



Arabian Love Poems

Nizar Kabbani

Translated by
Bassam K. Frangieh and Clementina R. Brown,
with an introduction by Bassam K. Frangieh

Nizar Kabbani's poetry has been described as "more powerful than all the Arab regimes put together" (*Lebanese Daily Star*). Reflecting on his recent death, Sulhi Al-Wadi wrote (in *Tishreen*), "Qabbani is like water, bread, and the sun in every Arab heart and house. In his poetry the harmony of the heart, and in his blood the melody of love." *Arabian Love Poems* is the first English-language collection of his work.

Kabbani was a poet of great simplicity—direct, spontaneous, musical, using the language of everyday life. He was a ceaseless campaigner for women's rights, and his verses praise the beauty of the female body, and of love. He was an Arab nationalist, yet he criticized Arab dictators and the lack of freedom in the Arab world. He was the poet of Damascus: "I am the Damascene. If you dissect my body, grapes and apples will come out of it. If you open my veins with your knife, you will hear in my blood the voices of those who have departed."

Frangieh and Brown's elegant translations are accompanied by the striking Arabic texts of the poems, penned by Kabbani especially for this collection.

Nizar Kabbani was born in Syria in 1923, to a traditional, well-to-do family. He served in Syria's diplomatic corp for more than 20 years (1945–1966), but settled for political reasons in London. He died on April 30, 1998; at his request, he was buried in Damascus.

ISBN 0-89410-881-6



Nizar Kabbani

Arabian



Love Poems

Arabian Love Poems



Nizar Kabbani

Full Arabic and English Texts

Translated by
Bassam K. Frangieh
and Clementina R. Brown

A Three Continents Book



BOULDER
LONDON



Published in the United States of America in 1999 by
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
1800 30th Street, Boulder, Colorado 80301

and in the United Kingdom by
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU

Arabic text of poems © 1993 by Nizar Kabbani
English text of poems © 1993 by Bassam K. Frangieh
and Clementina R. Brown
Preface and Introduction © 1999 by Bassam K. Frangieh

All rights reserved by Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Qabbānī, Nizār.

[Poems. English & Arabic. Selections]

Arabian love poems / Nizar Kabbani = Qasā'id hubb 'Arabiyyah /
Nizār Qabbānī.—Rev. ed.

p. cm.

English and Arabic.

Translated by Bassam K. Frangieh and Clementina R. Brown, with an
introduction by Bassam K. Frangieh.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0-89410-881-6 (pb : alk. paper)

I. Qabbānī, Nizār.—Translations into English. 2. Qabbānī, Nizār.—
Translations into English. I. Frangieh, Bassam K. II. Brown,
Clementina R. III. Title. IV. Title: Qasā'id hubb 'Arabiyyah.

PJ7858.A2A24 1998

892.71'6—dc21

98-42796

CIP

British Cataloguing in Publication Data

A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book
is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the requirements
of the American National Standard for Permanence of
Paper for Printed Library Materials Z39.48-1984.

5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Preface ix

Introduction i

From *The Book of Love*

Oh green bird	19
My lover asks me	20
When I fell in love	21
You still ask me about the day of my birth	22
Oh, my love	23
All words	24
I hadn't told them about you	25
I hate to love like other people	26
Your love	27
From the moment you loved me	28
When I am in love (no. 1)	29
When I am in love (no. 2)	30
I love you when you cry	31
I don't know my birthday	32
Your eyes are like a rainy night	33
I wrote the name of the one I loved	34
Oh traveler	35
Our love	36
Don't worry	37
When I travel into your eyes	38
Like a fish	39
I am the prophet of love	40
Undress yourself	41
I have changed so much	42
Because my love for you	43

CONTENTS

— From *One Hundred Love Letters* —

1. I want to write different words for you 47
2. That March morning when you came walking toward me 53
 3. When I told you 59
4. When God bestowed women on men 65
 5. I was never a king 71
 6. Why do you erase history 73
 7. I taught the children of the world 75
 8. Pure like a necklace of jasmine 77
 9. I love you 79
 10. Your love took me 81
 11. I wear you 83
12. My kingdom of little things (*excerpt*) 87
 13. Out of my desire 89
 14. The two years 95
 17. When I am with you 97
 18. I'm not a teacher 99
 25. My letters to you 101
 28. In the summer 102
 33. Every time I kiss you 103
 35. My love runs to you 104
 37. Every man 105
 38. Stay out of my sight 106
 39. When rain fell on both of us 107
 40. I curl up 108
 41. I hope one day 109
 43. When you visit me 110
 47. Every time you traveled 111
 48. Did you ever think 113
 49. The day I met you 114
 50. Close all my books 115
 51. Yesterday I thought 116
 52. Please 117
 55. Why do you ask me to write you 119
 57. Pull out the dagger buried in my side 121
 59. From the airplane (*excerpt*) 123
60. Before I entered the cities of your mouth (*excerpt*) 125

CONTENTS

61. It is all over (*excerpt*) 127
64. What would your femininity say about me (*excerpt*) 129
 65. When you accompany me 131
 69. When you danced with me that night 133
 71. When you find a man 135
 78. I knew 137
 80. Your departure is not a tragedy 138
 81. While Rome burned, you burned 139
 83. Do you have a solution 141
 86. Drink your coffee 145
87. I am accused of being like Shahrayar 149
88. Why do you telephone, my lady 157
91. You wear hippie clothes 163
99. Be assured, my lady 167
100. This is my last letter 171

— Other Poems —

- About Sea Love 179
- I Learn by Reading Your Body 181
- To My Love on New Year's Eve 191
- Will You Allow Me to Take a Holiday? 193
- Time Travels with You When You Leave 195
- Love During House Arrest 199
- Women, The Knowledge of God 209
- I Will Tell You: I Love You 215
- The Talk of Her Hands 218
- I Am Afraid 219
- Who Is the Prettiest? 221
- I Conquer the Universe with Words 223

About the Book 225

Preface

ON APRIL 30, 1998, NIZAR KABBANI, THE MOST POPULAR ARAB poet of the twentieth century, died at age 75 in London. The battle for his life, waged against complications resulting from several heart attacks, lasted four months. Syrian president Hafez Al-Assad, who had just two months earlier decided to name a major street after Kabbani in Abu Roummana, the most prestigious district in Damascus, dispatched his own plane to carry Kabbani's body back to the city of his birth. Kabbani had asked in his will to be buried in his native land: "I want my body to be transported after my death to Damascus to be buried there with my people." Kabbani continued in his will, "Damascus is the womb that taught me poetry, creativity and the alphabet of Jasmine. I want to return home like the bird returns home and like the baby returns to his mother's bosom."

Kabbani, a devoted and committed Arab nationalist, was "hailed across Syria as a national hero," wrote the *New York Times* on the day following his death.¹ Al-Assad sent a member of his cabinet to extend his personal condolences to the family, and Kabbani's coffin was draped with the Syrian flag in one of the largest funeral services in the country's history. On the afternoon of a torrid May 4, a massive number of people crammed into the street in front of Badr Mosque, where the poet's funeral took place. The newspaper *Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat* estimated that more than ten thousand people walked in the three-hour funeral procession to Bab al-Shaghour, where the poet was laid to rest next to his father, mother, sister, and son.² The mourners included the minister of defense, the governor of Damascus, other high-level government officials, Syrian Ba'thist leaders, Arab writers, members of influential organizations, unionists, artists, and journalists. Traditionally, Syrian women have not participated in such large public processions. Still, a large number of women attended the funeral—women who had been deeply touched over the years by Kabbani's verses, which spoke directly to them, about them, and for them.

Outside of his native Syria, the poet was mourned by millions of Arabs all over the world. Major newspapers reported on the loss: The *London Times* described Kabbani as "the Arab World's greatest love poet in modern times,"³ while the *Washington Post* called him "the master of

the love verse.⁴ The *New York Times* obituary quoted a Syrian poet who said that Kabbani has been "as necessary to our lives as air."⁵ Most radio and television stations in the Arab world interrupted their regular programs to announce the sad news of Kabbani's death. Virtually every Arabic-language newspaper carried extensive front-page coverage of his death, with additional articles on his life and achievements. For weeks, not a day passed without a major commentary in the Arabic press detailing his significance to Arab society.

Leading Arab intellectuals expressed great sorrow at the vacuum Kabbani left in Arabic poetry and culture. Poet Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati, a pioneer in the free-verse movement that swept the Arab world in the 1950s, said: "The poetry of Nizar Kabbani has been a mirror of an entire age and served as a history for Arab aspirations and hopes that were crushed after the June 1967 Arab defeat. He stood alone in his poetic style and diction with a unique texture. The many poets who tried to imitate him have all failed."⁶ Lebanese critic and professor Muhammed Najm, who recently edited a two-volume set of literary criticism in honor of Kabbani's work, reflected that "no Arab poet has surpassed Kabbani in either originality or innovation. Once he fully mastered classical Arabic poetry, he moved on to modern Western literature, then produced profound poems with extreme simplicity."⁷

Novelist Tayeb Salih commented that "an Arab World without Nizar Kabbani is very difficult to imagine. Kabbani devoted his life to the Arab World for fifty years, engaging himself in all social situations, in all victories and defeats, in our sadness and joy, and he stood at the heart of all Arab events, always defying and provoking, encouraging and satirizing. Events got their full meanings only when he described them. Victories were not considered victories until Kabbani said that they were victories, and the dimensions of defeats were not clearly understood until Kabbani pointed them out." It is as if, Salih added in his *Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat* piece, "lovers did not learn the meaning of love until they read the poetry of Nizar Kabbani."⁸

To say that Kabbani was the most popular and famous of contemporary Arab poets is not to claim that he was the most skilled. Others far surpassed him in vision and sophistication; but their complex verses, charged with metaphysics and metaphor, were accessible only to the intellectuals and the highly educated. Kabbani's verses addressed the crises facing the people: the realities of high unemployment, the challenge of earning enough to bring home bread and rice to one's family, the

interrogations and investigations made by the police and secret service against innocent citizens, the series of dictators and their political mafias in the years since independence. Kabbani wrote in a language that was close to the language spoken in the home and in the street. He used images close to the heart, with a mystical, penetrating musicality that altered Arab political consciousness. As a result, his poems were read in cafés, in parks, in office buildings, and on street corners. His was a strong voice for the millions of oppressed Arabs who would not talk for fear of political or social persecution. He will always be remembered as the poet who was more politically effective than any modern Arab political party. His poetry was described as "more powerful than all the Arab regimes put together."⁹

Readers will also surely miss Kabbani's prose. He was a writer sought by the most influential newspapers and magazines in the Arab world, and his columns gained readers for any paper lucky enough to publish them. People anxiously awaited his boldly provocative criticisms of the most recent political developments in the Middle East. He was always on top of current events. Always rebellious. Always dissatisfied. Always loud and confrontational. The masses saw in his words a compass amid the chaos of Arab reality and its unclear future direction. Kabbani was a mainstream leader who called for resistance and radicalism in the shadow of a failed Middle East peace process and a stagnant Arab culture, refusing to accept either. Along with a number of other nationalist writers, he opposed normalization with Israel. He openly battled Naguib Mahfouz, the Egyptian Nobel Prize winner for literature, who supported normalization.

Kabbani was unique: Although he attacked rulers, he was never thrown in jail. Although his books were banned in some Arab countries, he remained the world's best-selling Arab poet. Although he addressed his verses to the poor and the oppressed, he never associated with them, unlike other poets such as Al-Bayati, who spent time in cafés and public places, drinking coffee with ordinary people, listening to their problems, and offering advice. Kabbani never dropped a bourgeois mentality and an elitist attitude.

(This last comment is not intended as criticism. The Syrian bourgeois class during the French mandate and in the 1940s, when Kabbani was in his formative years, was divided for the most part into two groups. The first group "sold out," serving as local agents for the imperialists, imitating the French, visiting casinos, dancing the tango, and spending their

summers in Paris. The second group, which included the Kabbani family, was the "nationalist" bourgeois: They played a major role in provoking the people to struggle against the French mandate and in developing a national political consciousness; they also served as arms brokers both to finance the nationalist movement and to supply the members of the resistance with weapons for fighting against the French occupation. Kabbani's father was one of the national bourgeois who helped to finance and organize the Syrian National Movement.)

There is no Arab poet of equal caliber to Kabbani on the near horizon. He remains a powerful psychological outlet for millions who express their misery and pain through his verses. Those verses have been a necessity of life to many Arabs, from Morocco to the Gulf. Thus, in lamenting his death, Sulhi Al-Wadi wrote: "Kabbani is like water, bread, and the sun in every Arab heart and house. In his poetry the harmony of the heart, and in his blood the melody of love. His body has departed, but his soul is hovering over the Damascus to which he bid farewell with jasmine to be received with laurels. . . . Good-bye Nizar."¹⁰

* * *

Lynne Rienner called me in Cairo in May 1998 to express her interest in publishing a new edition of Nizar Kabbani's *Arabian Love Poems*, which I had translated with Clementina Brown in 1993. That call came at a time when I was both saddened by the poet's recent death and disappointed at the unavailability of the love poems, the Arabic text of which Kabbani had written in his own hand.

In the weeks following the poet's death, I read a daily deluge of obituaries and articles on his life and achievements. The more I read, the more I realized that no gesture of appreciation could equal ensuring the availability of his poetry. This new, revised edition of *Arabian Love Poems*, particularly meaningful so soon after Kabbani's death, is offered as a sincere appreciation of the elegance of Arabic poetry, and as a way to keep Kabbani's legacy alive in the English-speaking world.

Bassam K. Frangieh

NOTES

1. *New York Times*, May 1, 1998.
2. *Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat*, May 5, 1998.
3. *London Times*, May 14, 1998.
4. *Washington Post*, May 1, 1998.
5. *New York Times*, May 1, 1998.
6. *Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat*, May 1, 1998.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Lebanese Daily Star*, May 5, 1998.
10. *Tishreen*, May 2, 1998.

Introduction

1

Bassam K. Frangieh

NIZAR KABBANI, THE MOST INFLUENTIAL AND BEST-KNOWN Arab poet in modern times, penetrated and captured the hearts and souls of millions of Arabs. During a career that produced fifty volumes of poetry, Kabbani became the Arab world's greatest love poet. He was a champion of women's rights, urging women to take control of their lives, bodies, and destinies. A proponent of women's liberation, he initiated a change in attitudes about sexuality, erotic freedom, and the right of women to celebrate ecstasy.¹ He asserted that freedom of the body was a path to freedom of the spirit for everyone, thereby helping the new generation to erase the guilt, fear, and embarrassment that had been associated with sex.² He also strived to change the repressive relationship between the two sexes to one of openness.

Kabbani was born in Damascus, Syria, on March 21, 1923, to a traditional well-to-do family. He was the second of six children—two girls and four boys. During his youth, the resistance movement against the French mandate was mobilizing the population, and the modern nation of Syria was in the process of being born. Along with the other merchants and professionals, his father, Tawfiq Kabbani, a respected national figure, helped finance the national movement and was one of its leaders. The spacious Kabbani house, located in Al-Shaghur, the most conservative section of the city, was used for secret resistance meetings, and the child Nizar would sit in the huge courtyard near fountains and flowers listening to political leaders speak out against the French occupation.

There were calls for revolution and freedom, and plans for strikes and demonstrations were often completed in the Kabbani home. Early one morning when Nizar was ten, French soldiers entered the house and arrested his father, imprisoning him for a time in the Syrian desert outside Palmyra. The example set by his father, who was willing to sacrifice for political and social freedom, laid the foundation for Kabbani's later work and influenced his poetic development.

Kabbani may also have been influenced by his father's uncle, Abu Khalil al-Kabbani, who was an unusual and gifted nineteenth-century

Syrian figure. Abu Khalil was a well-known author, composer, singer, dancer, actor, and poet who was strongly influenced by Western theater. He translated Moliere into Arabic and established the first theater company in Syria. He long dreamed of creating a "Broadway district" in the city of Damascus.

Because women were not allowed to act in the Syrian theater during Abu Khalil's time, he gave female roles to young men with high-pitched voices. This female impersonation enraged the sheikhs and religious figures in Damascus, and they sent a delegation to the capital of the Ottoman Empire to complain to the caliph. A decree was issued to close Abu Khalil's theater, the only avant-garde theater in the Middle East at that time. Forced into exile, Abu Khalil went to Egypt, where he soon began to contribute to the establishment of the Egyptian theater at the end of the century.

Nizar Kabbani attended primary and secondary school at the National College of Science, located in the heart of old Damascus. This college, established for the Damascene bourgeois, combined in its curriculum Arabic and French languages and cultures, in contrast to the missionary schools, where only French language and culture were emphasized. The faculty of the National College included leading intellectuals, writers, and poets, and Kabbani was fortunate to have been taught by the gifted poet Khalil Mardam.

Kabbani completed secondary school and then earned his bachelor's degree in law from Damascus University. Although it was his major, he did not like law, preferring instead to jot down love poems in the margins of his notebooks during classroom lectures.

According to the poet, he came from a family that falls in love easily: "Love was born in my family as natural as sweetness is born in apples." For generations, men in the Kabbani family were known for falling in love with the first pair of beautiful eyes they saw. Wissal Kabbani, one of the poet's sisters, was herself a martyr to love. Kabbani was fifteen when Wissal committed suicide, "simply and poetically," because she couldn't marry the man she loved. The image of his sister dying for the sake of love lived on in his memory, and he often thought of her "angelic face and her beautiful smile" while she was dying.¹

Nizar Kabbani believed that his sister's suicide may have been one of the factors that led him to devote himself to love poetry. He wrote, "The death of my sister, the martyr, broke something inside me and left on the surface of the lake of my childhood more than one ripple and more than

He wrote his first poem in 1939, at age sixteen, and in 1944 published his first collection of love poems, *Qalat li al-Samra'* (The Brunette Said to Me). In this collection, the twenty-one-year-old poet described how he had discovered the world of women and the world of love. Full of sexual images, the work became available during a time when love and sex were forbidden topics in Arab society, especially among the youth, and it sold out within a month. Verses in the collection spread like wildfire, and one poem, "Your Breast," catapulted Kabbani to fame. In it, the poet talks to a brunette:

Unlock the treasury!
Lay bare your burning breasts
Don't smother your imprisoned fire.
Your breasts are the two most beautiful paintings,
Two balls of silk spun by the generous morning.
So come close to me my little cat
Let yourself free,
Come close,
Think of the fate of your breasts
With the turn of the seasons.
Don't panic,
Foolish is she who hides her breasts
And lets her youth pass without being kissed.
I pulled her body to me
She neither resisted nor spoke,
Intoxicated she swayed against me
And offered her quivering breasts
Saying in drunken passion
"I cannot resist touching fire."²

Students gathered together to recite this poem, copying lines in their schoolbooks, and verses appeared on every schoolroom blackboard in Damascus. In appreciation of his young fans, Kabbani noted, "Throughout my poetic history, students have been my troops, my voice, and my passport to the world."³

The collection—twenty-eight poems written in a new style, simple, direct, and honest—appeared toward the end of World War II, when Damascene society was undergoing a transformation. Previously, literary life had been isolated from the people and molded by rigid rules and tra-

struggle began, which Kabbani embodied. Expressing the needs of the new generation for openness and social freedom, he broke the entrenched walls of silence about love and sex and established a contemporary, liberated love poetry. The younger generation also responded enthusiastically to the poet's style, in which classical Arabic was linked with colloquial words. Kabbani often used pure Damascene idioms in his verses. His work was read by young men and women in their bedrooms and in the streets. They felt that this poet was speaking their language and using a vocabulary of yearning, excitement, love, lust, and rebellion—a true expression of their lives.⁷ Predictably, the poet was attacked by conservatives in Syria and other Arab states who had a vested interest in traditional lifestyles.

Harshly criticized by the clergy and religious leaders as had been his uncle earlier in the century, Kabbani also was attacked by the media. Among his most bitter critics was Sheikh Ali Tantawi, who published a series of caustic articles in *Al-Risala Journal*. Sheikh Tantawi wrote:

A year ago in Damascus a little book was published with a glossy, smooth cover like the fancy paper which is used to wrap chocolate at weddings. The book is tied with a red ribbon like the one the French used at the beginning of their occupation of Damascus to girdle the hips of some women. This book is supposed to be poetry but the verses are of equal length only if you measure them with a ruler. The collection contains a description of a shameless whore and every festering and sinful thing. It is a realistic description but without imagination because the author is not an imaginative man. Rather he is a spoiled school boy, rich and dear to his parents.⁸

A year after the controversial collection was published, Kabbani joined the Syrian diplomatic corps, subsequently serving in Cairo, Ankara, London, Madrid, Beijing, and Beirut. This experience played an important role in his life and his art, for his ever more complex and allusive style seems to reflect his long immersion in foreign cultures.⁹ Nonetheless, he continued to publish poems in which he described his deepening feelings about women and his sympathies for their deprivations and unequal treatment.

In 1948, he published his second collection, *Tufulat Nahd* (Young Breast), another important achievement. The relative openness of Cairo,

his first post, had further liberated the artist in him and refined his poetic language, introducing sensuous images within a complex aesthetic framework and symbolic expressions. In his collection *Qasa'id* (Poems), published in 1956, Kabbani further explored the inner world of women and established new trends in feelings and thought. Here, for the first time, he expressed himself in the first-person feminine. This is an important aspect of his poetry, through which the reader experiences the hidden world of women and hears their bitter words against men and society. In a sense, he was doing what his artistic uncle had done—using male voices to speak for the generations of silenced women.¹⁰

Kabbani said it better in the introduction to his collection *Yawmiyyat Imra'a La-Mubaliya* (Diary of an Indifferent Woman), 1968, where he elaborated further on the societal pressures on Arab women: "This is the book of every woman . . . sentenced and executed before she could open her mouth. The East needs a man like me to put on the clothes of a woman and to borrow her bracelets and eyelashes in order to write about her. Is it not an irony that I cry out with a woman's voice while women cannot speak up on their own?"¹⁰

From the very beginning of his poetic career, Kabbani held Arab men and the society they dominated responsible for the wrongs done to women. He early understood the problems of women, and his position on the issue of women's rights remained unchanged. His poetry, early and late, with its social and aesthetic dimensions, made a difference. Kabbani, allying himself through his art with liberal forces at work in the Arab world, courageously produced vivid verses that created an atmosphere encouraging women to abandon the veil, to choose their marriage partners, and to gain a modest level of independence.

In the spring of 1966, Kabbani left the diplomatic service to devote himself entirely to his poetry. He remained in Beirut, his last post, and founded the publishing house *Mansurat Nizar Kabbani* to produce his works. Kabbani wrote: "When I sat behind the desk and lit the first cigarette in my Beirut office, I felt like a king with real authority."¹¹ The concept of love that Kabbani developed in his 1966 publication "Painting with Words" was one result of his twenty years of emotional, social, and poetic experience outside of Syria.

In his 1972 collection, *Ash'ar Kharija 'ala al-Qanun* (Poems Outside the Law), the reader finds symbolism intermixed with romanticism. It is a sharp and sensitive collection in which each poem changes into a symbol. The beautiful poem "Tanwi'at Musiqiyah 'an Imra'ah Mutajarridah"

(Musical Variations of a Naked Woman), for example, is a creative and innovative work depicting the feelings of a poet before two naked breasts. His feelings expand to include visions and images transferring the movements of the breasts into voices, smells, tastes, flames, and colors.¹² The poem is an artistic mixture of images, thoughts, and feelings, rich in details:

Two beautiful roosters
Crow on your chest
And sleep.
I remained sleepless.
The hand-embroidered sheet
Was covered with birds,
Roses and palm trees.

The fields of Ceylon,
The forests of spices,
And the coconuts
Call me,
Keeping me from sleep.
My nerves are pieces of straw,
My face a newspaper clipping,
I am not a killer,
But the jumping shark
In the gulf of your wild breasts
Seduced me into committing a crime.

Your half-open red gown
Revealing two firm breasts
Sliced my wound open.
I dreamt of you in your bath,
The iridescent bubbles
Floated by the chandelier, flicked my skin,
Broke me on the ground into pieces.

Your breasts were two baby lambs
Nuzzling on the grass of my chest.

Cashmere fleeced my face, my shirt.
I, shattered, glittered on the floor like beads . . .
Drinking coffee,
And your wet gown
Roused me,
Millions of gifts you offered.

Your breasts were two unbridled horses
Drinking water from the bottom of mirrors. . . .¹³

Kabbani rejected the silencing of love, just as he opposed societal values based on repression. Many of his verses sought to incite women to liberate themselves from constricting society.¹⁴

Love me and say it out loud,
I refuse that you love me mutely¹⁵

There is no poem by Kabbani that is free of a female presence, and there is nothing about women that Kabbani could not transform as an inspiration for his verse.

I become ugly when I don't love
And I become ugly when I don't write¹⁶

The supreme importance of women to Kabbani is indicated in the following verse, which depicts women as a source of protection, salvation, and supernatural power in the face of death:

Nothing protects us from death
Except woman and writing¹⁷

The poet paid a great deal of attention to the emotional lives of women and was fond of the "little things" that shape how they think and feel. In his poem "Shu'un Saghirah" (Little Things), he speaks in a woman's voice to reveal the way she feels when she is in love, describing the details and inner world that fill her life and enrich her imagination, and conveying her passion, warmth, and innocence:

Little things
Which mean the world to me
Pass by you
Without making an impression.
From these things
I build palaces,
Live on them for months
And spin many tales from them,
One thousand skies,
And one thousand islands,
But these little things
Mean nothing to you.

When the telephone rings in our house
I run to it
With the joy of a small child,
I embrace the emotionless machine
And squeeze
Its cold wires
And I wait
For your warm, full voice to come to me
Like the music of falling stars
And the sound of tumbling jewels.
I cry
Because you have thought of me
And have called me
From the invisible world.

When I return to my room in the evening
And take off my dress,
I feel your hands
Mercifully wrapping around my arms.
Although you are not in my room
I worship
The place where your warm hands
Held the sleeve of my blue dress
And cry.¹⁸

Kabbani played an important role in bringing poetic language closer to the language used in everyday life. Poet Salma Jayyusi argues that Kabbani did more than any other contemporary Arab poet to unite the language of poetry with contemporary language, both written and vernacular. In much of his erotic and sociopolitical verse he managed to approximate the rhythms of common speech. His poetry produces an instant effect on the audience. His contemporary voice is heard not only in the use of the single word, but also, and this is most important, in his style, his word arrangement, and the very spirit of the language.¹⁹

Leading critic Ihsan Abbas has argued that, if not for Nizar Kabbani and some of the poetry of Salah Abdul Sabour, love would not have taken the form of an independent poetic theme in the Arab world. Before these two poets, love had been mixed and blended with other themes. Kabbani gave the theme of love distinct dimensions that guaranteed its independent existence, and as a result, he was named the poet of love. Kabbani made love one part of an equation between two great powers: women and poetry.²⁰

Kabbani also addressed problems facing women from a psychological or sociological point of view. The reaction of a woman to an unfaithful husband is examined in "Risalah Min Sayyidah Haqidah" (Letter from an Angry Woman). The problem of a pregnant woman whose lover turns his back on her is the subject of "Hubla" (Pregnant). How a woman might express her sexual hunger when the man close to her does not satisfy her is the theme of "Aw'iyat al-Sadid" (Vessels of Pus). And how this same woman then ceases from making love to men and begins to make love with women is the subject of "Al-Qasidah al-Shirah" (The Evil Poem).²¹

Kabbani's poetry was not inspired by a single love or a single woman; it was the product of multiple relationships and much experience. His love had a universal tone and universal dimensions—a love for the entire world. He felt that he was part of the land, society, culture, and history, and that each word a poet puts on paper carries within it an entire humanity. "Woman for me is a continent that I travelled to, but she is certainly not the entire world. Love for me embraces the entire universe. It exists in the soil and water and in the night; in the wounds of fighters and in the eyes of children; in the revolutions of students and in the furor of angry men. Woman is a seaport among many seaports that provided me with bread, water, silk, and incense, but the rest of the ports continue calling to my ship."²²

Kabbani saw in women a revolution and a means of liberation for both men and women. He linked women's rights with the war for social liberation in the Arab world, maintaining: "Unless we stop considering women as sex objects, there will be no liberation. Sexual repression is the biggest problem in the Arab World." He called for an end to the game of love behind closed doors: "I have moved my bed to the open air and I have written my love poems on trees in public parks . . . to put an end to secretive and marshal laws imposed on the body of the Arab woman and make love legitimate."²³ "People who are possessed with sex, he wrote, 'cannot write, think, or undertake any civilized achievement.'²⁴ Thus, he was convinced that sexual repression is one reason behind the economic backwardness of the Arab world, and that any revolution concerned solely with an individual's thoughts and not with his or her body is only half a revolution.

* * *

Kabbani believed that, ideally, art should be able to lift the veil from tragedy without seeking solutions. He touched upon his subject with the tenderness and delicacy of a butterfly, like a painter using his brush.²⁵ His skillful and hidden techniques require careful study.

Poetic language is the real key to Kabbani's work and was his most important achievement. "I departed from the dictionary and dealt with vocabulary that everyone used. I included words that are hot, fresh, and mixed with the flesh of human beings and the incidents in their daily lives." As he saw it, his task as a poet was to take poetry from the lips of individuals and return it to them. His words were always warm and directed to innocent, simple people, to those who "could not find clothes to wear so they wore a poem."²⁶ He portrayed the reality of his audience.

Kabbani also was an indisputable master of poetry readings. His readings were exceptional cultural events, and millions of Arabs gathered to listen to him in person, on television, or on the radio, affirming the importance of poetry in the lives of Arabs and in the molding of their consciousness. In Sudan, ten thousand people attended one of his open-air readings. During the Arab League's 1980 poetry festival in Tunis, he read his powerful poem "Ana Ya Sadiqati Mut'abun Bi'urubati" (My Friend, I Am Tired of My Arabism), which was broadcast on Tunisian National Television; it is said that the broadcast was watched by everyone in the country who had access to a television, and by the next day the

poem had spread throughout the Middle East, where its verses can be found to this day framed on walls in homes.

More than those of any other contemporary Arab poet, Kabbani's poems have been set to music and recorded. Since popular music in the Arab world has a massive audience, these recordings have broadened Kabbani's appeal even further, capturing the hearts of millions of listeners and flowing from many lips. His verses serve as a bridge between popular music and modern poetry, and they have enriched popular Arabic music with poetic rhythms and nuances.

* * *

Although Kabbani mixed romanticism and symbolism with realism, his work is difficult to classify into one school or movement of poetic thought. He himself was well aware of this fact. In his 1990 volume *Hal Tasma'in Sahil Ahzani?* (Do You Hear the Neigh of My Sadness?), for example, he wrote: "Don't bother to classify me. I'm a poet outside classification, description and specifications. I'm not a traditionalist, a modernist, classicist, neoclassicist, romantic, nor a futurist, an impressionist, or surrealist. I'm a mixture that no laboratory can analyze. I'm a mixture of freedom. This is the word that I have been seeking for fifty years and I only found it this moment."²⁷

* * *

It was in 1954 that Kabbani added another taboo to his poetry: politics. In that year he published "Khubbz wa Hashish wa Qamar" (Bread, Hashish, and Moon), in which he harshly criticized the mistakes of the Arabs, attacking all Arab leaders in his demand for radical change. More than a decade later, after the Arab defeat in the Six Day War, he announced his commitment to political poetry:

O my sad homeland
You have changed me
In a single moment
From the poet writing of love and longing
To a poet writing with a knife²⁸

"Woman has been my beloved for fifty years and still is," he wrote, "but I added to her a second wife; her name is Homeland."²⁹

Kabbani's growing commitment to political poetry was not a surprise. The first poem he wrote had a nationalist theme, and he kept touching on other political and social themes.³⁰ His love and compassion for his country and his longing for his land were always strong, reflecting his family's deep roots in the national and social struggles in the Arab world. Traveling in Andalusia, he was swept by a storm of yearning for his homeland:

In the narrow streets of Cordova
I reached into my pockets more than once
To pull out the keys
To our house in Damascus³¹

In 1956, he wrote "The Story of Rachel Schwartzberg," in which he summarized in poetic verses the story of the Zionist movement and the miserable situation of Palestinians living and struggling in the diaspora. Also in 1956, during the aggression of Britain, France, and Israel against Egypt, he wrote "Letter from a Soldier on the Suez Front," denouncing the attackers and depicting the heroism of the Egyptians as they defended their land. In 1961 he wrote "Jamila Buhayred," in which he described that woman's bravery and her prominent role in the Algerian struggle against the French.³²

"Bread, Hashish, and Moon" (1954), however, was perhaps his most famous sociopolitical poem. In it he shook the foundations of Arab society by revealing a collapsing social system and calling for immediate change. The poet described in clear words the miserable situation of the masses who live in poverty, superstition, and backwardness:

When the moon is born in the east,
The white roofs sleep
Beneath the heaps of light,
People leave their shops and depart in groups
To meet the moon,
Carrying their bread and songs to the mountaintop,
And their drugs,
Where they buy and sell fantasies
And images,

And die if the moon comes to life.
What does that luminous disc
Do to my land,
To the land of the prophets,
To the land of the simple,
The chewers of tobacco and dealers of narcotics,
What does the moon do to us,
That we lose our pride
And live only to beg from heaven?
What does heaven have
For the lazy and the weak? . . .
They spread out their fine and elegant carpets
And console themselves with an opium
Called destiny and fate
In this land, the land of the simple.³³

After the poem was published, the Syrian parliament met to discuss its implications, and some members of parliament demanded that its author be expelled from the Syrian foreign service.

The poem "Hawamish 'ala Daftar al-Naksah" (Marginal Notes on the Book of Defeat), which Kabbani wrote immediately after the 1967 Arab defeat, contained harsh criticism for the political, psychological, and strategic mistakes of the Arabs. This poem resulted in pitting both the right and the left against him because he attacked all Arab leaders without exception, calling for democracy, freedom, and justice:

It is not surprising that we have lost the war.
For we fought it
With all the East's rhetorical talents
And empty heroism.

.....
The secret of our tragedy:
Our cries are more powerful than our voices,
Our swords taller than our men.

.....
Our skins are numbed,
Our souls bankrupt,
Our days wasted in witchcraft, chess and sleep.
.....

O Sultan, O my lord,
 Because I came close to your deaf walls,
 Trying to reveal my sadness and my misfortune,
 I was beaten with shoes.
 Your soldiers forced me to eat out of my shoes,
 O Sultan, O my lord,
 You have lost the war twice
 Because half of us has no tongue—
 What value are people with no voice?³⁴

The poem found a large audience among the many Arabs who read in it what they had wanted to say but were not able to put into words.

As happens to many artists of courage and vision, Kabbani paid a high price for writing political poetry. At one time or another, most of the Arab regimes have censored his books. In Egypt, after the publication of "Marginal Notes on the Book of Defeat," all of Kabbani's poetry, including his verses set to music, was banned; he was not allowed to enter the country, and there were calls for a trial. Eventually, however, after a personal appeal to Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Naser, Kabbani was given permission to travel in Egypt and his music and poetry were available again.

Kabbani's message is clear and consistent: the political and social structures in the Arab world must change to better represent the people. He vowed publicly to maintain his vigil on Arab governments and societies until real change took place, and he held to his course.

* * *

Beirut, the city where Kabbani settled after his diplomatic career, was to be a site of deep personal tragedy for the poet. He lost his second wife there in 1981, when she was an innocent victim in a bomb blast during the Lebanese Civil War. Eight years earlier, he had lost his twenty-five-year-old son, a medical student, to a heart ailment. This double tragedy left a deep mark on his life. His moving poem "Balqis," about his murdered wife, is a lengthy and powerful attack on all parties in the Lebanese Civil War who had abandoned major problems in the Arab world in order to fight each other. In "Balqis" he came close to naming those whom he believed had planted the bomb that killed his wife. Although he vowed in this poem never to write again, the prolific writer did not keep his

pledge. He left Beirut after her death to reside in France and Switzerland, and finally settled in England where he lived until his death in May 1998.

There is a close harmony between Kabbani the man, his poetry, and his beliefs. This harmony produced a special musicality in his poetry that is more important than rhyme and meter. He also wrote from the heart—"I felt something, so I created something"³⁵—and the qualities of innocence, truthfulness, and simplicity permeate his work. Perhaps the most important praise of any writer is the excitement and anticipation with which his or her followers wait for new work. The Arab world always anxiously awaited Kabbani's next poem, whatever the subject matter. It is still difficult to accept that there will not be one.

NOTES

1. See Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, p. 37.
2. See Muhyi al-Din Subhi, *Nizar Qabbani: Sha'iran wa Insanan* [Nizar Kabbani: Poet and Man], Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1958, p. 88.
3. See Nizar Qabbani, *Qissati Ma'a al-Shi'r* [My Story with Poetry], Beirut: Manshurat Nizar Qabbani, 1973.
4. Ibid.
5. Nizar Qabbani, *The Complete Works*, Vol. I, Beirut: Manshurat Nizar Qabbani, 12th edition, 1983, pp. 69–71.
6. See Nizar Qabbani, *Qissati Ma'a al-Shi'r*.
7. See Subhi, *Nizar Qabbani*.
8. Ibid. The Arabic text of this letter is on p. 16.
9. Qabbani, *Qissati Ma'a al-Shi'r*, p. 100.
10. Nizar Qabbani, *Yawmiyyat Imra'a La-Mubaliya* [Diary of an Indifferent Woman], Beirut: Manshurat Nizar Qabbani, 1968, pp. 9–10.
11. Qabbani, *Qissati Ma'a al-Shi'r*, p. 103.
12. See Muhyi al-Din Subhi, *Al-Kawn al-Shi'ri 'Inda Nizar Qabbani* [The Poetic World of Nizar Kabbani], Beirut: Dar al-Tal'a, 1977, pp. 72–74.
13. Nizar Qabbani, *The Complete Works*, Vol. II, Beirut: Manshurat Nizar Qabbani, 5th edition, 1983, pp. 87–93.
14. See Ihsan Abbas, *Ittijahat al-Shi'r al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir* [Directions of Contemporary Arabic Poetry], Kuwait: al-Majlis al-Watani lil-Thaqafah wa al-Funun wa al-Adab, 1978, p. 176.
15. Qabbani, *The Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 655.
16. Qabbani, *The Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 874.

17. Nizar Qabbani, *Qassa'id Maghdoub 'alayha* [Censored Poems], Beirut: Manshurat Nizar Qabbani, 1986, p. 16.
18. Qabbani, *The Complete Works*, Vol. I, pp. 378-384.
19. See Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, Vol. II, Leiden: 1977.
20. Ihsan Abbas, *Ittijahat al-Shi'r al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir*, pp. 176-177.
21. These four poems are included in Qabbani, *The Complete Works*, Vol. I, pp. 334-354.
22. Munir Al-Akash, *As'ilat al-Shi'r: Fi Harakat al-Khalq wa Kamal al-Hadathah wa Mawtiha* [The Questions of Poetry: In the Movement of Creativity and the Perfection of Modernity and Its Death], Beirut: Arab Institute for Studies and Publications, 1979. See interview with Qabbani, pp. 177-204.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. See Arian Loya, "Poetry as a Social Document: The Social Position of the Arab Woman as Reflected in the Poetry of Nizar Qabbani," *Muslim World* 63 (1973), p. 51.
26. Munir Al-Akash, *As'ilat al-Shi'r*.
27. Nizar Qabbani, *Hal Tasma'in Sahil Ahzani?* [Do You Hear the Neigh of My Sadness?], Beirut: Manshurat Nizar Qabbani, 1990, Introduction.
28. Nizar Qabbani, *The Complete Works*, Vol. III, Beirut: Manshurat Nizar Qabbani, 3rd edition, 1983, p. 73.
29. Qabbani, *Hal Tasma'in Sahil Ahzani?* p. 32.
30. See Petro Martinez Montavez, *Poemas Amorosos Arabes* [Arab Love Poems], Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, 1975, pp. 7-41, as translated by Karl Frederick Humiston.
31. Nizar Qabbani, *Al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar* [Poetry Is a Green Lantern], Beirut: Manshurat Nizar Qabbani, no date, p. 21.
32. These three poems are included in Qabbani's *The Complete Works*, Vol. III, pp. 25-28.
33. Ibid., p. 13.
34. Ibid., p. 69.
35. Qabbani, *The Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 18.

From *The Book of Love*

Oh green bird,
As long as you are my love,
God is in the sky.

مَا دُعَيْتِ يَا عُصْفُورِي الْخَضْرَاءُ
مَبِيتِي ..
إِذْنُ .. فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ فِي السَّمَاءِ .

My lover asks me:
 "What is the difference between me and the sky?"
 The difference, my love,
 Is that when you laugh,
 I forget about the sky.

تَسْأَلُنِي هَبِيبَتِي :
 « مَا الْفَرْقُ مَا بَيْنِي وَمَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ ؟
 الْفَرْقُ مَا بَيْنَا
 أَنْتَ إِذْ ضَحَكْتَ يَا هَبِيبَتِي
 أَنْسَى السَّمَاءَ ..

When I fell in love,
 The kingdom of the Lord changed.
 Twilight slept in my coat,
 And the sun rose from the west.

هَبِيبَتِي أَنَا سَقَطْتُ فِي الْحُبِّ
 تَغَيَّرَتْ .. تَغَيَّرَتْ مَمْلَكَةُ الرَّبِّ
 صَارَ الدُّجَى نِيَامٌ فِي مِعْطَفِي
 وَتَشَرَّقَ الشَّمْسُ مِنَ الْغَرْبِ ..

You still ask me about the day of my birth
 So write down what you don't know
 The day you declared your love
 Is the day of my birth.

ما زلتَ تَسْأَلُنِي عن عيد ميلادي
 سَجِّلْ لَدَيْكَ إِذْنًا .. ما أَنْتَ تَجِبُهُ
 تَارِيخُ حُبِّكَ لِي ... تَارِيخُ مِيلَادِي .

Oh, my love,
 If you were at the level of my madness,
 You would cast away your jewelry,
 Sell all your bracelets,
 And sleep in my eyes.

لو كُنْتَ يا حَبِيبَتِي
 بِمَسْتَوَى جُنُونِي
 أَمَيَّتَ ما عَلَيَّ من جَوَاهِرٍ ..
 وَبَحَّتَ ما لَدَيْكَ من أَصَاوِرٍ
 وَنَحْتَتَ فِي عَيْنِي ..

All words
In the dictionaries, letters, and novels
Died.
I want to discover
A way to love you
Without words.

لَأَنَّ كَلَامَ الْقَوَامِيْسِ مَاتَ
لَأَنَّ كَلَامَ الْمَكَاتِيْبِ مَاتَ
لَأَنَّ كَلَامَ الرِّوَايَاتِ مَاتَ
أُرِيدُ الْكَيْسَافَ طَرِيقَةَ عَيْشٍ
أُحِبُّكَ فَيْدَا .. بِلَا كَلِمَاتٍ ...

I hadn't told them about you,
But they saw you bathing in my eyes.
I hadn't told them about you,
But they saw you in my written words.
The perfume of love cannot be concealed.

أَنَا عَنْكَ مَا أَخْبَرْتَهُمْ .. لَكِنَّهُمْ
لَحَوْلٍ تَغْتَسِلِينَ فِي أَهْدَاقِي ..
أَنَا عَنْكَ مَا كَتَبْتَهُمْ .. لَكِنَّهُمْ
قَرَأُواكَ فِي جَبْرِي ، وَفِي أَوْرَاقِي
لِلْحُبِّ رَاحَةٌ .. وَلَيْسَ بُوْشَعْرًا
أَنْ لَا تَفُوحَ مَزَارِعُ الدَّرَاقِ ..

I hate to love like other people.
 I hate to write like other people.
 I wish my mouth were a church
 And my letters were bells.

أُكْرَهُ أَنْ أُحِبَّ مِثْلَ النَّاسِ
 أُكْرَهُ أَنْ أَكْتُبَ مِثْلَ النَّاسِ
 أَوَدُّ لَوْ كَانَ فَمِي كَنِيسَةً
 وَأَهْرَافِي أَجْرَاسَ ..

Your love,
 Oh you with fathomless eyes,
 Is extreme,
 Mystic,
 Holy.
 Your love, like birth and death,
 Is impossible to repeat.

صَبِيح .. يَا حَقِيقَةَ الْعَيْنَيْنِ
 تَطْرُقُ ..
 تَصُوفُ ..

عِبَادَةٌ ..

صَبِيح ، مِثْلُ الْمَوْتِ وَالْوِلَادَةِ
 صَعِبٌ بَأَن يُعَادَ مَرَّتَيْنِ ..

From the moment you loved me
 My lamp has given more light
 My notebooks have blossomed
 Things have changed.
 I have become a child
 Playing with the sun,
 A prophet
 When I write about you.

طالما ؟ لماذا ؟ منذ صرّيت حبيبتي
 يضيئُ مِدادِي ، والدخائرُ تُعشِبُ .
 تغيّرتِ الأشياءُ عندُ عشقتيني
 وأصبحتُ كاللطفال ، بالشَّمْسِ أَلْعَبُ
 ولستُ نبيّاً مُرسلاً ، غيرَ أنني
 أصبحُ نبيّاً .. عندما عنكِ أكتبُ .

When I am in love
 I make the Shah of Persia
 One of my followers
 I make China obey my every command
 I move the seas from their customary places
 And if I wanted
 I could control the hands of time.

حينَ أكونُ عاشقاً
 أجعلُ شاهَ الفُرسِ من رَعِيَّتِي
 وأُفَضِّلُ الصِّينَ لِمُؤَاجَازِي
 وأنقلُ البحارَ من مَكَانِهَا
 ولو أَرَدْتُ أَوْقِفُ السَّوَانِي .

When I am in love
I become a liquid light
And in my notebook
The poems become
Fields of mimosas and daisies.

هَيْنَ أَكُونُ عَاشِقًا
أَصْبِحُ ضَوْءًا سَائِلًا
لَا تَسْتَطِيعُ الْعَيْنُ أَنْ تَرَانِي
وَتَصْبِحُ الْأَشْعَارُ فِي دِفَاتِي
مَقُولَ مِيمُوزَا وَأَقْوَابِ .

I love you when you cry
I love your face cloudy and sad
Sadness melts us together.
I love those flowing tears
I love your face wet with tears
Women are beautiful
When they cry.

إِنِّي أُحِبُّكَ عِنْدَمَا تَبْكِينَ
وَأُحِبُّكَ وَجْهَكَ غَاطِمًا وَهَزِينًا
الْحُزْنُ يَصْهَرُنَا مَعًا ، وَيَذِينُنَا
مَنْ هَيْتُ لَا أُدْرِي ، وَلَا تَدْرِينَا
تِلْكَ الرُّمُوحُ الْهَامِيَاتُ ، أُحِبُّكَ
وَأُحِبُّكَ ، خَلْفَ حُضُونِي ، تَسْرِينَا
بَعْضُ النِّسَاءِ .. وَجُوهُهُنَّ جَمِيلَةٌ
وَتَصِيرُ أَجْمَلُ .. عِنْدَمَا يَبْكِينَ ...

I don't know my birthday.
 My face is as old as the earth,
 My sadness is as old as God and the seas
 My age is not important.
 What is important is
 My eternal love for you.

عُمْرٌ وَجَبْرِي ..
 مثل عُمر الأرض ، آلاف العصور
 عُمرٌ حُزْني
 مثل عُمر الله .. أو عُمر البحور
 يومٌ ميلادي ، أنا أُجبرُهُ
 فالذي يُحْسِبُ ، يا سيدي
 ليس عُمرِي .. إنما عُمرُ شعوري .

Your eyes are like a rainy night,
 My boats sink in them,
 My writing disappears in their reflection,
 Mirrors have no memory.

عَيْنَاكَ .. مثل الليلة الماطرة
 مراكبي غارقة فيهما .
 كتابتي منسية فيهما .
 إن المرايا مالهذا ذاكرة ..

I wrote the name of the one I loved
On the wind.
I wrote the name of the one I loved
On the water.
But the wind is a bad listener,
The water does not remember names.

كَتَبْتُ فَوْقَ الرِّيحِ
إِسْمَ الَّتِي أُحِبُّ
كَتَبْتُ فَوْقَ الْمَاءِ
لَمْ أُدِرْ أَنَّ الرِّيحَ
لَا تُحْسِنُ الْإِصْغَاءَ .
لَمْ أُدِرْ أَنَّ الْمَاءَ
لَا يَحْفَظُ الْأَسْمَاءَ ...

Oh traveler,
After ten years,
You are still
Like a spearhead in my side.

مَا زِلْتِ يَا مُسَافِرَهُ
مَا زِلْتِ بَعْدَ السَّنَةِ الْعَاشِرَةِ
مَزْرُوعَةً .. كَالرُّمْحِ فِي الْخَاصِرَةِ ..

Our love
Has no mind or logic
Our love
Walks on water.

أَرَوَعُ مَا فِي حُبِّنَا .. أَنَّهُ
لَيْسَ لَهُ عَقْلٌ وَلَا مَنطِقٌ .
أَجْمَلُ مَا فِي حُبِّنَا .. أَنَّهُ
يَمْشِي عَلَى الْمَاءِ ، وَلَا يَغْرَقُ ..

Don't worry,
My sweetest,
You are in my poetry and in my words.
You might grow old in years,
But you are ever young in my pages.

لَا تَقْلَقِي .. يَا حُلْوَةَ الْحُلُوبِ
مَا دُعِمْتَ فِي شِعْرِي ، وَفِي كَلِمَاتِي
قَدْ تَلَبَّرِينَ مَعَ السِّنِينَ .. وَإِنَّمَا
لَنْ تَلَبَّرِي أَبَدًا .. عَلَى صَفْحَاتِي .

Like a fish,
Quick and cowardly in love,
You killed a thousand women inside me
And became the queen.

كَمْ تُسْبِرِينَ السَّمْلَةَ
سَرِيعَةً فِي الْحُبِّ .. مِثْلَ السَّمْلَةِ ..
جَبَانَةً فِي الْحُبِّ .. مِثْلَ السَّمْلَةِ ..
قَتَلْتِ أَلْفَ امْرَأَةٍ فِي رَأْيِي
وَصِرْتِ أَنْتِ الْمَلِكَةُ ..

When I travel into your eyes
I ride a magic carpet
Lifted by violet and rose clouds
Rotating like the earth
In your eyes.

وَكَلَّمَا سَافَرْتُ فِي عَيْنَيْكَ ، يَا حَبِيبَتِي
أُحْسِسُ أَنَّي رَاكِبٌ سُجَّادَةٌ سِحْرِيَّةٌ
فَقِيعَةٌ وَرَدِّيَّةٌ تَرْفَعُنِي ..
وَبَعْدَهَا ، تَأْتِي الْبِفَضْجِيَّةِ ..
أَدُورُ فِي عَيْنَيْكَ ، يَا حَبِيبَتِي
أَدُورُ .. مِثْلَ الْكُرَةِ الْأَرْضِيَّةِ ..

I am the prophet of love,
 Carrying surprises to women.
 Had I not washed your breasts with wine,
 They would have never blossomed.
 My modest miracle
 Made your nipples bloom.

إِنِّي رَسُولُ الْحُبِّ ..
 أَصِلُ لِلنِّسَاءِ مُفَاجَأَتِي
 لَوْ أَنِّي بِالْخَمْرِ لَمْ أُغْسِلْهُمَا
 نَهْدَاكِ .. مَا كَانَا عَلَى قَيْدِ الْحَيَاةِ
 فَإِذَا اسْتَدَارَتْ حَامَتَاكِ ..
 فَتِلْكَ أَصْنَعُ مُعْجَزَاتِي ..

Undress yourself.
 For centuries
 There have been no miracles.
 Undress yourself,
 I am mute,
 And your body knows all languages.

تَعْرِى .. فَهَذَا زَمَانٌ طَوِيلٌ
 عَلَى الْأَرْضِ لَمْ تَسْقُطِ الْمُعْجَزَاتُ
 تَعْرِى .. تَعْرِى ..
 أَنَا أُفْرَسُ
 وَجِسْمِي يَعْرِفُ كُلَّ اللُّغَاتِ ...

I have changed so much.
 Once I wanted you to take off everything,
 To be like a naked forest of marble.
 Now I want you to remain
 Veiled in mystery.

كم تَغَيَّرْتُ بَيْنَ عَامٍ وَعَامٍ
 كَانَ كَهْمِي أَنْ تَخْلَعِي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ
 وَتُظَلِّي كَغَابَةٍ مِنْ رَخَامٍ ..
 وَأَنَا الْيَوْمَ ، لَا أُرِيدُكَ إِلَّا
 أَنْ تَكُونِي إِشَارَةً اسْتِغْفَرُ ..

Because my love for you
 Is higher than words,
 I have decided to fall silent.

لَدُنَّ حُبِّي لَكَ فَوْقَ مُسْتَوَى الْكَلَامِ
 قَرَّرْتُ أَنْ أَسْكُتَ ..
 وَالسَّلَامُ ...

From *One Hundred Love Letters*

- 1 -

I want to write different words for you
To invent a language for you alone
To fit the size of your body
And the size of my love.

•

I want to travel away from the dictionary
And to leave my lips.
I am tired of my mouth
I want a different one
That can change
Into a cherry tree or a matchbox,
A mouth from which words can emerge
Like nymphs from the sea,
Like white chicks jumping from the magician's hat.

•

أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُكْتُبَ لَكَ كَلِمًا
لَا تُشَبِّهُ الْكَلِمَ .
وَأُفْتَرِغَ لُغَةً لَكَ وَحْدَكَ
أَفْضَلُ عَلَى مَقَايِيسِ جَسَدِكَ
وَمَآحِقِ حُبِّي .

•

أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَتَافَرَ مِنْ أَوْرَاقِ الْقَامُوسِ
وَأُطْلِبَ إِجَازَةً مِنْ فَمِي .
فَلَقَدْ تَعَبْتُ مِنْ اسْتِدْرَاجَةِ فَمِي
أُرِيدُ فَمًا آفَرًا ..
يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يَتَحَوَّلَ مَتَى أَرَادَ
إِلَى شَجَرَةٍ كَرَزٍ ..
أَوْ عُلْبَةٍ كَبْرِيتٍ ..
أُرِيدُ فَمًا جَدِيدًا تَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْكَلِمَاتُ
كَمَا تَخْرُجُ الْخَوَرِيَّاتُ مِنْ زَبَدِ الْبَحْرِ
وَكَمَا تَخْرُجُ الصَّيْفَانُ الْبَيْضَانِ مِنْ قُبَّةِ السَّاحِرِ ..

•

خُذُوا جَمِيعَ الْكُتُبِ الَّتِي قَرَأْتُ فِي كُفُولَتِي
 خُذُوا جَمِيعَ كُرَاسِي الْمَدْرَسَةِ
 خُذُوا الطِّبَاشِيرَ .. وَالْأَقْدَمَ .. وَالْأَلْوَانِ السُّودَاءَ ..
 وَعَلِّمْنِي كَلِمَةً جَدِيدَةً
 أَنْ عُلِّقَتْ كَالْخَلْقِ فِي أُذُنِ حَبِيبَتِي ..

أُرِيدُ أَصَابِعَ أُخْرَى ..
 لِأَكْتُبَ بِطَرِيقَةٍ أُخْرَى ..
 فَأَنَا أُكْرَهُ الْأَصَابِعَ الَّتِي لَا تَطُولُ .. وَلَا تَقْصُرُ .
 كَمَا أُكْرَهُ الْأَشْجَارَ الَّتِي لَا تَمُوتُ .. وَلَا تَكْبُرُ .
 أُرِيدُ أَصَابِعَ جَدِيدَةً ..
 عَالِيَةً كَصَوَارِي الْمَرَائِبِ
 وَطَوِيلَةً كَأَعْنَاقِ الزُّرَافَاتِ
 حَتَّى أَفْضَلَ لِحَبِيبَتِي قَمِيصًا مِنَ الشَّعْرِ ..
 لَمْ تَلْبِسْهُ قَبْلِي ..

Take all the books
 That I read in my childhood,
 Take all my school notebooks,
 Take the chalk,
 The pens,
 And the blackboards,
 But teach me a new word
 To hang like an earring
 On my lover's ear.

I want new fingers
 To write in another way,
 High like masts of ships,
 Long like a giraffe's neck
 So I can tailor for my beloved
 A garment of poetry.

أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُصْنَعَ لَكَ أَجَدِيَّةً
غَيْرَ كُلِّ الْأَجَدِيَّاتِ.
فَمِنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْ إِبْقَاعِ الْمَطَرِ ..
وَشَيْءٍ مِنْ غَمَارِ الْقَمَرِ ..
وَشَيْءٍ مِنْ حُزْنِ الْغُيُومِ الرَّمَادِيَّةِ
وَشَيْءٍ مِنْ تَوَجُّعِ أَوْرَاقِ الصَّفْصَافِ
تَحْتَ عَرَائِي أَيْلُورِ.

I want to make you a unique alphabet.
In it I want
The rhythm of the rain,
The dust of the moon,
The sadness of the grey clouds,
The pain of the fallen willow leaves
Under the wheels of autumn.

- 2 -

That March morning when you came walking toward me
 Like a beautiful poem
 The sun and the spring came with you.
 On my desk the papers
 Turned green
 In front of me a cup of coffee
 Became empty before I drank it
 When you appeared
 The running horses
 In the painting on my wall
 Left me
 To run to you.

- 2 -

نَهْراً دَخَلْتَ عَلَيَّ
 فِي صَبِيحَةِ يَوْمٍ مِنْ أَيَّامِ آذارٍ
 كَقَصِيدَةٍ صَمِيحَةٍ تَحْسِي عَالِي قَدَمَيْهِ ..
 دَخَلْتَ الشَّمْسُ مَعْلَبٌ ..
 وَدَخَلَ الرَّبِيعُ مَعْلَبٌ ..
 كَانَ عَلَى مَكْتَبِي أَوْرَاقٌ .. فَأُورِقَتْ
 وَكَانَ أَمَامِي فَنَاجَانُ قَهْوَةٍ
 فَتَسَرَّبَنِي قَبْلَ أَنْ أُشْرِبَهُ ..
 وَكَانَ عَلَى جِدَارِي لَوْحَةٌ زَيْتِيَّةٌ
 لِخَيُْولٍ تَرْكُضُ ..
 فَتَرَكَّتْنِي الْخَيُْولُ حِينَ رَأَيْتُكَ
 وَرَكَضَتْ نَحْوَكَ ..

نَبْلًا زُرْتَنِي ،
 فِي صَبِيحَةِ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ مِنْ أَذَارِ
 حَدَثَتْ قَشْعَرِيَّةٌ فِي جَسَدِ الْأَرْضِ
 وَسَقَطَ فِي عَطَنِ مَا .. مِنَ الْعَالَمِ
 نَزَلَ مُسْتَعِلٌ ..
 حَسِبَهُ الْإِطْفَاقُ فَطِيرَةً مَحْشُوءَةً بِالْحَسَلِ ..
 وَحَسِبَهُ النِّسَاءُ
 سِوَارًا مَرْصُومًا بِالْمَاسِ ..
 وَحَسِبَهُ الرِّجَالُ
 مِنْ عِلَاقَاتِ لَيْلَةِ الْقَدَرِ ...

That March morning when you visited me
 The earth's body shivered,
 A blazing star
 Fell somewhere in the world.
 Children thought the star
 A honey cake.
 Women thought the star
 A bracelet made of diamonds.
 Men thought the star
 A sign from the heavens.

وَمِنْ نَزَعْتَ مَعْطَفَكَ الرَّبِيعِ
 وَجَلَسْتَ أَمَامِي
 فَرَأَيْتَ تَحْمِلُ فِي عِقَابُكَ ثِيَابَ الصَّيْفِ
 تَأَكَّدْتُ أَنَّ الْأَطْفَالَ كَانُوا عَلَى حَقٍّ ..
 وَالنِّسَاءَ كُنَّ عَلَى حَقٍّ ..
 وَالرِّجَالَ كَانُوا عَلَى حَقٍّ ..
 وَأَنْتَ ..
 سَرِيحَةٌ كَالْعَسَلِ ..
 وَصَافِيَةٌ كَالْمَاسِ ..
 وَمُزْهِلَةٌ كَلِيلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ...

When you took off your spring coat
 And sat in front of me
 Like a butterfly
 With a suitcase full of summer clothes,
 I was certain
 That all the children, women, and men
 Were right.
 That you were
 As sweet as honey,
 As pure as diamonds,
 An astonishing miracle.

When I told you:

"I love you"

I knew

I was leading a coup

Against the tribal law,

That I was tolling the bells of scandal.

I wanted to seize power

To increase the number of leaves

In the forests.

I wanted to make the oceans bluer

And the children more innocent.

I wanted to put an end to the savage age

And to kill the last Caliph.

It was my intention

When I loved you

To break down the doors of the harem,

To protect women's breasts

From men's teeth:

So that their nipples could

Dance in the air with delight.

•

عندما قلت لك: «أُحِبُّكَ» ..

كنتُ أعرفُ أنني أقودُ انقلاباً على شريعة القبيلة ..

وأقرعُ أجراسَ الفضيحة ..

كنتُ أريدُ أن أستلمَ السلطةَ

لأجعلَ غاباتِ العالمِ أكثرَ ورَقاً ..

وبجاءَ العالمِ أكثرَ زُرْقَةً ..

وأطفالَ العالمِ أكثرَ براءةً ..

كنتُ أريدُ أن أنهيَ عصرَ البربريةِ ..

وأقتلَ آخرَ الخلفاءِ ..

كانَ في نيَّتي، عندما أُحِبُّكَ،

أن أُكسِرَ أبوابَ الحريمِ ..

وأُنقِذَ أشداءَ النساءِ من أسنانِ الرجالِ ..

وأجعلَ هاماتِهِنَّ ترقصُ في الهواءِ مُبتهرجةً

كحباتِ الزعرورِ الأحمرِ ...

•

عندما قلتُ لك : « أُحِبُّكَ » ..
 كنتُ أعرفُ أنني اخترعُ أبجديةً جديدةً
 لمدينةٍ لا تقرأ ..
 وأنشدُ أشعاري في قاعةٍ فارغةٍ
 وأقدمُ النبيذ ..
 لمن لا يعرفون نعمةَ السكر ..

عندما قلتُ لك : « أُحِبُّكَ » ..
 كنتُ أعرفُ أن المتوحشين سيتعقبونني
 بالرماح المسحوق ، وأقواس النشاب ..
 وأن صوري سُلِصِقَ على كلِّ الجدران
 وأن بصماتي ستوزع على كلِّ المخافِر
 وأن جائزة كبرى ستعطى لمن يحمل لحيهم رأسي
 ليعلق على بوابة المدينة ..
 كبرتقالة فلسطينية ...

When I said:
 "I love you!"
 I knew
 I was inventing a new alphabet
 For a city that does not read,
 I was reciting my poems
 In an empty hall,
 And I was offering wine
 To those who did not know
 The joys of drunkenness.

When I said:
 "I love you"
 I knew
 Savages would follow me
 With poison spears,
 With bows and arrows.
 My photograph would be plastered
 On all walls.
 My fingerprints
 Would be distributed to all police stations,
 A big reward
 Would be given
 To whomever carried my head to them
 To be hung at the city gate
 Like a Palestinian orange.

عندما كتبتُ اسمك على دفاتر الورود ..
كنتُ أعرف ..

أَنَّ كُلَّ الْأُمِّيِّينَ سَيَقْضُونَ ضِدِّي ..
وَكُلَّ الْعَاهِلِينَ بِالْوَرَاثَةِ عَنْ مُمَارَسَةِ الْحُبِّ .. ضِدِّي
وَكُلَّ الْمَرْضَى بِوَرَمِ الْجَنْسِ .. ضِدِّي ..
عندما قررتُ أن أقتلَ آخِرَ الْخُلَفَاءِ
وَأُعْلِنَ قِيَامَ دَوْلَةٍ لِلْحُبِّ ..

تَلَوْنِي أَنْتِ عَلِيَّةٌ .
كنتُ أعرفُ أَنَّ الْعَصَافِيرَ وَهِيَ
سَتُعْلِنُ الثَّوْرَةَ مَعِي ...

When I wrote your name
On the notebook of roses
I knew
All the illiterate,
All the sick and impotent men
Would stand against me.
When I decided to kill the last Caliph,
To announce
The establishment of a state of love
Crowning you as its queen,
I knew
Only the birds
Would sing of the revolution with me.

هين وزَّعَ اللَّهُ النساءَ على الرجالِ
 وأعطاني إِيَّاكَ ..
 شعرتُ أَنَّهُ انْحَاذَ بِصُورَةٍ مَلْسُوفَةٍ إِلَيَّ ..
 وفالَفَ كُلَّ الكُتُبِ السَّمَاوِيَّةِ الَّتِي أَلْفَطُ
 فأعطاني النِّبْدَ ، وأعطاهمُ الخِنْطَةَ .
 أَلْبَسَنِي الحَرِيرَ ، وَأَلْبَسَهُمُ القُطْنَ .
 أَهْدَيْتَنِي الوردَةَ ..
 وَأَهْدَاهُمُ الخُصْنَ ..

When God bestowed women on men
 He gave you to me.
 I felt
 He was clearly biased toward me
 And that He violated
 All His heavenly books.
 He gave me the wine
 But gave other men the wheat,
 He clothed me in silk
 But clothed those men in cotton,
 He gave me the rose
 But gave them the thorn.

هِينَ عَرَفَنِي اللَّهُ عَلِيًّا ..
 وَزَهَبَ إِلَى بَيْتِهِ
 فَكَّرْتُ أَنْ أَكْتُبَ لَهُ رِسَالَةً
 عَلَى وَرَقٍ أَزْرَقٍ ..
 وَأَضَعُهَا فِي مُغْلَفٍ أَزْرَقٍ ..
 وَأَغْسِلُهَا بِالْمُدِّعِ الْأَزْرَقِ ..
 أَبَدُوهَا بِعِبَارَةٍ : يَا صَدِيقِي .
 كُنْتُ أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَسْأَلَهُ لِأَنَّهُ اخْتَارَكَ لِي ..
 فَاللَّهُ - كَمَا قَالُوا لِي -
 لَا يَسْتَلِمُ إِلَّا رِسَالَةَ الْحُبِّ ..
 وَلَا يُجَاوِبُ إِلَّا عَاشِرًا ..

After God introduced you to me
 He returned home.
 I thought of writing Him
 A letter on blue paper,
 Enclosed in a blue envelope
 Washed with my tears,
 Calling Him,
 "My dear friend,"
 I wanted to thank Him
 Because He chose you for me.
 I wrote Him
 Because I am told
 God only receives
 And responds
 To letters of love.

هِينَ اسْتَمَحْتُ مُكَافَأِي
 وَرَجَعْتُ أَصْلَابِي عَلَى رَاةِ يَدِي
 كَزَهْرَةِ مَا نُولِيَا ..
 بَسَمْتُ يَدَ اللَّهِ ..
 وَبَسَمْتُ الْقَمَرَ وَالْكَوَاكِبَ ..
 وَاحِدًا .. وَاحِدًا ..
 وَبَسَمْتُ الْجِبَالَ .. وَالْأُودِيَةَ .. وَأُجْنَحَةَ الطَّوَاحِينِ
 بَسَمْتُ الْغُيُومَ الْبَلْبِرَةَ ..
 وَالْغُيُومَ الَّتِي لَا تَزَالُ تَذْهَبُ إِلَى الْمَدْرَسَةِ ..
 بَسَمْتُ الْجُزُرَ الْمَرْسُومَةَ عَلَى الْخَرَائِطِ ..
 وَالْجُزُرَ الَّتِي لَا تَزَالُ بِذَاكِرَةِ الْخَرَائِطِ ..
 بَسَمْتُ الْأَمْشَاطِ الَّتِي سَتَتَحَشَّطِينَ بِهَا ..
 وَالْمَرَايَا الَّتِي سَتَرْتِمْسِينَ عَلَيْهَا ..
 وَكُلَّ الْحَمَائِمِ الْبَيْضَاءِ ..
 الَّتِي سَتَتَحَمَّلُ عَلَى أُجْنَحَتِهَا ..
 جَبَازًا مُمْرَسًا ..

When I received my reward
 I returned home carrying you
 In the palm of my hand
 Like a magnolia flower.
 I had kissed God's hand
 And the moon and the stars
 One by one.
 I had kissed the mountains and the valleys,
 The windmills and the clouds.
 I had kissed the islands drawn on maps.
 I had kissed your combs and your mirror.
 I had kissed
 All the white doves
 That will carry
 Your wedding dress
 On their wings.

لَمْ أَكُنْ يَوْمًا مُلِكًا ..
 وَلَمْ أَتَّخِذْ مِنْ سُلالاتِ الْمُلُوكِ
 غَيْرَ أَنَّ الْإِحْسَاسَ بِأَنْتَ لِي ..
 يُعْطِينِي الشُّعُورَ ..
 بِأَنْتَ أَسْطُ سُلْطَتِي عَلَى الْقَارَاتِ الْخَمْسِ ..
 وَأَسْطُ عَلَى نَزَوَاتِ الْمَطَرِ ..
 وَعَرَبَاتِ الرِّيحِ ..
 وَأَقْتَلِكُ أَلْفَ الْفَدَايِنِ فَوْقَ الشَّمْسِ ..
 وَأَهْلِي سَحُوبًا لَمْ يَحْضُرْ أَحَدٌ قَبْلِي ..
 وَالْعَبْ بَكْوَاكِبِ الْمَجْمُوعَةِ الشَّمْسِيَّةِ
 كَمَا يَلْعَبُ طِفْلٌ بِأَصْدَافِ الْبَحْرِ ..
 لَمْ أَكُنْ يَوْمًا مُلِكًا .. وَلَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَكُونَهُ ..
 غَيْرَ أَنَّ مُجَرَّدَ إِحْسَاسِي بِأَنْتَ تَنَامِينِي فِي جَوْفِ يَدِي ..
 يَجْعَلُنِي أَتَوَقَّعُ ، بِأَنْتَ قَيْصَرَ مِنْ قِيَا حِرَّةِ رُوسِيَا ..
 أَوْ أَنْتَ كِشْرَى أَوْ شِرْوَانُ ...

I was never a king,
 I do not come from a royal family,
 But the thought that you now belong to me
 Gives me the feeling
 Of power over five continents,
 Of controlling the rain,
 And the chariots of the wind,
 Of possessing thousands of acres
 Above the sun,
 Of ruling peoples
 Who have never been ruled before,
 And of playing with the stars of the solar system
 Like a child playing with seashells.
 I was never a king
 I do not want to be one;
 But when I feel you sleeping
 In the palm of my hand
 I imagine
 I'm a Russian Tsar,
 A Persian Shah.

Why do you erase history
Stop the movement of the ages
And kill within me
All other women,
One by one?

Why do I give you
Of all women
The keys to my cities,
Which have never opened their gates
To any tyrant,
Which have never before opened themselves
To any woman?
Why do I ask my soldiers
To receive you with songs
And laurels
And to crown you
With melodies and bells
Princess for life?

لماذا ؟
تسطين كل الأزمنة
وتوقفين حركة العصور
وتتغالبين في إغاي جميع نساء العشيرة ؟
واحدة .. واحدة ..
ولا أعترض ..

لماذا ؟
أعطيت من دون جميع النساء ، مفاتيح مدني
التي لم تفتح أبوابها لأي طاغية
ولم ترفع راياتها البيضاء لذية امرأة ..
وأطلب من جنودي
أن يستقبلوك بالناشيد ، والمناويل ، وأكاليل النخار ..
وأبايعك ، أمام جميع الموالين
وعلى أنغام الموسيقى ، ورنين الدجراس
أميرة مدى الحياة ؟؟

عَلَّمْتُ أَوْفَاءَ الْعَالَمِ
كَيْفَ يَرْجُونَ اسْمَكَ ..
فَتَحَوَّلَتْ شَفَاهُكُمْ إِلَى أَشْجَارِ تَوْتٍ ..

أَوْصَيْتُ الرِّيحَ
أَنْ تَمَشِطَ خُصَلَّتِ شَعْرُكَ الْفَاحِشِ
فَاغْتَدَرَتْ بِأَنَّ وَقْتُهَا قَصِيرٌ
وَشَعْرُكَ طَوِيلٌ ...

I taught the children of the world
To spell your name,
And their lips changed into cherry trees.

I asked the wind
To comb the tresses of your coal black hair
But it refused,
Saying time was short,
And your hair was long.

مَنْ أَنْتِ يَا امْرَأَةً ؟
 أَتَيْتِ الدَّخْلَةَ كَالْخِجَرِ فِي تَارِيحِي ..
 أَتَيْتِ الطَّيِّبَةَ كَعُيُونِ الدَّرَانِبِ
 وَالنَّاعِمَةَ كَوَبْرِ الْخَوْفَةِ ..
 أَتَيْتِ النَّقِيَّةَ كَطَوَاقِ الْيَاسَمِينِ .
 أَخْرَجِي مِنْ أَوْراقِ دَفْأَتِي
 أَخْرَجِي مِنْ شَرَايِصِ سَرِيرِي ..
 أَخْرَجِي مِنْ فَنَاجِينِ الْقُرْودِ ..
 وَمَلَايِقِ السُّكَّرِ ..
 أَخْرَجِي مِنْ أَزْرَارِ قُمْصَانِي
 وَخُيُوطِ فُنَادِيلِي
 أَخْرَجِي مِنْ كُلِّ أَشْيَائِي الصَّغِيرَةِ
 حَتَّى أَسْتَطِيعَ أَنْ أَذْهَبَ إِلَى الْعَمَلِ ...

Pure like a necklace of jasmine,
 Soft as the skin of a peach,
 You forced your way into my life
 Like a spear.
 Leave
 The pages of my notebooks
 The sheets of my bed,
 Leave
 My coffee cups
 The sugar spoons,
 Leave
 The buttons of my shirts
 The lines of my handkerchiefs,
 Leave
 All my little things
 So I can go to work.

أُفِيَّ أُحِبُّكَ ..
 ولدُ أَلْعَبُ مَعَكَ لَعِبَةَ الْحُبِّ .
 ولا أُنَاقِصُكَ مَعَكَ كَالْأَطْفَالِ عَلَى أَشْجَالِ الْبَحْرِ ..
 سَعَلَ هَمَاءُ لَبِّ ..
 وَسَعَلَ زَرْخُ لِي ..
 خُذِي كُلَّ السَّمَكِ الْأَحْمَرِ وَالْأَزْرَقِ ..
 وَظَلِّي حَبِيبَتِي ..
 خُذِي الْبَحْرَ ، وَالْمَرَاكِبَ ، وَالْمُسَافِرِينَ ..
 وَظَلِّي حَبِيبَتِي ..
 إِنِّي أَضَعُ جَمِيعَ مَمْلَكَاتِي أَمَامَكَ
 وَلا أَقْلُرُ فِي حِسَابِ الرَّبِّ وَالْخَسَارَةِ
 فَإِنَّا لَسَمَتْ سَوَى شَاعِرٍ
 كُلُّ شَرْوَةٍ مَوْجُودَةٍ فِي رِخَاتِي ..
 وَفِي عَيْنَيْكَ الْجَمِيلَتَيْنِ ..

I love you
 But I do not play
 The game of love.
 I do not fight with you
 Like children do
 Over the fish of the sea,
 A red fish for you,
 A blue fish for me.
 Take all the red and blue fish
 But continue to be my lover.
 Take the sea,
 The boats,
 The passengers,
 But continue to be my lover.
 Take all my possessions
 I am only a poet
 All my wealth is
 In my notebooks
 And in your beautiful eyes.

Your love took me
 To the land of wonder
 Your love attacked me
 Like the scent of a woman entering an elevator
 Your love surprised me
 While I sat in a cafe with a poem,
 And made me forget the poem
 Your love attacked me
 Like a wild animal,
 Surprising me
 While I sat on the top of my suitcase
 Waiting for the train of days.
 I forgot the train,
 I forgot the days,
 While I traveled with you
 To the land of wonder.

رما في حُبِّكَ على أرض الدهشة.
 هاجمني، سرائحة امرأةٍ تدخلُ إلى مصعدٍ ..
 فاجأني ، وأنا أجلسُ في المقهى مع قصيدة ..
 نسيتُ القصيدة ..
 فاجأني ، وأنا أقرأُ خطوطَ يدِي .
 نسيتُ يدِي ..
 راكعني كدبٍ متوحشٍ ..
 فاجأني .. وأنا قاعدٌ على مقابلي
 أنتظرُ قطارَ الأيام .
 نسيتُ القطار ..
 ونسيتُ الأيام ..
 وسافرتُ معكِ إلى أرض الدهشة ..

I wear you
 Like a tattoo on the arm of a Bedouin.
 I wander aimlessly with you
 On all the sidewalks of the world.
 I have had no passport or photograph
 Since I was three
 I dislike pictures.
 Every day the color of my eyes changes
 Every day the expression of my mouth changes
 Every day the number of my teeth is different
 I do not like sitting
 On a photographer's chair
 I do not like posing for pictures.
 On earth all the children and the tortured
 Resemble each other
 Like the teeth on a comb,
 I soaked my old self
 In the water of my sadness,
 And drank it.

•

أَهْمَلْتُكَ كَالْوَشْمِ عَلَى زِرَاعِ بَدَوِيٍّ .
 وَأَتَسَلَّحُ بِكَ عَلَى كُلِّ أَرْضِ الْعَالَمِ .
 لَيْسَ عِنْدِي جَوَازُ سَفَرٍ ،
 وَلَيْسَ عِنْدِي صُورَةٌ فُوتُوغَرَفِيَّةٌ
 مِنْذُ كُنْتُ فِي الثَّلَاثَةِ مِنْ عُمرِي .
 إِنِّي لَا أُحِبُّ التَّصَاوِيرَ ..
 كُلَّ يَوْمٍ يَتَغَيَّرُ لَوْنُ عُيُونِي .
 كُلَّ يَوْمٍ يَتَغَيَّرُ مَكَانُ فَمِي .
 كُلَّ يَوْمٍ يَتَغَيَّرُ عَدَدُ أَسْنَانِي .
 إِنِّي لَا أُحِبُّ الْجُلُوسَ عَلَى كُرَاسِي المَصَوِّرِينَ ..
 وَلَا أُحِبُّ الصُّورَ التَّذْكَارِيَّةَ ..
 كُلُّ أَلْفَالِ الْعَالَمِ يَتَشَابَهُونَ .
 وَكُلُّ المُعَذَّبِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَشَابَهُونَ
 كَأَسْنَانِ المَشْطِ .
 لِذَلِكَ .. نَقَعْتُ جَوَازَ سَفَرِي القَدِيمِ
 فِي مَاءِ أَغْرَافِي .. وَشَرِبْتُهُ ..

•

وَقَرَّرْتُ ..
 أَنْ أَطُوفَ الْعَالَمَ عَلَى دَرَاجَةِ الْحُرِّيَّةِ ..
 وَبَنَفْسِ الطَّرِيقَةِ غَيْرِ الشَّرْعِيَّةِ
 الَّتِي تَسْتَحْلِلُ الرِّجْمَ عِنْدَمَا تُسَافِرُ ..
 وَإِذَا سَأَلُونِي عَنْ مُنَوَانِي
 أُعْطِيهِمْ عُنْوَانَ كُلِّ الْأَرْضِ صِفَةً
 الَّتِي اخْتَرْتُهَا مَكَانًا رَاحَةً بِدِقَامَتِي .
 وَإِذَا سَأَلُونِي عَنْ أَوْرَاقِي
 أُرِيهِمْ عَيْنِيْلِي ، يَا حَبِيبَتِي ..
 فَتَرَكُونِي أَمْرًا ..
 لِأَنَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَ أَنَّ السَّفَرَ فِي هَذَيْنِ عَيْنِيْلِي ..
 مِنْ هَقٍّ جَمِيعِ الْمَوَاطِنِ فِي الْعَالَمِ ..

I decided
 To roam the world
 On the bicycle of freedom
 In the same illegal way
 That wind travels.
 If I am asked for my address
 I give
 The address of all the sidewalks
 That I chose as my permanent residence.
 If I am asked for my papers,
 I show them your eyes.
 My love,
 I am allowed to pass
 Because they know
 That traveling in the cities of your eyes
 Is the right of every man.

(excerpt)

My kingdom of little things
 Ended with you
 I no longer possess things alone,
 Arrange flowers alone,
 Or read books alone
 You came between
 My eyes and my paper,
 Between my mouth and my voice,
 My head and my pillow,
 My fingers and my cigarette.

Of course
 I do not complain
 Of your living inside me
 Or your interfering with the movement of my hands
 Of the blinking of my eyes
 Of the speed of my thoughts
 The fig trees
 Do not complain of housing too many birds
 The cups do not complain
 Of holding too much wine.

انتهت معاك ..

مملكة شؤوني الصغيرة ..

لم يعد لديّ أشياء أملكها وحدي .

لم يعد عندي زهور أنسقها وحدي .

لم يعد عندي كتب أقرأها وحدي ..

أنت تدخلين بين عيني .. وبين ورقتي ..

بين فمي .. وبين صوتي ..

بين رأسي .. وبين مخدتي ..

بين أصابعي .. وبين لفافتي ..

طبعاً .. أنا لا أشكو من سكناك في ..

ومن تدخلك في حركة يدي ..

وحركة جفني .. وحركة أظفاري ..

فأشجار التين لا تضيق بعصافيرها ..

والنودس لا تضيق بسكنى النسيم الأحمر فيها ..

ليس لك زمانٌ حقيقيٌّ خارجٌ لرفعتي .
أنا زمانك .

ليس لك أبداً واضحة
خارج امتداد ذراعي ..

أنا أبداً لك كلُّ
زواياك ، ودوائرك ..

مخطوطك المنحنية ..
ومخطوطك المستقيمة ..

يوم دخلت إلى غابات صدري

دخلت إلى الحرية ..

يوم فرجت منظر

صرت جارية ..

واشتراك شيخ القبيلة ...

•

Out of my desire
You have no life
I am your time
You have no meaning
Beyond the reach of my arms.
I am all your dimensions,
Your corners and your circles,
Your curves and lines.
The day you entered
The forests of my chest,
You entered freedom.
The day you left,
You became a slave,
Bought by the leader of the tribe.

•

أَنَا عَلَّمْتُكَ أَسْمَاءَ الشَّجَرِ
وَهَوَاةَ الصَّرَاصِيرِ اللَّيْلِ
وَأَعْطَيْتُكَ عَنَّاوِينَ النُّجُومِ الْبَعِيدَةِ .
أَنَا أَدْفَعْتُكَ مَدْرَسَةَ الرَّبِيعِ
وَعَلَّمْتُكَ لُغَةَ الطَّيْرِ
وَأَجْدِيَةَ الْيَنَابِيعِ .
أَنَا كَتَبْتُكَ عَلَى دِفَاطِرِ الْمَطَرِ
وَشَرَّاشِفِ الثَّلَاجِ ، وَأَكْوَارِ الصُّبُورِ
وَعَلَّمْتُكَ كَيْفَ تُكَلِّمِينَ الْأَرَانِبَ وَالتَّعَالِبَ
وَكَيْفَ تُحَسِّطِينَ صُوفَ الْخَرَّافِ الرَّبِيعِيِّ .
أَنَا أَطْلَعْتُكَ عَلَى مَكَاتِبِ الْعَصَافِيرِ الَّتِي لَمْ تُنْشَرِ .
وَأَعْطَيْتُكَ فَرَاطَ الصَّيْفِ وَالشِّتَاءِ
لِتَتَعَامِيَ ، كَيْفَ تَرْتَفِعُ السَّنَابِلُ ،
وَتُرْقَرِزُ الصَّيْصَانُ الْبَيْضَاءُ ،
وَتَتَزَوَّجُ الْأَسْمَاكُ بَعْضُهَا ،
وَتَيْدَقُّ الْحَلِيبُ مِنْ ثَدْيِ الْقَمَرِ ...

I taught you the names of the trees
And the dialogue of the night crickets
I gave you the addresses of the distant stars.
I registered you in the school of spring
And taught you the language of the birds
The alphabet of the rivers.
I wrote your name
On the notebooks of the rain,
On the sheets of the snow,
And on the pine cones.
I taught you to talk to rabbits and foxes
To comb the spring lamb's wool.
I showed you the unpublished letters of the birds,
I gave you
The maps of summer and winter
So you could learn
How the wheat grows,
How white chicks peep,
How the fish marry,
How milk comes out of the breast of the moon

لِلنَّاسِ ..
 تَعِبْتَ مِنْ مِصَانِ الْحَرِيَّةِ
 فَرَمَالِ مِصَانِ الْحَرِيَّةِ ..
 تَعِبْتَ مِنْ غَابَاتِ صَدْرِي ..
 وَمِنْ سِمْفُونِيَّةِ الصَّرَاصِيرِ اللَّيْلِيَّةِ
 تَعِبْتَ مِنَ النَّوْمِ عَارِيَةً ..
 فَوْقَ شَرَاشِفِ الْقَمَرِ ..
 فَتَرَكْتَ الْغَابَةَ
 لِيَأْكُلَكَ الدَّبُّ ..
 وَيَقْتَرِسَكَ شَيْخُ الْقَبِيلَةِ ..

But you became tired of the horse of freedom
 So the horse of freedom threw you
 You became weary of the forests of my chest
 Of the symphony of the night crickets
 You became bored of sleeping naked
 Upon the sheets of the moon,
 So you left the forest
 To be ravished by the leader of the tribe,
 And eaten by the wolf.

السَّنتَانِ اللَّتَانِ كُنْتَ فِيهِمَا حَبِيبِي
 هُمَا أَهْمُ صَفْحَتَيْنِ
 فِي كِتَابِ الْحُبِّ الْمُعَاصِرِ ..
 كُلُّ الصَّفَحَاتِ ، قَبْلَهُمَا ، بِيضَاءُ ..
 وَكُلُّ الصَّفَحَاتِ ، بَعْدَهُمَا ، بِيضَاءُ ..
 إِنَّمَا نَقَطُ الْإِسْتِوَاءِ
 الْمَاشُ بَيْنَ فَمِي وَفَمِكَ ..
 وَهُمَا الْمِقْيَاسُ الزَّمَنِيُّ
 الَّذِي تَعْتَمِدُهُ الْمَرَاصِدُ
 وَتُضَبِّطُ عَلَيْهِ ، كُلُّ سَاعَاتِ الْعَالَمِ ..

The two years
 You were my lover
 Are the two most important pages
 In the book of modern love.
 All the pages before and after
 Were blank.
 These pages
 Are the lines of the equator
 Passing between your lips and mine
 They are the measures of time
 That are used
 To set the clocks of the world.

كُلَّمَا رَأَيْتُكَ .. أَيْأَسُ مِنْ قَصَائِدِي .
 إِنِّي لَا أَيْأَسُ مِنْ قَصَائِدِي
 إِلَّا هِيَ أَكُونُ مَعْلَبٌ ..
 جَمِيلَةٌ أَنْتِ .. إِلَيَّ دَرْجَةٌ أَنِّي
 هِيَ أَفْخَرُ بِرَوْعَتِكَ .. أَلَمْ تَرَ ..
 تَلَمَّحْتُ لُغَتِي ..
 وَتَلَمَّحْتُ مُفْرَدَاتِي ..
 فَخَلَّصْتَنِي مِنْ هَذَا الْإِشْطَاقِ
 كُونِي أَقَلَّ جَمَالٍ ..
 حَتَّى أُسْتَرِدَّ شَاعِرِيَّتِي
 كُونِي امْرَأَةً عَادِيَّةً
 تَتَأَمَّلُ .. وَتَتَعَطَّرُ .. وَتَحْبَلُ .. وَتَلِدُ ..
 كُونِي امْرَأَةً مِثْلَ كُلِّ النِّسَاءِ ..
 حَتَّى أُتَصَّلِحَ مَعَ لُغَتِي ..
 وَمَعَ نَفْسِي ..

When I am with you
 I feel despair about writing poetry
 When I think of your beauty
 I gasp for breath
 My language falters
 And my vocabulary disappears
 Save me from this dilemma
 Be less beautiful
 So I can regain my inspiration
 Be a woman
 Who uses make-up and perfume
 And gives birth
 Be like other women
 So I can write again.

لستُ معلِّمًا ..
لأعالمك كيف تُحبِّين .
فالأسماك ، لا تحتاجُ إلى معلِّمٍ
لتتعلمَ كيف تسبح ..
والعصافير ، لا تحتاجُ إلى معلِّمٍ
لتتعلمَ كيف تطير ..
إسبحي وهدلي ..
وطيري وهدلي ..
إنَّ الحبَّ ليس له دفاتر
وأعظمُ عُشَّاق التاريخ
كانوا لا يعرفون القراءة ...

I'm not a teacher
To show you how to love
Fish don't need a teacher
To learn how to swim
Birds don't need a teacher
To learn how to fly.
Swim and fly by yourself
Love has no notebooks,
The greatest lovers in history
Did not know how to read.

My letters to you
 Are greater and more important than both of us.
 Light is more important than the lantern,
 The poem more important than the notebook,
 And the kiss more important than the lips.
 My letters to you
 Are greater and more important than both of us.
 They are the only documents
 Where people will discover
 Your beauty
 And my madness.

رَسَائِلِي إِلَيْكَ ..
 تَخْطَايَ ، وَتَخْطَاكِ ،
 لَأَنَّ الضَّوْءَ أَكْهَمُّ مِنَ الْمِصْبَاحِ
 وَالْقَصِيدَةُ أَكْهَمُّ مِنَ الدُّفْتَرِ
 وَالْقُبْلَةُ أَكْهَمُّ مِنَ الشَّفَةِ ..
 رَسَائِلِي إِلَيْكَ ..
 أَكْهَمُّ مِنْكِ ، وَأَكْهَمُّ مِنِّي
 إِنَّهَا الْوَنَائِقُ الْوَحِيدَةُ
 الَّتِي سَيُلْتَشَفُ فِيهَا النَّاسُ
 جَمَالَكَ .. وَجُنُونِي ..

In the summer
I stretch out on the shore
And think of you
Had I told the sea
What I felt for you,
It would have left its shores,
Its shells,
Its fish,
And followed me.

في أيام الصيف
أتمدّد على رمال الشاطئ
وأمارس هواية التفكير بك ..
لو أنني أقول للبحر .. ما أشعر به نحوك
لترك شواطئه ..
وأصدّقه ..
وأسمّكه ..
وتبجني ...

Every time I kiss you
After a long separation
I feel
I am putting a hurried love letter
In a red mailbox.

كلّما قبّلتك ..
بعد طول افتراق
أشعر أنني ،
أضع رسالة حبّ عسّجلة
في علبة بريد حمراء ...

Every man
Who kisses you after me
Will discover above your mouth
The small grapevine
That I planted.

كُلُّ رَجُلٍ سَيَقْبَلُكَ بَعْدِي
سَيَكْتَشِفُ فَوْقَ فَمِكَ
عَرِيشَةً صَغِيرَةً مِنَ الْحِنَبِ
زَرَعْتُهَا أَنَا ...

My love runs to you
Like a white horse
Refusing the saddle and the rider
My lady,
If you knew the yearnings of horses,
You would fill my mouth
With cherries, almonds, and pistachios.

يَنْدَفِعُ حُبِّي نَحْوَكِ
كَصَاحِبِ أَيْهَنٍ ..
يَرْفُضُ سَرْجَهُ وَفَارَسَهُ .
لَوْ كُنْتِ يَا سَيِّدَتِي ،
تَعْرِفِينَ أَشْوَاقَ الْخُيُولِ
لَمَلَأْتِ فَمِي
لَوْزًا .. وَكَرْزًا .. وَفُسْتَقًا أَخْضَرَ ..

When rain fell on both of us
Thousands of plants
Grew on our coats.
After you left
Rain began to fall on me alone
But on my coat nothing grew.

كَانَ الْمَطَرُ نِزْلًا عَلَيْنَا مَعًا ..
فَتَمَثَّرَ أُلُوفُ الْخَشَائِشِ
عَلَى مِعْطَفَيْنَا .
بَعْدَ رَحِيلِكَ ،
صَارَ الْمَطَرُ يَسْقُطُ عَلَيَّ وَحْدِي
فَلَا يَنْبُتُ شَيْءٌ عَلَيَّ مِعْطَفِي ...

Stay out of my sight
So I can distinguish between colors
Move away from my hand
So I can know the size of the universe
And discover
That the world is round.

إِبْتَعِدْ قَلِيلًا عَنْ حَقَّتِي عَيْنِي
هَتَّى أَفِيَّزُ بَيْنَ الْأَلْوَانِ
إِنْزِعْ عَنِّي عَنْ أَصَابِعِي الْخَمْسَةِ
هَتَّى أَعْرِفَ حُجْمَ الْكَوْنِ ..
وَأَقْنَعَنَّ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ كُرَوِيَّةٌ ...

I curl up
On the shores of your breasts
Tired
Like a child
Who has not slept
Since the day he was born.

أَتَلَوَّمُ عَلَى رِمالِ نَهْدَيْكِ مُتَعَبًا
كَطِفْلِ لَمْ يَنَمْ مِنْهُ وَلَدَتْهُ ..

I hope one day
You will no longer be
Fearful like a rabbit.
Then you will know
I am not your hunter
I am your lover.

آهِ .. لَوْ تَحَرَّرْتِ يَوْمًا
مِنْ غَرِيزَةِ الدَّرَانِبِ ..
وَتَعْرِفْتِ ،
أَنِّي لَسْتُ صَيَّادًا ..
لَكِنِّي مَحِبُّبٌ ...

When you visit me,
Wearing a new dress,
I feel what a gardener feels
When a tree blooms in his garden.

عندما تزوريني
بتوب جديد ..
أشعر بما يشعر به البستاني
حين تزهر لديه شجرة ..

Every time you traveled
Your perfume asked me about you
Like a child
Asking about the return of its mother.
Imagine,
Even perfume
Knows Banishment
And Exile.

كلما سافرت ..
طالبي عطرك بك ..
كما يطالب الطفل بعودة أمه ..
تصورني ..
حتى العطور
تعرف الغربة ..
وتعرف النفي ...

Did you ever think
Of where we were going
Boats know where they are sailing,
Fish know where they are swimming,
Birds know where they are flying
Yet we flounder in the water
But do not sink
We wear traveling clothes
But do not travel
We write letters
But do not mail them
We buy tickets
On all departing planes
But stay in the airport
You and I are
The most cowardly travelers ever.

هل فكرت يوماً .. إلى أين ؟
المراكب تعرف إلى أين ..
والأسماك تعرف إلى أين ..
وأسراب السُّلُوف تعرف إلى أين ..
وللأخضر ..
نحن نختطف في الماء .. ولا نغرق ..
ونلبس ثياب السفر .. ولا نُسافر ..
ونكتب المكاتيب .. ولا نُرسلها ..
ونحجز تذكريت ..
على كل الطائرات المسافرة
ونبقى في المطار ..
أنت .. وأنا ..
أجبن مسافرين عرّفهما العصر ..

The day I met you
I tore up
All my maps and my prophecies
And became like an Arabian horse.
I smell the scent of your rain
Before it makes me wet,
I hear the rhythm of your voice
Before you speak
I undo your braids
Before you plait them.

مَرَقْتُ ، يَوْمَ عَرَفْتُكَ
كُلَّ خَرَاطِي ، وَنُبُوَاتِي .
وَصِرْتُ كَالْخَيْلِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ
أَشْمَمُ رَائِحَةَ امْطَارِكَ
قَبْلَ أَنْ تَبْلُغَنِي ..
وَأَسْمَعُ إِيقَاعَ صَوْتِكَ
قَبْلَ أَنْ تَتَكَلَّمَنِي ..
وَأُفْكُ ضَفَائِرَكَ بِيَدِي
قَبْلَ أَنْ تَضْفِيسِي ...

Close all my books
Read the lines of my face
I look at you
With the amazement of a child
In front of a Christmas tree.

إِغْلِقِي جَمِيعَ كُتُبِي
وَاقْرَأِي نُقُوطَ يَدَيِ
أَوْ نُقُوطَ وَجْهِ .
إِنِّي أُتَلَّعُ إِلَيْكَ بِأَنْبَرَاءِ طِفْلِ
أَمَامَ شَجَرَةِ عِيدِ الْمِيلَادِ ...

Please,
Respect my silence,
Silence is my best weapon
Did you feel my words
When I fell silent?
Did you feel the beauty of what I said
When I said nothing?

أَرْجُوكَ أَنْ تَحْتَرِمَ صَمَتِي
إِنَّ أَقْوَى أَسْلِحَتِي هُوَ الصَّمْتُ .
هل شَعَرْتَ بِبِلَاغَتِي عِنْدَمَا أَسْكُتُ ؟
هل شَعَرْتَ بِرَوْعَةِ الْأَشْيَاءِ الَّتِي أَقُولُهَا ؟
عِنْدَمَا لَا أَقُولُ شَيْئاً ..

Yesterday I thought
Of my love for you.
I remembered
The drops of honey on your lips,
I licked the sugar
Off the walls of my memory.

فَأَلَمْتُ أَمْسٍ ، بِحُبِّي لَكَ
تَذَكَّرْتُ فِجَاءً ..
قَطَرَاتِ الْعَسَلِ عَلَى شَفَتَيْكَ
فَأَحَسَسْتُ السُّكَّرَ عَنْ جُذُرَانِ ذَاكِرَتِي ..

لماذا تطلبين مني أن أكتب إليك؟

لماذا تطلبين مني

أن أتعرّك أمامك كرجل بدائي؟

الكتابة هي العمل الوحيد الذي يُعرّيني.

عندما أتكلّم..

فإنني أحتفظ ببعض الثياب.

أما عندما أكتب..

فإنني أُصيرُ حراً، وخفيفاً

كصُفُوفٍ خرافي لا وزن له..

عندما أكتب..

أنفصلُ عن التاريخ..

وعن جاذبية الأرض...

وأردو ككوكب في فضاء عينيّك..

Why do you ask me to write you?

Why do you ask me

To undress in front of you

Like a primitive man?

Only writing undresses me.

When I speak

I keep my clothes on,

When I write,

I become free and light

Like a weightless legendary bird.

When I write,

I separate from history

From the earth's gravity,

I turn like a planet

In the space of your eyes.

Pull out the dagger buried in my side.
 Let me live.
 Pull out your scent from my skin.
 Let me live.
 Give me a chance
 To meet a new woman
 To cross out your name from my diary
 To cut the braids of your hair
 Wrapped around my neck.
 Give me a chance
 To search for roads where
 I have never walked with you,
 For seats
 Where I have never sat with you,
 For places
 That have no memory of you.
 Give me a chance
 To search for the women
 Whom I left for you
 And killed for you
 So I can live again.

إِنْزَعِي الدَّخْرَ الْمُدْفُونَ فِي خَاخِجَتِي
 وَاتْرُكِينِي أُعِيشُ ..
 إِنْزَعِي رَائِحَتَكَ مِنْ مَسَامَتِي جِلْدِي
 وَاتْرُكِينِي أُعِيشُ ..
 إِنْجِئِي الْفُرْصَةَ
 لِتَعْرِفَ عَلَى امْرَأَةٍ جَدِيدَةٍ ...
 تَشْطُبُ اشْعَابَ مِنْ مَفْطَرِّي
 وَتَقْطَعُ خُصَلَاتِ شَعْرِكَ
 الْمُلْتَفَةِ حَوْلَ عُنُقِي ..
 إِنْجِئِي الْفُرْصَةَ
 لَدُجَّتْ عَنْ طَرْقِي لَمْ أَمْشِ عَلَيْهِ مَعْلُكُ ..
 وَمَقَاعِدَ لَمْ أَجْلِسْ عَلَيْهِ مَعْلُكُ ..
 وَأَمَلَنِي لَمْ تَذْكُرِي ذَاكَرَتُنِي .
 إِنْجِئِي الْفُرْصَةَ
 لَدَّجَّتْ عَنْ عَنَاوِينَ النِّسَاءِ ..
 اللَّوَاتِي تَرَكْتُهُنَّ مِنْ أَجْلِكَ ..
 وَقَتَلْتُهُنَّ مِنْ أَجْلِكَ ..
 فَأَنَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُعِيشَ ...

من الطائرة ..
يرى الإنسان عواطفه بشكل مختلف .
يتحرر الحب من غبار الأرض ..
من جاذبيتها ..
من قوانينها ..
يصبح الحب .. كرة من القطن لا وزن لها .
الطائرة تنزلق على سجادة من الغيم المنقطع .
وعيناك تركضان خلفها
كعصفورين فضوليين
يدرعقان فراشة ...

أحمق أنا ..
حين ظننت أنني مسافر وحدي .
ففي كل مطار نزلت فيه
عثرنا عليك في حقيبة يدي ..

(excerpt)

From the airplane
Man sees his emotions differently
Love is liberated
From the dust,
From gravity,
From laws of the earth,
And becomes a weightless ball of cotton.
The airplane glides
Over the scattered carpet of clouds,
Your eyes running behind it
Like two curious birds
Chasing a butterfly.

I was a fool
To think I was traveling alone.
In each airport where I landed
They found you
Inside my briefcase.

قَبْلَ أَنْ أُدْخَلَ مَدَائِنَ فَمِكَ ..
 كَانَتْ شَفَقَاتِ زَهْرَتِي هَجَرًا
 وَقَدَمِي نَبِيذٍ .. بِلَا نَبِيذٍ ..
 وَجَزِيرَتَيْنِ مُتَجَدِّتَيْنِ
 فِي بَحَارِ الشَّمَالِ ..

(excerpt)

Before I entered the cities of your mouth
 Your lips were two stone flowers,
 Two empty glasses of wine,
 Two frozen islands in the North Seas.

قُضِيَ الدَّمْرُ .. وَأَصْبَحْتَ حَبِيبَتِي
 قُضِيَ الدَّمْرُ ..
 وَدَخَلْتَ فِي طَيَّاتِ لَحْيِي كَالظَّفَرِ الطَّوِيلِ ..
 كَالزَّرِّ فِي الْعُرْوَةِ ..
 كَالْحَلَقِ فِي أُذُنِ امْرَأَةٍ إِسْبَانِيَّةٍ ..

كُونِي إِذَنْ حَبِيبَتِي .. وَأَسْكُتِي ..
 وَلَا تُنَاقِشِينِي فِي شَرَعِيَّةِ حُبِّي لِلَّهِ
 لَدُنَّ حُبِّي لِلَّهِ شَرِيعَةٌ ..
 أَنَا أَكْتُبُهَا .. وَأَنَا أَنْفِذُهَا ..
 أَمَا أَنْتِ ..

فَصِرْتِمْ لِي أَنْ تَنَامِي كَزَهْرَةٍ مَا رَغَرِيَتْ بَيْنَ ذِرَاعِي ..
 وَتَتْرَكِينِي أَحْلَمُ ..
 فَصِرْتِمْ لِي يَا حَبِيبَتِي
 أَنْ تَطَائِي حَبِيبَتِي ..

It is all over.
 You have become my lover.
 You entered my flesh like a long nail,
 Like a button fitting through its hole,
 Like the earrings of a Spanish woman.

Be my lover then
 And be quiet.
 Do not argue about
 The legitimacy of my love for you.
 My love for you is a law
 I wrote.
 Your task is to sleep like a daisy
 Between my arms
 And to let me rule.
 Your task is
 To remain my lover.

ماذا تقول أنوثتك عني؟
 إذا عاملتك ،
 كقلب لا يرغب أحد في اقتلاكه
 أو كأرض محايدة ،
 لا يدخلها المتحاربون ..
 ماذا يقول نهدالك عني؟
 إذا تركتهما يُشرَّران خلف ظهري ،
 ونجت ..
 ماذا تقول شفقالك عني؟
 إذا تركتهما تأكلان بعضهما
 وذَهبت ..

(excerpt)

What would your femininity say about me
 If I treated you
 Like a field no one wants to own
 Or like a neutral land
 Where fighters never go?
 What would your breasts say about me
 If I slept
 And left them
 Whispering behind my back?
 What would your lips say about me
 If I departed
 And left them eating one another?

When you accompany me
I like to go through all the red lights
I feel a childish desire
To commit millions of little crimes.

When your hand is buried in mine
I like to break the windows
That they installed around love
To disobey official decrees
The governments issued to ban love.
I feel satisfied,
When the pieces of broken glass
Cut the tires of my car.

عندما تكونين برفقتي
أحبُّ أن أجتازَ جميعَ إشاراتِ المرورِ الحمراء
أحسُّ بشهوةٍ طفوليةٍ
لارتكاب ملايين المُنالقاتِ
وملايين التهاكاتِ ..

عندما تكون يدك مطبوعةً في يدي
أحبُّ أن أكسرَ جميعَ ألواحِ الزجاجِ
التي ركبوها حولَ الحبِّ ..
وجميعَ البلاغاتِ الرسميةِ
التي أصدرتها الحكومةُ لمصادرةِ الحبِّ ..
وأشعرُ بنشوةٍ لا حدودَ لها
حين تصطدمُ نِشَارَاتُ الزجاجِ المُسَوَّرِ
بَعَجَلَاتِ سيارتي ...

هَيْنَ رَقَصْتَ مَعِيَ ، فِي تِلْكَ اللَّيْلَةِ ..

عَدْتُ شَيْئًا غَرِيبًا .

شَعَرْتُ أَنَّ نَجْمَةً مُتَوَهِّجَةً

تَرَكَتْ غُرْفَتَهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

وَالْتَجَأَتْ إِلَى صَدْرِي ..

شَعَرْتُ كَمَا لَوْ أَنَّ غَايَةَ كَامِلَةٍ

تَنَبَّهَتْ تَحْتَ ثِيَابِي ..

شَعَرْتُ ، كَمَا لَوْ أَنَّ طِفْلَةً فِي عَامِلَةِ النَّائِلِ

تَقْرَأُ .. وَتَلْتَبُّ فُرُوضَةَ الْمَدْرَسِيَّةِ

عَلَى قِمَاشٍ قَمِيصِي ..

لَيْسَ مِنْ عَادَتِي أَنْ أُرْقُصَ ..

وَكَلَّنِي فِي تِلْكَ اللَّيْلَةِ

لَمْ أَكُنْ أُرْقُصُ فَسَبَّ

وَكَلَّنِي .. كُنْتُ الرَّقْصُ ...

When you danced with me that night

Something strange happened.

I felt as if a blazing star

Left its place in the sky

And sought refuge in my chest.

I felt as if an entire forest

Was growing under my clothes.

I felt as if a three-year-old child

Was writing her schoolwork

On the fabric of my shirt.

It is not my habit to dance,

But that night

I was not merely dancing,

I was the dance.

When you find a man
Who transforms
Every part of you
Into poetry,
Who makes each one of your hairs
Into a poem,
When you find a man,
Capable,
As I am,
Of bathing and adorning you
With poetry,
I will beg you
To follow him without hesitation,
It is not important
That you belong to me or him
But that you belong to poetry.

يَوْمَ تَعْرِينَ عَلَى رَجُلٍ ..
يَقْدُرُ أَنْ يُجَوِّلَ كُلَّ ذَرَّةٍ مِنْ ذَرَّاتِكَ ..
إِلَى شِعْرٍ ..
وَيَجْعَلَ كُلَّ شَعْرَةٍ مِنْ شَعْرَاتِكَ .. قَصِيدَةً
يَوْمَ تَعْرِينَ عَلَى رَجُلٍ ..
يَقْدُرُ - كَمَا فَعَلْتُ أَنَا -
أَنْ يَجْعَلَكَ تَخْتَسِلِينَ بِالشِّعْرِ ..
وَتَتَّخِذِينَ بِالشِّعْرِ ..
وَتَحْسَبِينَ بِالشِّعْرِ ..
فَسَوْفَ أَتَوَسَّلُ إِلَيْكَ
أَنْ تَتَّبِعِيهِ بِلَا تَرَدُّدٍ ..
فَلَيْسَ الْمُهْرِمُ أَنْ تَكُونِي لِي ..
وَلَيْسَ الْمُهْرِمُ أَنْ تَكُونِي لَهُ ..
الْمُهْرِمُ .. أَنْ تَكُونِي لِلشِّعْرِ ...

أَعْرِفُ ..
وَمَنْ عَلَى رَصِيفِ الْمَحْطَةِ
أَنْتَ تَنْتَظِرِينَ رَجُلًا آخَرَ ..
وَأَعْرِفُ ، وَأَنَا أَحْمِلُ حَقَائِبُكَ
أَنْتَ سَتُسَافِرِينَ مَعَ رَجُلٍ آخَرَ ..
وَأَعْرِفُ أَنِّي لَمْ أَكُنْ سِوَى مَرْوَحَةٍ صِينِيَّةٍ
فَقَفَّتْ عَنْكَ هَرَارَةُ الصَّيْفِ ..
أَعْرِفُ أَيْضًا ..
أَنَّ رِسَالَتِ الْحُبِّ الَّتِي كَتَبْتُ لَكَ ..
لَمْ تَكُنْ سِوَى مِرْيَا .. رَأَيْتَ فَيْطَ تَعْرُودَكَ ..

دَمْعَ هَذَا ..
أَحْمِلُ حَقَائِبُكَ .. وَحَقَائِبَ حَبِيبِكَ ..
لَأُنْشِي أُنْشِي أَنْ أَضْفَعَ امْرَأَةً ..
تَحْمِلُ فِي حَقِيْبَتِهَا الْبَيْضَاءِ
أَحلى أَيَّامِ حَيَاتِي ..

I knew
While we were at the station
That you were waiting for another man,
I knew
While I was carrying your luggage
That you would be traveling with another man,
I knew that I was
No more than a disposable Chinese fan
Used to shield you
From the heat of the summer.
I also knew
That the love letters I wrote you
Were not more than mirrors
To reflect your pride.

In spite of that,
I will carry your luggage
And your lover's luggage
Because I cannot
Slap a woman
Who carries in her white handbag
The sweetest days of my life.

Your departure is not a tragedy:
I am like a willow tree
That always dies
While standing.

لَنْ يَكُونَ زَهَابُكَ مَأْسَاوِيًّا
كَمَا تَتَصَوَّرِينَ ..
فَأَنَا كَأُشْجَارِ الصُّفْصَفِ
أُمُوتُ دَائِمًا
وَأَنَا وَاقِفٌ عَلَى قَدَمَيْهِ ..

While Rome burned, you burned
Do not expect me
To write an elegy for you
I am not used to
Praising dead birds.

بَعْدَمَا احْتَرَقَتْ رُومًا .
وَأَحْتَرَقْتَ مَعَهَا ..
لَا تَتَنَظَّرِي مِنِّي
أَنْ أَكْتُبَ فِيكَ قَصِيدَةً رَثَاءً
فَمَا تَعَوَّدْتُ ،
أَنْ أَرْتِي الْعَصَافِيرَ الْحَيَّةَ ..

هل لديك حلٌّ لقضيتنا ؟
 هل لديك حلٌّ لهذه السفينة المُنقوبة
 التي لا تستطيعُ أن تطفو ..
 ولا تستطيعُ أن تغرق ..

أنا شخصياً ..
 قابلٌ لجميع حلولك .
 فلقد شربْتُ من ملح البحر ما فيه الكفاية ..
 وشوَّت الشموسُ جلدي ، بما فيه الكفاية ..
 وأكلت الأسماك المتوحشة من لحمي ..
 ما فيه الكفاية ...

Do you have a solution
 For our problem,
 For this battered ship
 That can neither float nor sink?

I have to accept
 All your solutions
 Since I have drunk enough
 From the salt of the sea,
 The sun has baked
 Enough of my skin,
 And the wild fish have eaten
 Enough of my flesh.

أنا شخصياً ..
 ضجرت من السفر .
 وضجرت من الفجر .
 فهل لديك حل لهذا السيف
 الذي يخترقنا .. وقد يقتلنا ؟
 هل لديك حل ؟
 لهذا الدفيون الذي نتعاطاه .. ولا يندرنا ..

أنا شخصياً ..
 أريد أن أستريح .
 على أي حجر ، أريد أن أستريح .
 على أي كتيف ، أريد أن أستريح .
 فلقد تعبت من المراكب التي لا أشريعة لها ..
 ومن الأرضية التي لا أرضفة لها ..
 فقدمني هلولاب ، يا سيدي !
 وهذي توقيعي عليك قبل أن أراها ..
 واتركيني أنام ...

I am bored with traveling,
 I am bored of being bored.
 Do you have a solution
 For this sword
 That penetrates but does not kill?
 Do you have a solution
 For this opium we take
 That does not make us high?

I want to relax
 On any stone,
 On any shoulder,
 I am tired
 Of boats without sails
 Of roads without pavement.
 Do offer a solution, my lady,
 Which I promise to accept
 So that I may sleep.

إِشْرَبِي فَنَجَانٌ قَهْوَتِي ..
وَأَسْتَعِجْ بِرُحْدِي إِلَى كَلِمَاتِي ..
فَرَجًا ..
لَنْ نَشْرَبَ الْقَهْوَةَ مَعًا .. مَرَّةً ثَانِيَةً ..
وَلَنْ يُتِمَّ لِي أَنْ أُتَكَلِّمَ مَرَّةً ثَانِيَةً ..

لَنْ أُتَحَدَّثَ عَنْكَ ..
وَلَنْ أُتَحَدَّثَ عَنِّي ..
فَنَحْنُ صِفْرَانِ عَلَى شِمَالِ الْحُبِّ ..
سَطْرَانِ مَكْتُوبَانِ بِالْقَلَمِ الرِّصَاصِ عَلَى كَهَامِشِي ..
وَكَلْنِي سَأَتَحَدَّثُ ..
عَمَّا هُوَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْكَ .. وَأَكْبَرُ مِنِّي ..
وَأَنْظِفُ مِنْكَ .. وَأَنْظِفُ مِنِّي ..
سَأَتَحَدَّثُ عَنِ الْحُبِّ ..

عَنْ هَذِهِ الْفَرَّاشَةِ الْمُدْهَشَةِ
الَّتِي حَلَقَتْ عَلَى أَكْتَافِنَا ، وَطَرَدَنَاهَا ..
عَنْ هَذِهِ السَّمَكَةِ الزَّهَبِيَّةِ ..
الَّتِي لَمَلَعَتْ إِلَيْنَا مِنْ أَعْمَاقِ الْبَحْرِ
وَسَحَقْنَاهَا ..
عَنْ هَذِهِ النُّجْمَةِ الزَّرْقَاءِ
الَّتِي مَدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا يَدَهَا
وَرَفَضْنَاهَا ..

Drink your coffee,
Listen quietly to my words.
Perhaps
We will not drink coffee together again.
Perhaps I will not have the chance to speak again.

I will not talk about you,
I will not talk about me,
We are two zeroes on the margin of love,
Two lines written in pencil.
I will talk
About what is more transparent
Than both you and me,
I will talk
About love,
About this amazing butterfly
Lighting upon our shoulders
Only to be brushed off,
About this golden fish
Rising from the depths of the sea,
Only to be crushed,
About this blue star
Extending its hand to us
Only to be turned away.

ليست القضية أن تأخذني حقيبة ..
 وتذهبي ..
 كل النساء يأخذن حقائبهن في لحظات الغضب ..
 ويذهبن ..
 ليست القضية أن أطفئ لفاغتي بعصية ..
 في قماش المقعد ..
 كل الرجال يقرقون قماش المقاعد ، عندما يغضبون ..
 القضية ليست برودة البسطة ..
 وهي لا تعلق بل .. ولا تعلق بي ..
 فحين صفران على شمال الحب ..
 وسفران مكتوبان بالقلم الرصاص على هامشه ..
 القضية هي قضية هذه السمكة الذهبية
 التي رماها إلينا البحر ذات يوم ..
 وسحقناها بين أصابعنا ..

It is not important
 That you take your bag and leave,
 All women take their bags and leave
 When they are angry.
 It is not the important question
 That I put out my cigarettes nervously
 On the upholstery of the chair,
 All men do that
 When they are angry.
 The matter is not that simple.
 It is out of our hands.
 We are two zeroes in the margin of love,
 Two lines written in pencil.
 What is important is this:
 The golden fish thrown to us by the sea
 Was squashed between our fingers.

أَنَا مُتَّهِمٌ بِالشَّهْرِ يَارْتِيَّةُ
مِنْ أَصْدِقَائِي .

وَمِنْ أَعْدَائِي .

مُتَّهِمٌ بِالشَّهْرِ يَارْتِيَّةُ ..

وَبِأَنِّي أَجْمَعُ النِّسَاءَ

كَمَا أَجْمَعُ طَوَائِفَ الْبَرِيدِ

وَعَلَبَ الْكَلْبِيَّةِ الْفَارَغَةَ

وَأُعَلِّقُهُنَّ بِالْمَبَاسِيسِ

عَلَى جُدْرَانِ غُرْفَتِي ..

يَتَرَمَّوْنِي أَيْضاً بِالنَّرْمِيسَةِ ..

وَبِالسَّادَةِ .. وَبِالدُّوْدِيَّةِ ..

وَبِكُلِّ مَا فِي الطَّبِّ النَّفْسِيِّ مِنْ أَمْرَاضٍ ..

لِيُثْبِتُوا أَنَّهُمْ مُتَّقُونَ ..

وَأَنِّي مُتَّهِمٌ ...

•

I am accused of being like Shahrayar

By my friends

And by my enemies,

Accused of collecting women

Like stamps

Like empty matchboxes

That I pin up

On the walls of my room.

They accuse me of being narcissistic,

Sadistic,

Oedipal,

Of being disturbed

In order to prove

They are educated

And I am deviant.

•

لا أَحَدَ يَا حَبِيبَتِي
 يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَسْتَعْمَلَ إِلَى إِخَارَتِي
 فَالْقَضَاءُ مُعَقَّدُونَ ..
 وَالشُّهُودُ مُرْتَشُونَ ..
 وَقَرَارُ إِدَانَتِي ، صَادَرَتْ قَبْلَ صُدُورِهِ ..
 لا أَحَدَ يَا حَبِيبَتِي ، يَفْهَمُ طُفُولَتِي
 فَأَنَا أَنْتَهِي إِلَى مَدِينَةٍ لَا تُحِبُّ الْأَطْفَانَ ..
 وَلَا تَعْتَرِفُ بِالْبَرَاءَةِ ..
 وَلَمْ يَسْبِقْ لَهَا أَنْ اشْتَرَتْ وَرْدَةً .. أَوْ دِيوانَ شِعْرٍ ..
 أَنَا مِنْ مَدِينَةٍ خَشِنَتْ يَدَيَّ ..
 خَشِنَتْ الْقَلْبَ .. خَشِنَتْ الْعَوَاطِفَ ..
 مِنْ كَثْرَةِ مَا ابْتَلَعَتْ مِنَ الْمَسَامِيرِ .. وَقَطَعِ الزُّجَاجِ ..
 أَنَا مِنْ مَدِينَةٍ جَلِيدَتِ الْأَسْوَارَ
 مَاتَ جَمِيعُ أَوْطَالِهَا مِنَ الْبَرْدِ ..

Nobody, my love,
 Wants to listen to my testimony.
 The judges are biased,
 The witnesses are bribed,
 I am pronounced guilty
 Before I testify.
 Nobody, my love,
 Understands my childhood,
 I belong to a city
 That does not love children,
 That does not recognize innocence,
 That has never in its life
 Bought a rose or a book of poetry.
 I belong to a city whose hands are rough
 Whose heart and emotions are hard
 From having swallowed nails and pieces of glass.
 I belong to a city whose walls are made of ice
 Whose children have frozen to death.

إِنِّي لَا أَظَلُّ فِي الرَّعْدِ لَأَعْدُ ..
 وَلَيْسَ فِي نِيَّتِي أَنْ أُوَكِّلَ مُحَامِيًا
 يُنْقِذُ رَأْسِي مِنْ حَبْلِ الْمِشْنَقَةِ ..
 فَلَقَدْ شُنِقْتُ أَلْفَ مَرَّاتٍ ..
 حَتَّى تَعَوَّدَتْ رَقَبَتِي عَلَى الشَّنَقِ ..
 وَتَعَوَّدَ جَسَدِي عَلَى رُكُوبِ سِيَّارَاتِ الْإِسْعَافِ ..

لَيْسَ فِي نِيَّتِي أَنْ أُعْتَذِرَ لَأَعْدُ ..
 وَلَا أُرِيدُ حُكْمًا بِالْبَرَاءَةِ مِنْ أَعْدُ ..
 وَلَكِنِّي .. أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَقُولَ لِلَّهِ ..
 لِلَّهِ دَعْدُكَ يَا حَبِيبَتِي ..
 فِي جَلْسَةٍ عَلَنِيَّةٍ
 وَأَمَامَ جَمِيعِ الَّذِينَ يُحَاكُمُونِي
 بِتُرْمَةِ هَيَّازَةٍ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ امْرَأَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ..
 وَأَهْتِكَارِ الْعُطُورِ .. وَالخَوَاتِمِ .. وَالْمِشَاطِ ..
 فِي زَمَنِ الْحَرْبِ ..
 أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَقُولَ :
 إِنِّي أَهْبَلُكَ وَهَدُوكَ ..
 وَأَتَأَمَّشُ بِكَ ..
 كَمَا تَتَأَمَّشُ قَشْرَةَ الرَّمَانَةِ بِالرَّمَانَةِ ..
 وَالِدُمْعَةَ بِالْعَيْنِ ..
 وَالسَّكِّينَ بِالْجُرْحِ ...

I am not apologizing to anyone.
 It is not my intention to hire a lawyer
 To save my head from the rope.
 I was hanged
 Thousands of times
 Until my neck was used to hanging
 And my body was accustomed to riding in ambulances.

It is not my intention to apologize.
 I do not want an innocent verdict
 From anyone.
 But I want to tell you alone my love
 In a public hearing
 And in front of all those who tried me
 For possessing more than one woman,
 For hoarding perfumes, rings, and combs
 During times of war.
 I want to say:
 I only love you,
 And I cling to you
 Like the peel clings to a pomegranate,
 Like the tear clings to the eye,
 Like the knife clings to the wound.

أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَقُولَ ..
وَلَوْ لِمَرَّةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ
إِنِّي لَسْتُ تَلَمِيذًا لَشَهْرِيَارٍ .
وَلَمْ أُعَارِسْ أَبَدًا هَوَايَةَ الْقَتْلِ الْجَمَاعِيِّ
وَتَذْوِيبِ النِّسَاءِ فِي حَاوِضِ الْكِبْرِيتِ ..
وَلَكِنِّي شَاعِرٌ ..
يَكْتَبُ بِصَوْتِ عَالٍ ..
وَيَحْسِقُ بِصَوْتِ عَالٍ ..
وَيُحِبُّ أَفْضَرَ الْحَيْنِينَ
مُسْنُوقًا عَلَى بَوَابِ مَدِينَةٍ
لَا تَعْرِفُ الطُّفُولَةَ ..

I want to say
If only this one time
That I am not a disciple of Shahrayar,
I am not a murderer
And have never melted women in sulfuric acid.
Rather, I am a poet
Who writes in a loud voice,
Who loves in a loud voice.
I am a child with green eyes
Leaning on the gate of a city
That does not recognize childhood.

Why do you telephone, my lady?
 Why do you attack me in such a civilized way?
 If the time for compassion is over,
 And the time of jasmine is over,
 Then why do you use your voice
 To assassinate me again?
 I am a dead man
 The dead don't die twice
 Your voice has nails,
 And my flesh is embroidered with stabs
 Like a bloody sheet.

لماذا تُخاطِبِينِ يا سيِّدتي؟
 لماذا تَعْدِينِ عَليَّ بِهذهِ الطَّرِيقَةِ المُنَحْضَةِ؟
 ما دامَ زَمَنُ الحَنانِ قد مَاتَ .
 وموسمُ الياسمينِ قد مَاتَ .
 لماذا تَسْتَعْمِلِينَ صَوْتَكِ
 كي يُخَالَني مَرَّةً أُخْرَى؟
 إِنِّي رَجُلٌ مَيِّتٌ .
 والمَيِّتُ لا يَمُوتُ مَرَّتَيْنِ ..
 صَوْتُكِ لَهُ أَظْفِرٌ ..
 ولَحْمِي ، مُطَرَّرٌ كَالشَّرْشَفِ الدِّمَشْقِيِّ ..
 بِالطَّعَنَاتِ ..

الْتَلْفُون .. كَانَ زَاتَ يَوْمٍ
مُحَمَّدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكِ ، هَبْلًا مِنْ أَلْيَا سَمِينٍ
وَأَصْبَحَ الْآنَ هَبْلَ مَشْنَقَةٍ ..

كَانَ هَاتِفُكَ ..
فِرَاشَ عَرِيرٍ أَسْتَلْقِي عَلَيْهِ
صَارَ صُلْبًا مِنَ الشُّوْكِ أَنْزِفُ فَوْقَهُ .
كَنتُ أَفْرَحُ بِصَوْتِكَ ،

عِنْدَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْ سَمَاعَةِ الْوَاتِفِ
كَعُصْفُورٍ أَغْضَرُ ..
أَشْرَبُ قَهْوَتِي مَعَهُ ..
وَأُرْقِنُ مَعَهُ ..

كَانَ صَوْتُكَ هَمَزًا لَدَيْجَرًا مِنْ حَيَاتِي
كَانَ يُنبِئُنِي ، وَفِطْلَةً ، وَمَرَدَّةً ..
يَحْمِلُ لِي الْفَرْحَ ، وَرَاحَةَ الْبَرَارِي .
صَارَ كَنَوَاقِيسِ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ الْكَزِينَةِ
يَغْسِلُنِي بِأَمْطَارِ الْقُبُوعَةِ ..

The telephone stretched between us
Like a chain of jasmine,
Now it has become a noose.
Your telephone used to be
A bed of silk for me to lie on,
Now it is
A cross of thorns that I bleed on.
I used to be happy to hear your voice
Coming over the telephone
Like a green bird,
I used to smoke and drink my coffee with your voice.
It was essential to my life,
A spring, a parasol, and a fan
That brought me
Joy and the smell of wilderness.
Now,
Your voice sounds
Like bells on Good Friday,
Washing me with the rain of tragedy.

أَوْقِفِي هَذِهِ الْمَذْجَةَ يَا سَيِّدِي ..
فَشَرَّابِي كُطِّبَ مَقْطُوعَةً ..
وَأَعْصَابِي كُطِّبَ مَقْطُوعَةً ..
رَجَاءً .. لَدَى زِيَارِ صَوْنِكَ بِنَفْسِي ..
كَمَا كَانَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ..
وَكَلَنِّي - مَعِ الدَّسْفِ -
لَا أَرَاهُ .. لَا أَرَاهُ ..
لَدُنِّي مُصَابٌ بِعَمَى الْأَلْوَانِ ..

Stop this torture, my lady,
My veins are blocked,
My nerves are severed.
Perhaps your voice is still violet
As it was before,
But now I can't see it
Because I'm color-blind.

تلبسين ملابس الهيببيين
وتعلقين على شعرك الزهور
وفي رقبتك الدجراسن ..
تقرئين تعاليم (ماو)
وكل كتب الثورة الثقافية
وتمشين في المسيرات الطويلة
ترفعين لافتات الحرية
وتطالبين أن يحكم الطلاب العالم
وأن يفسروا جذران العالم القديم ..

You wear hippie clothes,
Hang flowers in your hair,
You wear bells around your neck
And read the sayings of Mao,
All the books of the Cultural Revolution.
You participate in long marches
Raising the banners of revolution
Demanding that the students rule the world
That the walls of the ancient world be broken.

وَهَيْنَ يَهْوَ جُحْلُ الْحُبِّ ..
 كَوْهَشٍ أَرْزَقِ الْأَنْيَابُ ..
 تَرْتَعِشِينَ أُمَامَهُ كَفَاؤُهُ مَدْعُورَةٌ
 وَتَرْمِينَ صُورَةَ (مَأْدُ) عَلَى الْأَرْضِ
 وَتَرْمِينَ مَعْرَا ،
 كُلُّ لَافِحَاتِ الْحَرَّةِ الَّتِي رَفَعْتَ
 أَنْتِ زَمِيلَاتُكِ ..
 وَتَلْتَجِينَ بِأَكِيَّةٍ إِلَى صَدْرِ جَدَّتِكَ ..
 وَتَتَزَوَّجِينَ ..
 عَلَى طَرِيقَةِ جَدَّتِكَ ..

When love attacks you
 Like a beast with blue fangs
 You shiver
 Like a terrified mouse,
 You throw the picture of Mao on the floor
 And the banner of revolution
 That you raised,
 You run crying
 To your grandmother's bosom
 And marry
 According to your grandmother's way.

Be assured, my lady.
 I did not come to curse you
 To hang you on the ropes of my anger,
 I did not come to review my old notebooks with you.
 I am a man
 Who doesn't keep his old notebooks of love
 Who never returns to his memories.
 I came to thank you
 For the flowers of sadness
 That you planted inside me.
 From you I learned
 To love the black flowers,
 To buy them,
 To distribute them
 In the corners of my room.

إِطْمَئِنِّي يَا سَيِّدَتِي !
 فَمَا جِئْتُ لَأُشْتَكِبُ ،
 أَوْ لَأُشْنُقَكَ عَلَى حَبَالِ غَضَبِي .
 وَلَا جِئْتُ ..
 لَأُرَاجِعَ دِفَاتِرِي الْقَدِيمَةَ قَعْلُ .
 فَأَنَا رَجُلٌ ..
 لَا يَحْفَظُ بِدِفَاتِرِ حُبِّهِ الْقَدِيمَةِ ،
 وَلَا يَعُودُ إِلَى أَجْدَاءِ ..
 لَكِنِّي جِئْتُ ..
 لَأُشْكُرَكَ عَلَى زُهُورِ الْحُزْنِ الَّتِي زَرَعْتِ فِي دَاخِلِي
 فَهَمَلْتُ تَعَلَّمْتُ أَنَّ أَحَبَّ الزُّهُورِ السُّودَاءُ ..
 وَأَشْتَرِي ..
 وَأُوزِعُكَ فِي زَوَايَا عُمْرِي ..

ليس في نيتي ،
 أن أخفي انتهازيتك ..
 أو أكشف الأوراق المشوشة
 التي كنت تلعبين بها ، فهازل عامين ..
 لكنني جمعت لأشرك ..
 على مواسم الدمع
 وليالي الوجع الطويلة ..
 وعلى كل الأوراق الصفراء
 التي نثرتها على أرض حياقي .
 فلولاك ..
 لم أكتشف لذة الكتابة باللون الأصفر ..
 ولذة التفكير .. باللون الأصفر ..
 ولذة الحشوق .. باللون الأصفر ...

It is not my intention
 To expose to the world your opportunist nature,
 To reveal your cheating
 That lasted for two years,
 I came to thank you
 For the seasons of tears,
 For the long nights of pain,
 For all the deceitful, yellow papers
 You scattered
 On the ground of my life.
 Because of you I discovered
 The pleasure of writing in yellow,
 The pleasure of thinking in yellow,
 The pleasure of loving with yellow.

هذه هي رسالتي الأخيرة
ولن يكون بعدها رسائل..
هذه.. آخر غيمة رعدية
تُطر على..
ولن تعرفي بعدها المطر
هذا آخر النبيذ في إنائي
وبعد..
لن يكون سُكَّر.. ولا نبيذ..

This is my last letter
There will be no others.
This is the last grey cloud
That will rain on you,
After this, you will never again
Know the rain.
This is the last drop of wine in my cup
There will be no more drunkenness.

هذه آخر رسائل الجنون ..
 وآخر رسائل الطفولة .
 ولن تعرفي بعدي ،
 نقاء الطفولة ، وطراقة الجنون ..
 لقد عشقتك ،
 كطفل هارب من المدرسة
 يخبئ في جيوبه العصافير .. والقصاصد ..
 كنت معلك ..
 لطفل التلوسية ، والشُرود ، والتناقضات ..
 كنت طفل الشعر ، والكتابة العصبية ..
 أما أنت ..
 فلنت امرأة شرقية الشروش
 تنتظر قدرها ..
 في خطوط فجاجين القهوة ..

This is the last letter of madness,
 The last letter of childhood.
 After me you will no longer know
 The purity of youth
 The beauty of madness.
 I have loved you
 Like a child running from school
 Hiding birds and poems
 In his pockets.
 With you I was a child of
 Hallucinations,
 Distractions,
 Contradictions,
 I was a child of poetry and nervous writing.
 As for you,
 You were a woman of Eastern ways
 Waiting for her fate to appear
 In the lines of the coffee cups.

ها أُنَحْسَلُ يا سَيِّدِي !
 فَلَنْ تَكُونِي فِي الْكُتُبِ الزُّرْقَاءِ .. بَعْدَ الْيَوْمِ
 وَلَنْ تَكُونِي فِي وَرَقِ الرِّسَالِ ،
 وَبُكَاءِ الشُّمُوعِ ..
 وَحَقِيبَةِ مُورِّعِ الْبَرِيدِ .
 لَنْ تَكُونِي فِي عِرَاسِ السُّلُوكِ
 وَطَيَّارَاتِ الْوَرَقِ الْمَلَوْنَةِ
 لَنْ تَكُونِي فِي وَجَعِ التُّرُوفِ
 أَوْ فِي وَجَعِ الْقَصَائِدِ ..
 فَلَقَدْ نَفَيْتِ نَفْسَكَ فَارْجَ عِدَائِكَ طِفُولَتِي
 وَأَصْبَحْتَ نَشْرًا ..

How miserable you are, my lady,
 After today
 You won't be in the blue notebooks,
 In the pages of the letters,
 In the cry of the candles,
 In the mailman's bag.
 You won't be
 Inside the children's sweets
 In the colored kites.
 You won't be in the pain of the letters
 In the pain of the poems.
 You have exiled yourself
 From the gardens of my childhood
 You are no longer poetry.

Other Poems

— About Sea Love —

I am your sea,
 Do not ask me
 About the upcoming voyage.
 All you need to do is
 Forget your earthly instincts
 Obey the law of the sea
 Penetrate me like a mad fish,
 Split the ship,
 The horizon,
 My life
 Into pieces.

في الحبِّ البحريِّ

أنا بحرُكِ ، يا سيِّدتي
 فلا تسأليني عن تفاصيل الرحلة
 ودقتِ الإقلاع والوصول .
 كلُّ ما هو مطلوبٌ منك
 أن تنسي غرائز البرية
 وتطيعي قوانين البحر ..
 وتخرقين كسمكة مجنونة
 تشطُّ السفينة إلى نصفين ..
 والدُّفق إلى نصفين ..
 وحياتي إلى نصفين ..

— I Learn by Reading Your Body —

When I was expelled from the tribe
 For leaving a poem and a rose
 At the door of your tent,
 The age of decay began,
 An age familiar with grammar and syntax
 But ignorant about femininity,
 An age guilty of
 Erasing all women's names
 From the nation's memory.

أَقْرَأُ جَسَدَكَ .. وَأَتَقَفُّ

يَوْمَ طَرَدُونِي مِنَ الْقَبِيلَةِ
 لِأَنِّي تَرَكْتُ قَصِيدَةً عَلَى بَابِ خَيْمَتِكَ
 وَتَرَكْتُ لَكَ مَعْصُومَةً .. وَرَدَّةً ..
 بَدَأْتُ عَصُورَ الْإِنْخِلَاطِ .
 إِنَّ عَصُورَ الْإِنْخِلَاطِ لَيْسَتْ الْجُرْمُ
 بِمَجْدِي النَّحْوِ وَالصَّرْفِ ..
 وَلَكِنَّ الْجُرْمُ بِمَجْدِي الْأُنُوثَةِ
 وَشَطْبُ أَسْمَاءِ جَمِيعِ النِّسَاءِ
 مِنْ زَاكِرَةِ الْوَطَنِ ...

آهِ .. يَا حَبِيبَتِي .
 مَا هُوَ هَذَا الْوَلَدُ الَّذِي يَتَحَامَلُ مَعَ الْحُبِّ
 كَرَجُلٍ بُولِيْسٍ ؟
 فَيَحْتَبِرُ الْوَرْدَةَ مُؤَامَرَةً عَلَى الْإِنْفَاسِ
 وَيَحْتَبِرُ الْقَصِيدَةَ مَنَشُورًا سَرِيًّا ضِدَّهُ .
 مَا هُوَ هَذَا الْوَلَدُ ؟
 الْمَرْسُومُ عَلَى شَكْلِ جَرَادَةٍ صَفْرَاءَ ..
 تَزحفُ عَلَى بَطْنِهِ مِنَ الْمَحِيطِ إِلَى الْخَيْبِ .
 مِنَ الْخَيْبِ إِلَى الْمَحِيطِ .
 وَالَّذِي يَنْظُرُ فِي النِّظَرِ كَقَدَّيْسٍ
 وَيَدُوخُ فِي اللَّيْلِ عَلَى سُرَّةِ امْرَأَةٍ ...

Oh my love,
 What kind of a nation is this?
 Dealing with love like a policeman
 Considering the rose
 A conspiracy against the system
 Considering the poem
 A secretive leaflet.
 What kind of a nation is this?
 Taking the shape of a yellow locust
 Crawling on its belly
 From the ocean to the Gulf
 From the Gulf to the ocean,
 Speaking like a saint in the daytime
 Getting drunk over a woman's navel at night.

ما هو هذا الوطن ؟
 الذي ألغى مادة الحب من مناهج المدرسية .
 وألغى فن الشعر ..
 وعميّن النساء ..
 ما هو هذا الوطن ؟
 الذي يمارس العدوان على كل غمامة مطيرة
 ويفتح لكل نمر .. ملفاً سرياً
 وينظم مع كل وردة ..
 مختبر تحقيق ..

What kind of a nation is this?
 Deleting love from its curriculum
 The art of poetry,
 The mystery of women's eyes.
 What kind of a nation is this?
 Battling each rain cloud,
 Opening a secret file for each breast,
 Filing a police report for every rose.

أَيْتَرُ الْمَدْهَشَةَ كُلَّ لَعَابِ الْإِلْهَانِ
إِنِّي أَعْتَبُ نَفْسِي مُتَحَضِّراً ..
لِأَنْتِي أَهْبَابٌ ..
كُلُّ زَمَنٍ قَبْلَ عَيْنِيكَ هُوَ احْتِمَالٌ .
وَكُلُّ زَمَنٍ بَعْدَهُمَا ، هُوَ شَطَايَا .
فَدَرَسْتُ لِيَنِي لِمَاذَا أَنَا مَعَكَ ..
إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخْرِجَ مِنْ تَخَلُّفِي ..
وَأَدْخُلَ فِي زَمَنِ الْمَاءِ ..
أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخْرِجَ مِنْ بَدَاوِي
وَأَجْلِسَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرِ .
وَأَغْتَسِلَ بِمَاءِ الْيَنَابِيعِ
وَأَتَعَلَّمَ أَسْمَاءَ الْإِزْهَارِ ..

You amaze me
Like a child's toy
I feel civilized because I love you
Before you, time did not exist
After you, it split into pieces
Do not ask me why I'm with you
I want to be rid of my backwardness
Escape my Bedouin ways.
I want to sit beneath a tree,
Bathe in spring water,
Learn the names of the flowers.

أُرِيدُ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِي الْقِرَاءَةَ وَالْكِتَابَةَ ..
فَالْكِتَابَةُ عَلَى جَسَدِكَ ، أَوَّلُ الْمَعْرِفَةِ ،
وَالدُّخُولُ إِلَيْهِ دُخُولٌ إِلَى الْخِصْرَةِ ..
وَمَنْ لَا يَقْرَأُ دَفَاتِرَ جَسَدِكَ ..
يَبْقَى طَوَلَ حَيَاتِهِ أُصَمًّا ...

I want you to teach me the first knowledge
Of reading and writing on your body
Whoever does not read
The notebooks of your body
Will remain illiterate
All his life.

— To My Love on New Year's Eve —

I love you
 And I don't want
 To link you
 To the water or the wind,
 To the ebb and flow of the sea,
 To the hours of the solar eclipse
 I don't care
 About what the astronomers say
 About what appears
 In the lines of the coffee cups.
 Your eyes are
 The only prophecy.

إلى حبيبتي في رأس السنة

إني أُحِبُّ ..
 ولا أريد أن أُربطُ بالماء، أو بالريح
 ولا بمجرات المد والجزر .
 أو ساعات الخسوف والكسوف
 لا يبرهنني ما تقول المرصِد
 وخطوط فناجين القهوة ..
 فعينك وحدهما هما النبوءة ...

هل تسمحين لي أن أصطافُ؟

أَيُّهَا الْمَرْأَةُ الَّتِي تَسْتَوْطِنُ جِبْطِي الْعَصَبِيَّ .
هل تسمحين لي أن أصطافُ كما يصطافُ الآخرون ؟
وَأَتَجَمَّعَ بِأَيَّامِ الْجَبَلِ .. كَمَا يَتَجَمَّعُ الْآخَرُونَ .
الْجَبَلُ مَرْوَعَةٌ مَرِيرٌ بِسَبَانِيَّةٍ ..
وَأَنْتِ مَرْسُومَةٌ عَلِيْلٌ ..
وَعَصَافِيرُ عَيْنِيْلٍ ..

تَأْتِي أَخْوَاجًا أَخْوَاجًا مِنْ جِهَةِ الْبَحْرِ ..
كَمَا تَطِيرُ الْكَلِمَاتُ مِنْ أَوْرَاقِ دَفْتَرٍ أَزْرَقٍ .
هل تسمحين لِمَذَاكِرِي أَنْ تَكْسِرَ حَصَارَ رَاحَتِيكَ ؟
وَتَشْمَمَ رَائِحَةَ الْحَبَقِ ، وَالزَّعْتَرِ الْبَرِّيِّ ..
هل تسمحين لي .. أَنْ أَجْلِسَ عَلَى الشَّرْفَةِ الصَّيْفِيَّةِ ؟
دُونَ أَنْ يَتَسَلَّقَ صَوْتُكَ .. كَعَرِيشَةِ زَرْقَاءٍ
عَلَى نَافِذَةٍ بَيْقٍ ..

— Will You Allow Me to Take a Holiday? —

Woman who dwells inside me
Will you allow me
To take a holiday
And enjoy days in the mountains
As others do?
The mountain is
A silk Spanish fan
You are painted on it
The birds of your eyes
Come in flocks
From the seaside
Like words
Flying out of the pages
Of a blue notebook.
Will you allow my memory
To break through
The blockage of your scent
To smell
The basil and the wild thyme?
Will you allow me
To sit on the summer balcony
Without your voice
Climbing to me?

— Time Travels with You When You Leave —

I walked through
The streets of your face
Oh woman who used to be my lover.
I asked about my old hotel,
About the stand
Where I bought my newspaper,
The lottery tickets
That never won.
I found neither the hotel,
Nor the stand.
I learned
That the newspapers were no longer printed
After your departure,
That the city and the sidewalk
Had moved,
That the sun had changed its address,
And that the stars
We rented during the summer
Had been sold.
The trees had changed their locations,
The birds had migrated
With their young and their music.
The sea had thrown itself
Upon its own waves
And died.

تأخذين في عقابك الوقت ، وتُسافرن

تجولت في شوارع وجهك
أيتى المرأة التي كانت في سالف الزمان هبتي ..
سألت عن فندقي القديم .
وعن الكشك الذي كنت أشتري منه جرائدي .
وأوراق اليانصيب التي لا تربح ..
لم أجده الفندق ، ولا الكشك ..
وعلمت أن الجرائد ..
توقفت عن الصدور بعد رحيلك .
كان واضحاً أن المدينة قد انتقلت ..
والأرصنة قد انتقلت ..
والشمس قد غيرت رقم صندوقها البريدي .
والنجوم التي كنا نستأجرها في موسم الصيف
أصبحت برسم التسليم ..
كان واضحاً ، أن الأشجار غيرت عناوينها ..
والعصافير أخذت أولادها ..
ومجموعة الأسطوانات الطلاسيكية التي تحتفظ بها ..
وهاجرت ..
والبحر رمى نفسه في البحر ..
ومات ..

توقفي عن النمو في داخلي ..
 أيتها المرأة التي تنمسا سل تحت جلدي كغابة ..
 ساعديني .. على كسر العادات الصغيرة التي كونت معك ..
 وعلى اقتلاع رجلي ..
 من قماش الستائر .. ورقون الكتب .. وبللور المزهرات ..
 ساعديني على تذكر اسمي ..
 الذي كانوا ينادونني به في المدرسة ..
 ساعديني .. على تذكر أشكال قصائدي
 قبل أن تأخذ شكل جسدي ..
 ساعديني .. على استعادة لغتي
 التي فصلت مفرداتي عليك ..
 ولم تعد صالحة لسؤال من النساء ..

تجولت في أزقة صونك المطيرة
 بحثاً عن فطلة تصيني من الماء ..
 كان في يدي خريطة المدينة التي أحببت فيك ..
 وأسماء الدورية الليلية التي راقصت فيك ..
 ولكن شرطي السير ، سخر من بلاهتي
 وأخبرني أن المدينة التي أبحث عنك
 قد ابتلعها البحر ..
 في القرن العاشر قبل الميلاد ..

Oh woman who roots in my skin like a forest,
 Stop growing inside me
 Help me
 To break the little habits
 We developed together,
 To extricate your scent
 From the draperies,
 The bookshelves,
 The crystal vases.
 Help me
 To remember the name
 I was called in school.
 Help me
 To remember the form of my poems
 Before they take the shape of your body.
 Help me
 To regain my language
 Which cannot be spoken
 To any other woman but you.

I wandered
 In the rainy alleys of your voice
 In search of an umbrella.
 I carried the map of the city
 Where I loved you,
 The names of the nightclubs
 Where I danced with you,
 But the policemen mocked me
 And told me
 That the city I was searching for
 Had been swallowed by the sea
 In the tenth century.

- Love During House Arrest -

I ask for your permission to leave
 Since blood
 Which cannot be changed into water
 Has changed into water.
 The sky
 Whose blue glass
 I believed to be unbreakable
 Has broken.
 The sun
 Which I hung on your ear
 Like a Spanish earring
 Has fallen on the ground
 And shattered.
 The words
 That I used to cover you
 While you slept
 Have fled like terrified birds
 Leaving you naked.

الحُبُّ فِي الْإِدْقَامَةِ الْجَبَرِيَّةِ

أَسْتَأْذِنُكَ بِإِدْنِهَا ..
 فَالِدَمُ الَّذِي كُنْتُ أُعْسِبُ أَنَّهُ لَا يُصْبِحُ مَاءً
 أَصْبَحَ مَاءً .
 وَالسَّمَاءُ الَّتِي كُنْتُ أُعْتَقِدُ أَنَّ زُجَاجَهَا الْأَزْرَقُ
 غَيْرُ قَابِلٍ لِلانْسِرَافِ .. انْكَسَرَتْ .
 وَالشَّمْسُ .. الَّتِي كُنْتُ أُعَلِّقُهَا كَمَا تَلْقَى الْإِسْبَاقِيَّةُ
 فِي أُذُنَيْكَ ..
 وَقَعَتْ مِنِّي عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَتَرَشَّعَتْ ..
 وَالْكَلِمَاتُ الَّتِي كُنْتُ أُغَطِّيُ بِهَا عِنْدَ مَا تَنَامِينَ ..
 هَرَبَتْ كَالْحِصَايَةِ الْخَائِفَةِ ..
 وَتَرَكْنِي عَارِيَةً ..

أَسْتَأْذِنُكَ بِالتُّرُوجِ مِنْ هَذَا الْمِطْبَبِ الرَّهْوِيِّ
بَيْنَ نَهْدَيْكَ ..

فَلَمْ تَعُدْ عِنْدِي شَهْوَةً لِمَا قَشْتَيْكَ ..

أَوْ لِمَا جَعَلْتُ ..

لَمْ أَعُدْ مَتَحَسِّسًا لِلْمُجُومِ عَلَى أَيِّ شَيْءٍ ..

أَوْ لِلدَّفَاعِ عَنْ أَيِّ شَيْءٍ .

فَقَدْ سَقَطْنَا فِي الزَّمَنِ الدَّائِرِيِّ

عَيْنُ الْمَسَافَةِ بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ وَخَا صَدْرَيْكَ ..

لَا تَتَغَيَّرُ ..

وَبَيْنَ أَنْفِيَّ .. وَمَسَامَاتِ جِلْدَيْكَ ..

لَا تَتَغَيَّرُ ..

وَبَيْنَ زَنْزَانَةِ قَفْصِي .. وَسَاعَةِ إِعْدَامِي ..

لَا تَتَغَيَّرُ ...

I ask for your permission to leave
This turbulence between your breasts
I no longer have
The desire to talk to you
To make love to you
I am no longer enthusiastic
About attacking anything
Or defending anything
We have fallen into circular time
Where the distance
Between my hand
And your waist
Does not change,
The distance
Between my sense of smell
And the scent of your body
Does not change,
The distance
Between your thighs
And the circle of my death
Does not change.

أَسْتَأْذِنُكَ ، بالخروج من هذا الزمن الضيق ..
زَمَنِ الْجِنْسِ الْمُعَلَّبِ ..

والعواطفِ الجاهزة كإفطار الصباح
والقُبُورِ التي أُسَدِّدها مُرْغَمًا
كأجبيالةٍ مُسْتَحَقَّةٍ الدَفْعِ ...

أَسْتَأْذِنُكَ .. بأخذ إجازةٍ طويلة ..
فلقد تعبْتُ من حالة اللاشعور ..

واللاهُبِ .. التي أنا فيها .
وتعبْتُ من هذه الشقة المفروشة
التي صارت عواطفٍ ، مُرَبَّعةً كجدرانها
وشهوتي مُسْتَطِيلَةٌ كدهاليزها ..
وطُوعي والهُمُّ كسَقْفِها ..

I ask for your permission to leave
This narrow time
Of canned sex,
Instant emotions,
Kisses
That I pay in spite of myself
Like an overdue bill.

I ask for your permission to leave,
To take a long vacation
I am tired of feeling
No love and no longing.
I am tired of this furnished apartment
Where my emotions are square
Like its walls
My lust is
As long as its hallways
My ambitions are
As low as its ceilings.

أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُطْلِقَ الرِّصَاصَ
عَلَى مَلَأِ بَسَلِ الْمُسْرَحِيَّةِ ..
وَعَلَى عُدَّةِ الشُّغْلِ الَّتِي تَسْتَعْلِظُ فِي التَّشْخِصِ ..
عَلَى الدُّخْفَرِ ، وَاللَّيْلِيِّ ،
عَلَى الْأُزْرَقِ ، وَالْبَرْتَقَالِيِّ ..
عَلَى عُمُصَاتِ الْقَوَارِيرِ الَّتِي جَمَعْتَ فَيْطَ فَصَاطِلَ دَمِي ...
عَلَى غَابَةِ الْخَوَاتِمِ وَالْأَسَاوِرِ ..
الَّتِي اسْتَعْلِظَ لِابْتِزَازِي .
عَلَى الْأَمْرِقَةِ الْجُلْدِيَّةِ الْعَرِيفَةِ
الَّتِي اسْتَعْلِظَ فِي جِلْدِي
عَلَى دَبَابِيسِ الشَّعْرِ ..
وَمِبَارِدِ الْأَطَافِرِ ..
وَالسَّلَاسِلِ الْمُعَدَّنِيَّةِ ..
الَّتِي لَجَأْتُ إِلَيْهَا لَأُغْفِرَ اعْتِرَافِي ...

I want to rip up
Your theatrical clothes
Shoot at
Your tools and your masks.
I want to break
The dozens of colored bottles
You filled with my blood,
I want to chop down
The forests of rings and bracelets
You used to blackmail me.
I want to rip up
The wide leather belts
You whipped me with.
I want to destroy
The hairpins,
Nail files,
And metal chains
That you used to make me confess.

أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُطْلِقَ الرِّصَاصَ
عَلَى كُلِّ قَصَائِدِي الَّتِي كَتَبْتُهَا لِلْكَرْبِ ..
وَعَلَى كُلِّ إِهْدَاءَاتِ الرِّهْبَانِيَّةِ
الَّتِي صَدَرَتْ عَنِّي ،
فِي سَاعَاتِ الْحُبِّ الشَّدِيدِ ..
أَوْ ..
فِي سَاعَاتِ الْغَبَاءِ الشَّدِيدِ ..

I want to shoot
At all the poems I wrote you
At all the hysterical dedications
That I issued
In moments of intense love
Or
In moments of intense stupidity.

— Women, The Knowledge of God —

Tenderness fades in your eyes

Like circles of water.

Time, space, fields,

Houses, seas, ships

Disappear.

My face falls to the ground like a broken vase

That I carry in my hands,

Dreaming of a woman who will buy it,

But I am told

That women do not buy sad faces.

•

إِنَّ الْأُنثَىٰ مِنْ عِلْمِ رَبِّي

يَذُوبُ الْخَفَانُ بِعَيْنَيْكَ مِثْلَ دَوَائِرِ مَاءٍ ..
يَذُوبُ الزَّمَانُ ، الْمَطَانُ ، الْحَقُونُ ، الْبُعُوثُ ،
الْجَارُ ، الْمَرَائِبُ ..

يَسْقُطُ وَجْهِي عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَ الْإِنَاءِ
وَأَحِيلُ وَجْهِي الْمَكْسَرُ بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ ..
وَأَحْلُمُ بِامْرَأَةٍ تَشْتَرِيهِ ..

وَلَكِنَّ مَنْ يَشْتَرُونَ الدَّوَانِي الْقَدِيمَةَ

قَدْ أَخْبَرُونِي :

بَأَنَّ الْوُجُوهَ الْخَزِينَةَ لَا تَشْتَرِيهَا النِّسَاءُ ..

•

وَصَلْنَا إِلَى نُقْطَةِ الصِّفْرِ ..
 مَاذَا أَقُولُ ؟ وَمَاذَا تَقُولِينَ ؟
 كُلُّ الْمَوَاضِيْعِ صَارَتْ سَوَاءً ..
 وَصَارَ الْوَرَاءُ أَمَاماً ..
 وَصَارَ الْأَعْمُ وَرَاءً ..
 وَصَلْنَا إِلَى ذُرْوَةِ الْيَأْسِ ..
 هَيْتُ السَّمَاءُ رَحْمَةً ..
 وَهَيْتُ الْخِنَاقُ قِصَاصاً ..
 وَهَيْتُ مُمَارَسَةُ الْجِنْسِ .. أَقْسَى جَزَاءً ..

We reached the point
 Where we did not know what to say
 All subjects became the same
 The foreground merged with the background.
 We reached the peak of despair
 Where the sky was a bullet,
 Embracing was retaliation,
 Making love was the severest punishment.

تُحِبُّنِ .. أَوْ لَا تُحِبُّنِ ..
إِنَّ الْقَضِيَّةَ تَعْنِيكِ أَنْتِ، عَلَى أَيِّ هَالٍ .
فَلَسْتُ أَجِيدُ الْقِرَاءَةَ فِي شَفَتَيْكِ ..
لَكِي أَتَنَبَّأُ فِي أَيِّ وَقْتٍ ..
سَيَنْفَجِرُ الْمَاءُ تَحْتَ الرَّمْلِ .
وَفِي أَيِّ شَهْرٍ تَكُونِينَ أَكْثَرَ عُشْبًا ..
وَأَكْثَرَ فُضْبًا ..
وَفِي أَيِّ يَوْمٍ تَكُونِينَ قَابِلَةً لِلْوَصَالِ ..

It is up to you to love me.
I do not know how to read your lips
To predict when
Water will explode beneath the sands,
I do not know
During which month
You will be more abundant
And fertile
Or on which day
You will be ready for
The communion of love.

— I Will Tell You: I Love You —

I will tell you: I love you
When all old love languages die
And nothing remains for lovers to say or do
Then my task
To move the stones of this world
Will begin.

I will tell you: I love you
When I feel
That my words are worthy of you
And the distance between your eyes
And my notebooks disappears,
I will say it when I am able
To evoke my childhood,
My horses, my troops
And my cardboard boats
And able to regain
The blue time with you
Upon Beirut's shores
When you were tired,
Shivering like a fish between my fingers,
And I covered you
With a sheet made of summer stars.

سَأَقُولُ لَكَ أُحِبُّكَ

سَأَقُولُ لَكَ : أُحِبُّكَ .
عِينَ تَنْتَهِي كُلَّ لُغَاتِ الْعُشُقِ الْقَدِيمَةِ .
فَلَا يَبْقَى لِلْعُشَّاقِ شَيْءٌ يَقُولُونَهُ ، أَوْ يَفْعَلُونَهُ .
عِنْدِي سَتَبْدَأُ مَهْمَتِي فِي تَغْيِيرِ حِجَارَةِ الْعَالَمِ ..

سَأَقُولُ لَكَ : أُحِبُّكَ .
عِنْدَمَا أَسْعُرُ أَنْ كَلِمَاتِي صَارَتْ تَسْتَحِقُّكَ ..
وَتَضِيقُ الْمَسَافَةَ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْكَ وَبَيْنَ دِفَاتِي .
سَأَقُولُكَ ، عِنْدَمَا أَصْبِرُ قَادراً ، عَلَى اسْتِخْضَارِ هُفُونِي
وَهَيُولِي ، وَعَسَاكِرِي ، وَمَرَكَبِي الْوَرَقِيَّةِ ..
وَأَسْتَعَادَةِ الزَّمَنِ الذَّرَقَ مَعَكَ ، عَلَى شَاطِئِ بَيْرُوتَ ..
عِينَ كُنْتُ تَرْتَعَشِينَ كَسَمَكَةٍ بَيْنَ أَصَابِي ..
فَأُغَطِّيكَ عِينَ تَنَامِينَ ..
بَشِيرَتِي مِنْ مَجُومِ الصَّيْفِ ..

سأقول لك « أَعْطَيْتُ » ..
 عندما أبرأ من حالة الفصام التي تمزقني ..
 وأعود شخصاً واحداً .
 سأقولها ، عندما تنصالح المدينة والصحراء في داخلي .
 وترحل كل القبائل عن شواطئ دمي .
 وأتحرر من الوشم الذرقي المحفور على جسدي ..
 ومن كل وصفات الطب العربي
 التي جربت على مدى ثلاثين عاماً
 فشوت ذكوري ..
 وأصدرت حكماً بجلبك ثمانين جلدَةً ..
 بنضرة الدنوة ..
 لذلك .. لن أقول لك أَعْطَيْتُ ..
 فالدم من تأخذ تسعة شهور لتطلع زهرة ..
 والليل يتعذب كثيراً ، ليولد نجمة ..
 والبشرية تنتظر ألوف السنوات ، لتطلع نبياً ..
 فإماذا بدنتنظرين بعض الوقت ..
 لتُصيحي هيبتي ؟؟

I will tell you: I love you
 When I am cured of my schizophrenia
 And become a single person.
 I will say it
 When the city and the desert inside me
 Are reconciled,
 When all the tribes leave my blood,
 When I will be free of the blue tattoo
 Engraved on my body,
 Free of old Arab remedies
 Which I tried for thirty years
 And which told me
 To lash you eighty times
 For being a woman.
 Perhaps I will not say:
 I love you.
 It takes nine months
 For a flower to bloom.
 The night suffers a great deal
 In giving birth to a star,
 Humanity waits one thousand years
 To produce a prophet,
 Why don't you wait then
 To be my lover.

— The Talk of Her Hands —

Keep silent,
The most beautiful voice
Is the talk of your hands
On the table.

حديث يديك

قليل من الصمت ..
يا جَاهِلَةً .
فاجعل من كل هذا الحديث
حديث يديك
على الطاولة ...

— I Am Afraid —

I am afraid
To express my love to you
Wine loses its fragrance
When poured into a goblet.

أخاف

أخاف أن أقول لتي أحبط
« أحبط » .
فالخمر في جرارها
تخسر سيلمًا ، عندما تصبى ...

— Who Is the Prettiest? —

My poetry and your face
Are two pieces of gold,
Two doves and two oleander flowers
I am still confused
Who is the prettiest?

مَنْ مَنَّا أَمَّا؟

شِعْرِي .. وَوَجْهِكِ .. قِطْعَتَا ذَهَبٍ
وَحِمَامَتَانِ .. وَزَهْرَتَا زَهْدٍ .
مَا زِلْتُ مُحْتَارًا أَمَّا مَنَّا .
مَنْ مَنَّا؟ مَنْ مَنَّا؟ أَمَّا ..

— I Conquer the Universe with Words —

I conquer the universe with words.
 I ravish the mother tongue,
 The syntax, the grammar,
 The verbs, and the nouns,
 I violate the virginity of things
 And form another language
 That conceals the secret of fire
 And the secret of water.
 I illuminate the coming age
 And stop the time in your eyes,
 Erasing the line that separates
 This moment from the years.

أُغْتَصِبُ الْعَالَمَ بِالْكَلِمَاتِ

أُغْتَصِبُ الْعَالَمَ بِالْكَلِمَاتِ .
 أُغْتَصِبُ اللُّغَةَ الدُّمَّ .. النُّحُو .. الصَّرْفَ ..
 الرُّفْعَ .. الدُّسْمَاءَ ..
 أَهْبِئُكُمْ بِكَلَامَاتِ الْأَشْيَاءِ
 وَأُسْكَكُ لُغَةً أُخْرَى
 فَيُطِ سِرَّ النَّارِ ، وَسِرَّ الْمَاءِ .
 وَأُضِيئُ الزَّمَانَ الْآتِيَّ ..
 وَأُوقِفُهُ فِي عَيْنَيْكَ الْوَقْتَ ..
 وَأُمَحُو الْخَطَّ الْفَاعِلَ بَيْنَ الْحَظِّ وَالسَّنَوَاتِ ..

About the Book

NIZAR KABBANI'S POETRY HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS "MORE POWERFUL than all the Arab regimes put together" (*Lebanese Daily Star*).

Arabian Love Poems is the first English-language collection of his work. Frangieh and Brown's elegant translations are accompanied by the striking Arabic texts of the poems, penned by Kabbani especially for this collection.

Kabbani was a poet of great simplicity—direct, spontaneous, musical, using the language of everyday life. He was a ceaseless campaigner for women's rights, and his verses praise the beauty of the female body, and of love. He was an Arab nationalist, yet he criticized Arab dictators and the lack of freedom in the Arab world. He was the poet of Damascus: "I am the Damascene. If you dissect my body, grapes and apples will come out of it. If you open my veins with your knife, you will hear in my blood the voices of those who have departed."

NIZAR KABBANI was born in Syria in 1923, to a traditional, well-to-do family. He served in Syria's diplomatic corp for more than 20 years (1945-1966), but settled for political reasons in London. He died on April 30, 1998; at his request, he was buried in Damascus.

BASSAM K. FRANGIEH is professor of Arabic at Yale University. CLEMENTINA R. BROWN translates and interprets from Arabic, French, and Spanish into English.

