lover's address to the Beloved. Many others have been Her victims before him, among the tribe of devoted mystics, who died without her even glancing upon them (compare line 31). To be slain by Her would indeed be the pinnacle of renown. If he dies in loving Her, he will have won by the exchange; for he will have attained union, and the restoration of his spirit's life into the bargain (386-402). By devoting himself to Her service he has gained the contempt and ridicule of his fellows, but he is well content with his abasement (403-27).

Love has crazed and wasted him, and brought him to such a pass that his spirit was fearful of his mind, lest his mind knowing of his secret passion should release the tears which would reveal it to others. His spirit therefore concealed its emotions from his heart; and concealed them so well that his consciousness was rendered unaware even of his spirit's will to conceal (428-46). How sweet then are the lover's sufferings, which the Beloved causes him to be alike conscious and unconscious of! The poet meditates upon this subtlety at length; the Beloved has set one part of him to guard against the rest, to preserve him whole for Her sake. Veneration combats desire; speech and hearing wrestle with each other; humility strives with jealousy (447-76).

So at last his soul is rapt in ecstasy; though he is still aware of a desire stirring within him. He is in a state of continuous union with the Beloved; whenever Her name is mentioned, or the recollection of Her is stirred (even by the conventional 'ghost of reproach' visiting the lover as he tosses sleepless through the night), his spirit is transported with joy and emulation. When he prays, he leads all mankind in prayer; the Object of his prayer

being within him, the *imams* who lead the faithful turn towards him as the *qibla* or direction of prayer; all six directions which make up space point to him. It is to him (he being now united with the Beloved) that the rites of the greater and the lesser Pilgrimage are performed: at the Station of Abraham (near the Kaaba at Mecca) he prayed to the Beloved and She prayed to him (477-505).

The poet halts momentarily this onrush of verbal intricacy, and turning back (as every now and again) to the Pre-eternal Covenant proclaims it is high time for him to rend the veil still dividing him from complete unity, that remnant of desire which he has mentioned as yet stirring within him (in lines 479-80) and which he now acknowledges as a gift bestowed on him by the Beloved before Time was, even before the Covenant was sworn—the disposition to say 'Yea' to God's challenging demand (506-12). His present loyalty is not an 'earning' (the term used by the Sufi theorists to describe the subjective 'stages' of the path in which the mystic still exercises his own will), or a natural 'attraction' (such as the philosophers urged as the cause of love), but rather that same passionate distraction, that intoxication with the Beloved which governed him in the World of Command (the immaterial universe) before the World of Creation (the material universe) came into being and he himself was born into it. Love has now annihilated all creaturely attributes in him, which did not exist in the pre-eternal world and therefore could not divide him there from the Beloved (513-22). These attributes being rejected, they are transmuted into the Attributes of the Beloved, which are and always were in reality the lover's: the attributes veiled him from his realization of identity with the Beloved, just as the Attributes veiled him from his realization of continued individuality. The Object of his love had always been Himself; as a mortal being he had been distracted and unaware of this tremendous truth, but in the contemplation proper to his immortal soul he had ever been apprised of it (523-34).

The poet here pauses, as if conscious of the extreme obscurity of his last few highly concentrated utterances, and proposes to expatiate at greater length on their contents, while reducing his complex argument to simpler terms. He takes up anew the parts of the Slanderer and the Railer (compare lines 176-83), whom he now finds both to be his allies, and in fact to be mere aspects of the single Beloved-lover relationship. He has now abandoned all self-interest and selfish desires; even poverty is an attribute, therefore he has cast it away along with riches, together with the thought of merit in so doing; and so the Beloved has become his Prize (535-68).

The transformation of the lover into the Beloved has consequently endowed the lover with the Beloved's right and power to guide other lovers who have strayed from the true path of love. The poet exploits this point brilliantly to introduce a conventional transition: he offers counsel derived from his own experiences to an unnamed companion, no doubt to be identified with any disciple who may read his poem. The relative simplicity of this passage affords a welcome relief from the long-sustained tension of the preceding scenes. The neophyte is bidden to give himself up wholly to the Beloved's will; to be truly penitent (the first stage in the Sufi scheme of regeneration); not to put off his reformation to the morrow, but to resolve today; and to labour boldly and without flagging. Let him not make weakness or sickness an excuse; the race, if swiftly run, will itself provide him with respite (569-601). In this fashion he runs through the usual themes beloved by the Sufi

moralist. Riches do not win the Beloved's favour, nor poverty deny it; poverty must not be an excuse for self-regard, and this peril is to be eluded by complete sincerity in serving the Beloved. The disciple must practise godly silence, as all gnostics have found the greatest mysteries of love to be inexpressible in speech; at the same time he should beware of seeking in silence only that dignity which silence bestowed on the handful of true mystics who observed its rules (602-34). He must become a passive instrument in the Beloved's hands; not seeing, but sight; not hearing, but an ear; not speaking, but a tongue; seeing, speaking, and hearing not wilfully, but as the Beloved directs those faculties to act. This is the direct path which leads to union; to follow the soul's whims is to go hopelessly astray (635-43).

After this interlude, the poet resumes the narrative of his own progress. Hitherto his soul had still been 'reproachful' (a Sufi technical term borrowed from Koran lxxv. 2, and used by them to mean that state of inner conflict in which the mystic wrestles with his wayward impulses). He therefore set about schooling it with hard discipline: the poet has in mind that phase of the mystic's training which the theorists called *riyādat an-nafs*, 'disciplining the carnal soul'. In this way he converted his soul from being 'reproachful' to being 'at rest' (another Sufi term taken from Koran lxxxix. 27, indicating the state in which all inner conflict has been resolved). He made every 'station' upon the mystic path an ascetic exercise, performed in absolute submission to the Beloved's will; until at last he gave up the selfish passion of seeking the Beloved for himself, and found himself transformed from being desirous to being himself desired (644-65).

This new climax brings the poet to another long passage of involved elaboration upon the theme of the lover's union and identity with the Beloved, which, though in places extremely subtle, can be followed without much difficulty and adds little fresh to what has been analysed already. Ibn al-Fāriḍ is at pains to make clear the distinction between 'being' (individual existence in the phenomenal world) and 'beholding' (unitive existence in the spiritual world), a thread of meditation which runs through the whole poem (666-94). He illustrates the Beloved-lover equation with a series of eloquent examples. When the Beloved's name is called, the lover answers; when the lover is summoned, the Beloved cries *Labbaika* ('Here am I'); when the Beloved and the lover converse together, they do not use the second person singular form but only the first person singular, for in the mystery of mystical unity the two are One (695-720).

Feeling this statement to need further explanation, the poet proposes to cite two instances (one drawn from the sensation of hearing, the other from sight) to show how in certain circumstances duality is readily proved to be an illusion; arguing his case as against a stubborn opponent whom he accuses of 'secret polytheism'. A woman in a state of catalepsy utters trance-statements not of her own volition (though it is certainly her vocal chords that produce the sounds) but at the direction and under the control of the supernatural being possessing her. This is example number one (721-50); and the poet admits that previously he was in the same confusion as his opponent, when he was in a state of alternating 'loss' and 'discovery', oscillating between 'being' and 'beholding'. He had thought the sensation of annulment induced by spiritual intoxication to be the farthest point attainable in the mystical ascent (he is using the analogy of the Prophet's Ascension referred to briefly in Koran xvii. 1; the 'lote-boundary' is a quotation from Koran liii. 9,

a passage taken by the Sufis to describe a mystical experience); but the state of sobriety-after-drunkness (that 'twice sobering' mentioned in line 38) found him re-established in his transformed identity, his union with the Beloved being henceforward a true Unity (751-70). This mention of unity leads the poet on as ever to a fresh outburst of passionate subtlety: when he stood (on Mount Arafat at the Pilgrimage) he stood before Himself, and when he prayed He was his own Kaaba. He urges his opponent to give up the 'error of separation', to follow the right way of the Sufis who emulated one another in their quest after 'oneness', and boldly to proclaim that Beauty is absolute, and not made finite by the mortal elements in which from time to time it stands revealed. Every human lover distraught with passion for every human beloved yearns in reality for the Beloved, Who at once displays and hides Herself in the beautiful shapes She temporarily informs. In a long passage of sustained eloquence the poet makes this point over and over again, recalling the instances of love-poets famous in literary history for their celebration of the beautiful maidens they adored: lover and beloved, viewed as theatres of Divine manifestation, were in every instance identical with the Lover and the Beloved, themselves One Essence self-loving and self-beloved (771-854).

Why then, if the lover has realized his identity with the Beloved, and was aware that nothing else existed in all the world but the Beloved, did he submit thereafter to observe the ceremonies and requirements of formal religion? Not out of fear for the shame which other men's condemnation might bring upon him did he neglect his duties, nor out of a desire for a reputation of saintliness, but only in order to rescue his 'succouring friends' (see lines 13-14) from the attacks of the wily adversary who would aim to mislead them in their lower degree of attainment by quoting the example of the lover's own apparent ungodliness (855-92). This was another motive for that hard self-discipline to which he had already referred (in lines 644-65). Nevertheless, despite his outward profession of formal orthodoxy, he had never recanted the statement 'I am She' (893-9).

But neither had he at any time been guilty of the foolish heresy of incarnationism, pretending that the Beloved 'came to dwell in me' (the poet uses the technical term for incarnation condemned by the orthodox theologians). To prove this he now quotes the second example which he had promised (see lines 724-5). It was well known that Gabriel, the bearer of God's inspiration, appeared to Muhammad several times in the guise of a certain Dihya; yet the Prophet never confused Dihya with Gabriel—he saw the angel, where the other bystanders saw the man. Holy Scripture described this phenomenon as a 'covering' (a reference to Koran vi. 9)—a term which the poet uses elsewhere to connote that 'ambiguity' whereby the phenomenal world appears endowed with spiritual attributes (899-926).

This mention of Gabriel's appearance to Muhammad introduces a dramatic change in the narrative; the poet now speaks as the Beloved, clearly identified as Muhammad himself. The fount of Sadda (a well proverbial for the sweetness of its water) draws upon the same source as his own abounding flow—a figure for Divine inspiration, contrasted with the mirage of intellectual conjecture. Whereas the earlier prophets adventured no farther than the shore, Muhammad plunged deeply into the ocean of complete and final revelation reserved for him the 'orphan' (a reference to Koran xciii. 6) whose 'property' of esoteric knowledge was shared only by the 'youth'—Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law,

believed by the Sufis to have received secret mystical teaching from the Prophet (927-42).

Resuming the part of spiritual preceptor, the poet addresses once more the unnamed disciple (see lines 569-643), whom he urges to follow strictly in his path. He himself has transcended even love, as an emotion to be obliterated in complete union. Love indeed is the starting-point of the ascent which yet lies ahead; the disciple may therefore rejoice in it, as giving him supremacy over the rest of God's servants, the ascetics, the theologians, and the philosophers. Kinship based upon the loyalty of love secures that highest heritage of all, the mystic gnosis derived from the Prophet, whose care it was that his Divine knowledge should be of benefit to mankind (943-72). So mounting, the disciple may at length attain the lover's goal of Unity, which the poet once more exalts in eloquent metaphor (973-84).

The true lover may well boast his superiority over the toiling ascetic still the prey of hope and fear. By this subtle transition the poet is brought to change his address to the unattaining straggler, whom he charges with having advanced beyond his proper sphere (a reminiscence of the reproach offered by the Beloved to the lover in lines 286-302): let him therefore stay where he is, for any further progress will lead to his annihilation (985-1001). He alone (speaking as one who has achieved union with the Spirit of Muhammad) has reached the supreme rank of sobriety-after-union: his ear is that of Moses (who heard God speak), his eye the eye of Muhammad (who, according to some, saw God on the night of his Ascension). In his capacity as First Intelligence and Reality of Realities, his Spirit is the Spirit of all spirits (this line especially made Ibn al-Fāriḍ the target of orthodox disapprobation), his Beauty the source of all beauty. He possessed the prerogative of Divine knowledge before his fellow prophets ever knew of his existence-to-be. No names or epithets are appropriate to address him by; the 'bandying of names' is forbidden by Holy Scripture (a reference to Koran xlix. 11). His least follower possesses a degree of gnosis enabling him to answer the most abstruse questions in language of profound subtlety (1002-34). Even the term 'brought nigh' (used in several passages in the Koran of the angels and the blessed in Paradise, see iv. 170, lvi. 87, lxxxiii. 28) does not apply to him, for nearness itself implies separation; he has transcended all such discriminations as junction and separation, nearness and farness, love and aversion. If he is to be alluded to at all, then only metaphorical terms of address may be employed (1035-52). He has surmounted the highest pinnacle of Unity, and only returned from his spiritual Ascension in order to propagate the ordinances of his religion: a reference to the legend that the Prophet was instructed on the night of the Heavenly Journey how many times daily his followers should pray. He has grasped the principle enunciated in the Sura Taha (which, see Koran xx. 7, declares, 'I am God, there is no god but I, so worship Me and institute the prayer for My remembrance'). In greeting the Beloved, he is only greeting himself (1053-75).

So the mood changes once more, and the poet is reminded how at the beginning of the history of his passion he greeted the Beloved with a joyous Hymn to Love, which he proceeds to quote, recapitulating in still more splendid eloquence the tale of his lover's anguish, playing with consummate mastery the entire repertory of his poet's themes and variations. This long passage of sustained ardour contrasts delightfully in its simplicity with the intricacy of the metaphysical argument preceding and following it, and calls for

little elucidation. It may only be remarked in passing that the 'miraculous Night of Power' (lines 1144, 1185) is traditionally said to be 27 Ramadan (the phrase is taken from Koran xcvi, where the night is described as 'better than a thousand months—the angels descend in it, and the Spirit, by their Lord's leave free from every charge: greeting it is until the uprising of dawn'), and upon this night the whole Koran was first revealed. The 'Furthest Mosque' (line 1157, see Koran xvii. 1) is the Temple at Jerusalem, to which the Prophet was miraculously transported on the night of his Ascension. Those familiar characters the Slanderer, the Railer, and the Spy are mentioned once again (lines 1169–75). Joseph (line 1210) is referred to (as conventionally in mystical love-poetry) as the highest exemplar of human beauty. The interlude rises in a *crescendo* of rapture to the final declaration that the lover's passion, like the Beloved's beauty, is universal (1076–1229).

The poet resumes his preoccupation with the mystery of Unity. The Slanderer and the Railer are remembered from a previous mention (see lines 542–6) as the lover's truest allies rather than his enemies. In the state of sobriety-after-union there were revealed to him mysteries too great to be spoken, though allusion to them will be understood by other mystics; a clearer definition would expose the poet to condemnation by the narrowly orthodox. (This silence regarding the *mysterium tremendum* of the supreme mystical experience is a familiar theme in Sufi literature, especially after the execution of al-Hallāj.) In reality the four characters of the love-play—Beloved, Lover, Slanderer, and Railer—are one, the two first being a single Essence and the two last the attributes of that Essence. The Slanderer is a manifestation of the Spirit, seeking to lure the spirit of the lover back to its origin; the Railer is concerned to urge the soul back to the lover's fellow men in the material universe (1230–77).

At this point the poet again speaks as if by the mouth of the Prophet (see lines 927–42). The Universal Soul was the source from which all the forms of material existence derived, while the Universal Spirit created the spirits which inhabit the immaterial universe (1278–88). But the lover immediately takes up once more his personal story: the twofold draw of the Slanderer-Spirit (towards the eternal) and the Railer-Soul (towards the temporal), a characteristic of mystical ecstasy, is proved by the interplay of man's 'external' and 'internal' senses. Beautiful sights and sounds, perceived by the outward eye and ear, cause the inward eye and ear to apprehend the Beloved's beauty, and a state of uncontrollable joy ensues. This fine point is developed with a rich abundance of illustration, as the poet gives rein to the wide scope of his ranging fancy; as ever when carried away by his artistic imagination he writes with masterly simplicity, and this central passage, superbly beautiful, needs no comment (1289–1407).

Rapidly Ibn al-Fārīd increases the tension of his thought after this extended relaxation, as he meditates once more upon the mysteries of the Unity of Lover and Beloved. He himself contains his own temple housing the Kaaba of his spiritual worship; he circumambulates himself (as the Mecca pilgrims do the Holy House); he runs from his internal Safa to his internal Marwa (the mountains without Mecca between which the pilgrims race). The Lover-Beloved duality, the accompaniment of his mystical dream (as the Prophet was carried 'between sleeping and waking' upon his Ascension), has been transformed into a single Unity in the sobriety-after-union (1408–41).

Though now arrayed in the Attributes of Godhood, he (as self-identified with the Prophet) remembers his obligations to the phenomenal world, the ordinances of his religion (see lines 1055-8). In his dual nature, Divine and human, he pictures himself as an apostle sent by Himself to himself before Adam was born; and on the other side as an incarnate being created later in time, rising out of himself to Himself in renewed Unity of the persons; this thought is elaborated in a series of subtle images (1442-85). The 'cleaving' of heaven and earth (taking the language of Koran xxi. 31 as a reference to the act of creation) has now been 'closed'. The categories of space and time have passed away, for dimensions imply 'otherness' and therefore polytheism. God's creation has no incongruity (Koran lxvii. 3), for the opposites have been resolved. He is at one with that Adam to whom the angels bowed at God's command (see Koran xv. 28-30). His fellow mystics thought to find the truth at the 'nigh horizon' (the first vision of reality, as contrasted with the 'higher horizon' of complete revelation, see Koran liii. 7), that is to say in the ecstasy of spiritual intoxication, but the true union of Unity is only proved in the sobriety-after-union, the 'second separation' (1486-1518); he uses again the symbolism of Moses at Sinai (Koran vii. 139), an experience with which he, as the Spirit of Muhammad, was intimate long before Moses was born or turned to God at all. The language of the alphabet is again found appropriate to express the idea of the blotting-out of 'otherness' (individual existence) in the all-embracing Unity of supreme attainment: the dot distinguishing the letter *ghain* (which is also a word meaning 'cloud') is expunged, giving the letter '*ain*' (a word meaning 'eye' and 'essence') which uniquely subsists after the erasure has taken place (1486-1536).

Unity transcends all difference: it is a total obliteration of every kind of separateness. The mystic has realized the identity of his 'being' with his 'beholding': Muhammad referred to his priority over all the prophets when he asked his companions (according to a Tradition) whether they did not think him superior to Jonah. The poet uses the language of God's challenge and man's response (Koran vii. 171) to re-emphasize this constantly repeated point (1537-77). A Tradition quotes God as affirming, 'My Mercy was before My Wrath', which confirms the mystic in his certainty of Paradise; Hell will declare to every true believer (again according to a Tradition), 'Thy light hath quenched my fire'; and the poet combines these two thoughts in a single concordance of esoteric interpretation (1578-86). Using the terminology of the Sufis, he declares himself (as Spirit of Muhammad) to be the Pole upon which the heavens revolve, the Pole which never passed through the subordinate degrees of Substitute and Peg, for he was not successor to any prior Pole but himself the First Pole (1587-98).

In very subtle language the poet describes the lover's bewilderment at first encountering the Beloved, an oscillation between unconsciousness of self and consciousness of Self. He passed through the three grades of certainty (as named by the Sufi theorists), until he reached complete Unity of the persons; a state which he illustrates with a further range of figures which again are not essentially difficult to comprehend (1599-1710). The tension is increased more and more, as the poet meditates upon the profound mysteries of Unity, until he finally delivers himself of a series of lines highly mannered and ornamented in an almost complete incoherence of sensual ecstasy (1711-1829). (Incidentally, the reference in lines 1795-6 is to a Tradition according to which God said, 'Worship Me as if thou

seest Me, for if thou dost not see Me, I see thee'.) Some idea of the intricate verbal pattern of this passage may be conveyed by a transcription of a few lines.

fa-marji'uhā lil-ḥissi fī 'ālamī š-šahā
 -dati l-mujtadī mā n-nafsu minnī aḥassatī
 fuṣūlu 'ibārātin wuṣūlu taḥiyatin
 ḥuṣūlu iṣārātin uṣūlu 'aṭiyatī
 wa-maṭla'uhā fī 'ālamī l-ḡaibi mā wajad
 -tu min ni'amin minnī 'alaiya stajaddatī
 baṣā'iru iqrārin baṣā'iru 'ibratin
 sarā'iru āṭārin ḡaḥā'iru da'watī
 wa-mauḍi'uhā fī 'ālamī l-malakūti mā
 ḥuṣiṣtu mina l-isrā biḥī dūna usratī
 madārisu tanzīlin maḥārisu ḡibtatin
 maḡārisu ta'wīlin fawārisu man'atī
 wa-mauqi'uhā fī 'ālamī l-jabarūti min
 maṣāriqi fathin lil-baṣā'iri mubḥittī
 arā'iku tauḥīdin madāriku zulfatin
 masāliku tamjīdin malā'iku nuṣratī
 wa-manba'uhā bi-l-faiḍi fī kulli 'ālamīn
 li-fāqati nafsin bi-l-ifāqati aṭratī
 fawā'idu ilhāmin rawā'idu ni'matin
 'awā'idu in'āmin mawā'idu na'matī

Resuming in a somewhat lower key, the poet refers again to the 'joining of the rift' (compare lines 1490-1), and illustrates the effect of the supreme Unity upon the senses which no longer keep their distinct functions but are fused together in a concord of total consciousness (1830-69). This phenomenon is given as the explanation of various miracles (1870-1908). Noah was thus brought safely to berth upon Mount al-Judi (the Ararat of Koran xi. 46); Solomon was borne with his army of men and spirits upon the wind (Koran xxi. 81-82), and Bilkis, the Queen of Sheba, was transported to him upon her throne (Koran xxvii. 40-42); Abraham was saved from the fire into which his enemies cast him (Koran xxi. 69), and brought the four slain and dismembered birds together and to life from the far mountains (Koran ii. 262); Moses' rod swallowed up the serpents of Pharaoh's enchanter (Koran x. 80-81), and caused twelve fountains to gush out of the rock (Koran vii. 160); Jacob was healed of his blindness when Joseph's shirt was laid upon his face (Koran vii. 96); at Jesus' prayer a table was sent down from heaven upon the Israelites (Koran v. 114-15), and he healed the blind and the leper, and made a living bird out of clay (Koran iii. 43) (1909-44).

The familiar miracles of the heroes of early Islam—equal to the prophets of old since Muhammad sealed the office of apostleship—also prove the transforming power of Unity. Abu Bakr overcame the false prophet Musailama of the Banu Hanīfa; Omar saved Sāriya in battle by calling to him to take refuge in the mountain when he was many miles away in Medina; Othman was not diverted from reading the Koran when he was murdered; Ali possessed the esoteric interpretation of the Holy Writ (1945-78). So it was and is with

the right-guided and right-guiding saints after them; all are the Prophet's spiritual kindred, and the lover, through the miracle of love at one with the Spirit of Muhammad, is the father of Adam himself. Being born pure of contagion with otherness, his cradle-meditation was upon the Sura called 'The Prophets' (Koran xxi), the tablet upon which he learned to write was the Preserved Tablet laid up in heaven, his favourite reading in childhood was the Sura called 'The Victory' (or in Sufi parlance 'The Revelation', Koran xlviii). The religious code he instituted fulfilled and sealed all other systems (1980-2008). He, as Reality of Realities, is the source of all being and all activity; he in fact is the only agent in all the created world. The poet contrasts again in new interpretation the Divine attributes of Mercy and Wrath (see lines 1577-8), which he equates with the Sufi technical terms 'expansion' and 'contraction' (see Koran ii. 246); where the two states unite, there is total 'nearness' (2009-44).

The mention of Unity provokes the customary increase of tension and involution of thought, the Lover-Beloved addressing the disciple in a series of brilliant images. The poet compares this 'coinage of parables' with those diverse parts which al-Ḥarīrī portrays the hero of his *Maqāmāt* as playing; the play is not to be disregarded, for the story it tells shadows the truth. The natural phenomena of the image in the mirror and the voice's echo are cited as further examples. The transmission of knowledge and the disposition of the mind to know make the same point; the poet calls in the Platonic theory of 'recollection' to assist his argument (2045-129). As the tension relaxes, he is carried forward to a new passage of refreshing lucidity, in which he describes the scenes of the oriental shadow-play as illustrating his point that the 'play' of natural phenomena is not to be disregarded; the sleep of illusion brings with it the veridical dream of reality. The poet offers esoteric interpretations of the strange acts performed by Moses' mysterious companion—the slaying of the lad (Koran xvi. 73), the setting-up of the wall (ibid. 76), and the staving-in of the ship (ibid. 70), (2130-237).

The poet refers to the Tradition beloved of the Sufis, that God said, 'My servant ceases not to draw nigh Me by works of supererogation until I love him; and when I love him, I am his ear so that he hears by Me, and his eye so that he sees by Me, and his tongue so that he speaks by Me, and his hand so that he grasps by Me'. This Tradition is a further proof of the truth of mystical Unity; the 'means' (the physical attributes) are themselves the means of achieving that Unity, and Unity being once attained the means disappear (2238-53).

All natural beauty delights the mystic, for in it he contemplates the perfection of His own creative art. All religions contain indications to the truth of Unity; the 'eyes strayed not' (see Koran liii. 17) in any faith. Men were not created as an 'idle sport' (Koran xxiii. 117), or 'to wander off at random' (Koran lxxv. 36). In all things God's eternal Will is fulfilled, as when He said (according to the Tradition) creating Adam, 'These (the saved) are in Paradise, and I care not; and these (the damned) are in Hell, and I care not'; and this is confirmed amply by the Koran which men recite every morning. There is no room for pantheism in this doctrine of absolute Unity (2254-329).

So Ibn al-Fārīd passes into the final scene of his drama, speaking as with the voice of Muhammad, and referring to the vision of the Spirit hinted at in the Scriptures (Koran liii. 9), and Moses' putting-off of shoes in the holy valley (Koran xx. 12); his sun and moon

set not as did those heavenly bodies which Abraham rejected as objects of worship (Koran vi. 76). The heavens are in his control, and the angels acknowledge his sovereignty. The eternal wisdom still abides unchanged in the world of Spirit; this is the secret knowledge for which the Sufis pray, but those now living drink but the dregs of the cup of knowledge (so at the last the poet returns to the image with which he began), while even the boasted wisdom of the ancients was but the overflow of his abounding and infinite grace (2330-63).

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