

The Interpreter of Desires

*Poem XIII**

Ibn Arabi

1. A ringdove wailed and a sad lover complained, and he was grieved by her trilling note and complaint.
2. Tears flowed from their eyes in distress for her complaint, and 'twas as tho' they (the tears) were fountains.
3. I responded to her in the bereavement caused by the loss of her only child: one who loses an only child is bereaved indeed.
4. I responded to her, while Grief walked between us; she was invisible, but I was clearly seen.
5. In me is a burning desire, from love of the sandy tract of 'Álij, where her tents are and the large-eyed maidens,
6. With murderous glances, languishing: their eyelids are sheaths for glances like swords.
7. I did not cease to swallow the tears proceeding from my malady and to conceal and guard my passion from those who blame me,
8. Until, when the raven's croak announced their departure, separation exposed the desire of a sorrow-stricken lover.
9. They journeyed continuously through the night, they cut the nose-rings of their camels, so that they (the camels) moaned and cried under the litters.
10. I beheld the pangs of death at the time when they loosed the camels' reins and tied their saddle-girths.
11. Oh! Separation together with love's pain is mortal, but love's sorest pain together with meeting is light.
12. None blames me for desiring her, for she is beloved and beautiful wherever she may be.

Commentary by ibn Arabi

1. 'A ringdove,' i.e. the Universal Spirit, born of God and breathed into Man. She is described as having a collar (ring), in reference to the covenant which He laid upon her.

'A sad lover,' i.e. the partial spirit which is in Man.

'Her trilling note,' i.e. the sweet melodies calling him to union with her. This union is the first resurrection at death (...).

2. 'From their eyes': he refers to the partial spirits (...).

'Her complaint': the Universal Spirit, which is the father

of the partial spirits, longs for them even more than they long for her.

3. 'Her only child,' i.e. the special quality which distinguishes her from all things else, viz. her unity (...), whereby she knows the unity of Him who brought her into being. The loss of it consists in her not knowing what it is and in its not being plainly discerned by her.

4. 'She was invisible,' for she does not belong to the world of expression and exposition.

5. 'The sandy tract of 'Alij,' i.e. the subtleties of the acquired or analytic sciences. 'Alij refers to the striving after good works (...).

'Her tents,' the veils which conceal these sciences.

'The large-eyed maidens,' i.e. the sciences which descend upon the solitary recluse.

6. 'With murderous glances,' i.e. they cause him to pass away from his own personality.

'Languishing,' i.e. they incline towards the solitary. The term 'glances' indicates that they are sciences of contemplation and revelation, not of faith and mystery, and that they proceed from the manifestation of forms.

7. He refers to a state of concealment which is characteristic of the Malámatís.†

9. 'They journeyed continuously': since the object sought is infinite, the return from it is also a journey towards it. There is no migration except from one Divine Name to another.

'They cut the nose-rings of their camels,' on account of the violent haste with which they travelled.

11. 'Meeting,' a kind of presence (...) in which there is no passing away (...).

12. He says, 'The aspirations and desires of all seekers are attached to Her, yet She is essentially unknown to them hence they all love Her, yet none blames another for loving Her. Similarly, every individual soul and the adherents of every religion seek salvation, but since they do not know if they are also ignorant of the way that leads to it, though everyone believes that he is on the right way. All strife between people of different religions and sects is about the way that leads to salvation, not about salvation itself. If anyone knew that he was taking the wrong way, he would not persevere in his error.' Accordingly the author says that She manifests Herself everywhere, like the sun, and that every person who beholds Her deems that She is with him in Her essence, so that envy and jealousy are removed from their hearts.

† A Sufi sect or school who emphasized the need of incurring blame (*malámat*) for God's sake and of concealing spiritual merit, lest they should fall into self-conceit. [Reynold A. Nicholson]

* Ibn al-‘Arabi, Muhyi’ddín. *Tarjumán al-Ashwáq: A Collection of Mystical Odes*. Edited and translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911. 72-74.

El intérprete de los deseos

*Poema XIII**

Ibn Arabi

1. Una tórtola gemía y un triste amante se quejaba, y él se afligía por su trino y su queja.
2. Las lágrimas fluían de los ojos angustiados de ambos por la queja de ella, y (las lágrimas) eran como fuentes.
3. Le respondí en el dolor causado por la pérdida de su hijo único: quien pierde a un hijo único en verdad está de luto.
4. Le respondí, mientras Aflicción caminaba entre nosotros; ella era invisible pero yo podía ser visto con claridad.
5. En mí habita un deseo ardiente de amor por el tramo arenoso de ‘Álij, donde están sus tiendas y las doncellas de ojos grandes,
6. De miradas que matan, languidecientes: sus párpados son fundas para miradas que son como sables.
7. Yo no casaba de tragarme las lágrimas procedentes de mi dolencia y de ocultar y guardar mi pasión de aquellos que me culpan,
8. Hasta que, cuando el croar del cuervo anunció su partida, la separación expuso el deseo de un amante afligido.
9. Ellos viajaron sin parar durante toda la noche, cortaron los aros de la nariz de sus camellos, para que (los camellos) gimieran y lloraran bajo su lecho de paja.
10. Yo contemplé los dolores de muerte en el momento en el que ellos soltaron las riendas de los camellos y ataron las cinchas.
11. ¡Oh!, la separación junto con el dolor del amor es mortal, pero el dolor más intenso junto con el encuentro es más ligero.
12. Nadie me culpa por desearla, porque ella es bienamada y hermosa dondequiera que se encuentre.