



## 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*), "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." *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.

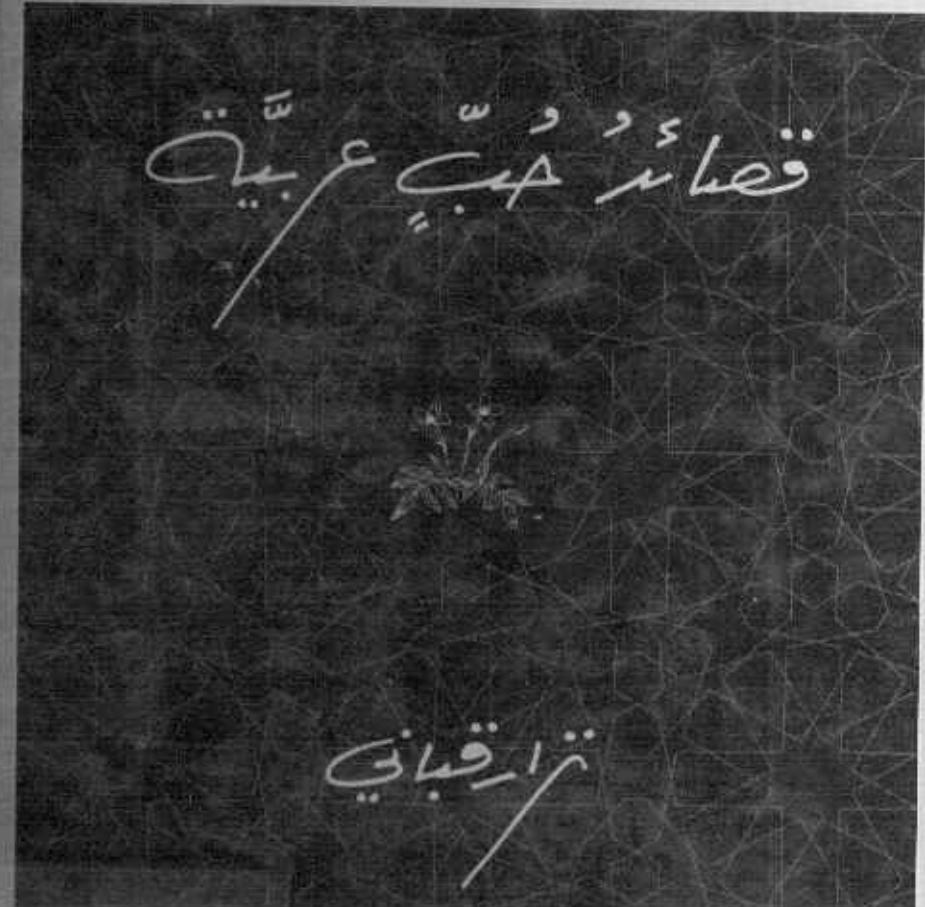
Nizar Kabbani was born in Syria in 1923, to a traditional, well-to-do family. He served in Syria's diplomatic corp for more than 20 years (1945–1966), but settled for political reasons in London. He died on April 30, 1998; at his request, he was buried in Damascus.

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# Nizar Kabbani

# Arabian



# Love Poems

Full Arabic and English Text

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—  
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*A Three Continents Book*

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Bassam K. Frangieh  
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## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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,"<sup>3</sup> while the *Washington Post* called him "the master of

the love verse.<sup>4</sup> The *New York Times* obituary quoted a Syrian poet who said that Kabbani has been "as necessary to our lives as air."<sup>5</sup> 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."<sup>6</sup> 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."<sup>7</sup>

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."<sup>8</sup>

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."<sup>9</sup>

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."<sup>10</sup>

\* \* \*

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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."<sup>4</sup>

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."<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup>

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?"<sup>11</sup>

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 Manshurat 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."<sup>12</sup> 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 Kharja '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.<sup>12</sup> 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. . . .<sup>13</sup>

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.<sup>14</sup>

Love me and say it out loud,  
I refuse that you love me mutely<sup>15</sup>

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 write<sup>16</sup>

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 writing<sup>17</sup>

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.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup>

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.<sup>20</sup>

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-Shirirah" (The Evil Poem).<sup>21</sup>

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."<sup>22</sup>

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."<sup>23</sup> "People who are possessed with sex, he wrote, 'cannot write, think, or undertake any civilized achievement.'"<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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."<sup>26</sup> 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."<sup>27</sup>

\* \* \*

It was in 1954 that Kabbani added another taboo to his poetry: politics. In that year he published "Khubz 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 knife<sup>28</sup>

"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."<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup> 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 Damascus<sup>31</sup>

In 1956, he wrote "The Story of Rachel Schwartzenberg," 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.<sup>32</sup>

"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.<sup>33</sup>

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?<sup>34</sup>

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"<sup>35</sup>—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-Muballya* [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'r '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 III-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'liat al-Shi'r: Fi Harakat al-Khalq wa Kamal al-Hadathah wa Mawtihā* [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 Ariaah 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'liat 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.

ما دُمْتَ يَا عَصْفُورَتِي اَنْفَرَادٌ

مُبِينٌ ..

إِذْنٌ .. خَلَقَ اللَّهُ 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.

تساءلني حبيبي :  
 « ما الفرق ما بيني وما بين السماء ؟  
 الفرق ما بيننا  
 أنت أنت أنت ضحكتي يا حبيبي  
 أنسى السماء ..

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

حين أنا سقطت في الحب  
 تغيرت .. تغيرت مملكة الرَّبِّ  
 صار الْجِنْ ينامُ في مِعْطَفِي  
 وُتَشَرِّقُ الشَّمْسُ مِنَ الْغَرْبِ ..

٢٢

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.

هَذِلْتَ تَسْأَلُنِي عَنْ عِيدِ مِيلَادِيِّ  
 سَجِّلْ تَدْبِيْكَ إِذْنَ .. مَا أَنْتَ تَجْبَلُهُ  
 تَارِيْخُ مُهْبَتِكَ لِي ... تَارِيْخُ مِيلَادِيِّ .

٢٣

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.

لَوْ كُنْتَ يَا حَبِيْبِي  
 بِمَسْتَوِيِّ جُنُونِي  
 رَمِيْتَ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ جَوَاهِيرِ ..  
 وَبَحْتَ مَا تَدْبِيْكَ مِنْ أَسَادِ ..  
 وَنَمَّتِ فِي عُيُونِي ..

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 الْمَكَاتِبِ مَاتَ  
 لَأَنَّ كَلَامَ الرَّوَايَاتِ مَاتَ  
 أَرِيدُ اِكْتِسَافَ طَرِيقَةِ عِسْقٍ  
 أُصِبِّيُّ فِيْرَهُ .. بَدْ كَهْدَاتٍ ..

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 عَنْكِ مَا أَخْبَرْتُهُ .. لَكَنْهُمْ  
 لَهُوكِ تَقْتِسِلَنَّ فِي أَهْدَافِي ..  
 أَنَا عَنْكِ مَا كَلَمْتُهُ .. لَكَنْهُمْ  
 قَرَوْبٌ فِي حِبْرِي، وَفِي أَوْرَاقِي  
 لِلْحُبَّ رَائِحَةٌ .. وَلَيْسَ بُوْسَعِطٍ  
 أَنْ لَا تَفْوَحَ 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.

أُمْرَةٌ أَنْ أُحِبَّ مِثْلَ النَّاسِ  
 أُمْرَةٌ أَنْ أَكْتُبَ مِثْلَ النَّاسِ  
 أَوْدُ لَوْ كَانَ خَمِيْسَةً  
 وَأَهْرُفِيْ أَجْرَاسِنْ ..

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

دُشْنٌ .. يَا عَمِيقَةَ الْعَيْنَيْنِ  
 تَطْرَفٌ ..  
 تَصْوُفٌ ..  
 عِبَادَهُ ..  
 صُبْدٌ .. مِثْلُ الْمَوْتِ وَالْوِلَادَهُ  
 صَعْبٌ بَيْنَ يُحَادَّ مَرْتَبَتَيْنِ ..

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.

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.

طازاً؟ طازاً؟ هنـذ صـرتْ حـبـيـتـي  
 يـضـيـعـيـ مـيـادـيـ، وـالـرـفـاتـرـ تـعـشـيـ.  
 تـغـيـرـتـ الـشـيـاءـ هـنـذ عـشـقـتـيـ  
 وـأـصـبـحـتـ كـلـذـهـفـانـ، بـالـشـمـسـ أـلـعـبـ.  
 وـلـسـتـ بـيـانـاـ مـرـسـلـاـ، غـيـرـ أـنـيـ  
 أـصـيـرـ نـبـيـاـ.. عـنـدـاـ عـنـيـ أـكـتـبـ.

هـنـذ أـكـوـنـ عـلـشـقـاـ  
 أـبـعـدـ شـاـةـ الـفـرـسـنـ مـنـ رـعـيـتـيـ  
 وـأـفـضـعـ الـصـيـنـ لـصـوـبـجـانـيـ  
 وـأـنـقـلـ الـبـحـارـ مـنـ مـكـانـيـ  
 وـلـوـ أـرـدـتـ أـوـقـفـ التـوـانـيـ.

30

2

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

هِنَّ أَكُونُ عَاشِقًا  
 أَصْبَحُ ضَوْءًا سَائِلًا  
 لَا تُسْتَطِعُ الْعَيْنُ أَنْ تَرَاهُ  
 وَتُصْبِحُ الرَّشَاحُرُ فِي دَفَّاتِرِي  
 هُمْقُولُ مِيمُوزًا وَأَقْوَافِي.

31

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 تَبَكِّينَا  
 وَأُحِبُّكَ وَجْهَكَ غَامِدًا وَهَزِينَا  
 الْخَرْنَ يَصْهُرُنَا مَعًا، وَيُذَيْنَا  
 مِنْ هُمْكَ لَا أَدْرِي، وَلَا تَدْرِيَنَا  
 تَلَقَ الدُّمُوعَ الْمَطَمِيَّاتِ، أُحِبُّكَ  
 وَأُحِبُّكَ، قَلْفَ مُقْوَطِرِكَ، تَسْهِينَا  
 بَعْضُ النِّسَاءِ .. وَجْهُهُنَّ جَمِيلَةٌ  
 وَتَصْيِيرُ أَجْمَلَ .. عِنْدَمَا يَبَكِّينَا ...

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 وَجْهِي ..  
 مُثْلُ عُمْرِ الْأَرْضِ، أَلْدُفُ الْعَصُورِ  
 عُمْرٌ حُزْنِي  
 مُثْلُ عُمْرِ اللَّهِ .. أَوْ عُمْرِ الْبَعْدِ  
 يَوْمٌ مِيلَادِيٌّ، أَنَا أُجَهَّلُهُ  
 فَالَّذِي يُحْسَبُ، يَا سَيِّدِي  
 لَيْسَ عُمْرِي .. إِنَّمَا عُمْرٌ شُعُورِي .

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

عَيْنَاتٍ .. مُثْلُ اللَّيْلَةِ الْمَاطِرَةِ  
 مَرَأْكِبِي غَارِقَةٌ فِي رَمَاءٍ .  
 كِتَابِتِي مَنْسِيَّةٌ فِي رَمَاءٍ .  
 إِنَّ الْمَرَايَا مَا لَهُ طَرْدَةٌ ..

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 أُهِبِطَ  
كَتَبْتُ فَوْقَ الْمَاءِ  
لَمْ أَدْرِ أَنَّ الرِّيحَ  
لَا تَحْسِنُ الْدِسْنَاءَ.  
لَمْ أَدْرِ أَنَّ الْمَاءَ  
لَا يَحْفَظُ الْوَسْمَاءَ ...

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

ما زَلْتَ يَا مُسَافِرَةَ  
ما زَلْتَ بَعْدَ السَّنَةِ الْعَاصِرَةِ  
عَزْرُوَةَ .. كَلْرُونْ فِي الْأَصْرَةِ ..

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

أَرْوَعُ مَا فِي هُبْنَا .. أَنَّهُ  
لَيْسَ لَهُ عَقْلٌ وَلَا حَنْطَقٌ .  
أَجْمَلُ مَا فِي هُبْنَا .. أَنَّهُ  
يَمْشِي عَلَى الْمَاءِ، وَلَا يَغْرُقُ ..

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 تَقْلِبِي .. يَا هُبْنَةَ الْحُلَوَاتِ  
مَا رُمِّتَ فِي شِعْرِي، وَفِي كَلِمَاتِي  
قَدْ تَكَبُّرَتِنَّ مَعَ السِّنِينِ .. وَإِنَّمَا  
لَنْ تَكَبُّرِي أَبَدًا .. عَلَى صَفَّاتِي .

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

وَكَمْ سَافَرْتُ فِي عَيْنِيْكَ، يَا حَبِيبِي  
 أُحِسَّ أَنِّي رَاكِبٌ سُجَادَةً سِحْرِيَّةً  
 فَعِيْنَةً وَرْدِيَّةً تَرْفَعُنِي ..  
 وَبَعْدَهَا، تَأْتِيَ الْبَنْسَجِيَّةُ ..  
 أَدْوُرُ فِي عَيْنِيْكَ، يَا حَبِيبِي  
 أَدْوُرُ .. مِثْلَ الْكُرْكَةِ الْأَرْضِيَّةِ ...

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

كَمْ تَسْبِرِيَ السَّمَاءَ  
 سَرِيعَةً فِي الْحُبِّ .. مِثْلَ السَّمَاءَ ..  
 جَبَانَةً فِي الْحُبِّ .. مِثْلَ السَّمَاءَ ..  
 قَتَلْتِ أَلْفَ اِمْرَأَةً فِي رَاحِيَّ  
 دَحِيرَتِيْ أَنْتِ الْمَلِكَةُ ..

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.

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

أَنَا رَسُولُ الْحُبِّ ..  
 أَهْلُ لِلِّنْسَاءِ مُفَاجَّهٌ  
 لَوْ أَنْتِي بِالْخَمْرِ لَمْ أُغْسِلُوكُمَا  
 نَهْدَالَكِ .. مَا كَانَ عَلَى قِيدِ الْحَيَاةِ  
 إِذَا أَسْتَدَارْتُ حَلَّمَكَ ..  
 فَتَلَكَ أَصْنَعُ مُعْجِزَاتِ ..

تَعْرِيَّ .. فَهَذِهِ زَمَانٌ طَوِيلٌ  
 عَلَى الدُّرْضِ لَمْ تَسْقُطِ الْمُعْجِزَاتِ  
 تَعْرِيَّ .. تَعْرِيَّ ..  
 أَنَا أُخْرَسُ  
 وَجِسْمِي يَعْرُفُ كُلَّ الْلُّغَاتِ ..

٤٢

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 تغيرت بين عام وعام  
 كان هسي أن تخلي كل شيء  
 وتنطلي لغابة من رفاه ..  
 وأنا اليوم ، لا أريد إلا  
 أن تكوني إشارة استفهام ..

٤٣

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

لدن هسي لل فوق مستوى الكلام  
 قررت أن أسكنت ..  
 والسلام ..

From *One Hundred Love Letters*

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.

أُريدُ أَنْ أَكْتُبَ لَكِ كَلْمَةً  
 لَا يُثْبِتُ الْكَلْمَمْ.

وَأَخْرُجَ لِغَةً لَكِ وَمَدِّكِ  
 أَفْصَلُكُمْ عَلَى مَقَابِيسِ بَهَّارِ  
 وَمَسَاحَةِ حُبِّيِّ.

أُريدُ أَنْ أَنْجُرَ مِنْ أَوْرَاقِ الْقَامُوسِ  
 وَأَطْلَبَ بِهَازَةً مِنْ فَيْ.

خَلِقْتُ تَعْبِتَ مِنْ اسْتِدَارَةِ فَيِّ  
 أُريدُ فَهَّا آخَرَ ..

يَسْتَطِعُ أَنْ يَتَوَوَّلَ مَقْ أَرَادَ  
 إِلَى شَجَرَةِ كَرَزِّ ..

أَوْ عَلْبَةَ كَبْرِيَّ ..

أُريدُ فَهَّا جَدِيدَ تَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْكَلْمَاتُ  
 كَمَا تَخْرُجُ الْمُوْرَيَّاتُ مِنْ زَرَدِ الْبَحْرِ  
 وَكَمَا تَخْرُجُ الصِّيَّصَانُ الْبِيْغَانُ مِنْ قُبَّةِ السَّاحِرِ ..

وخذوا جميع الكتب التي قرأتُ في طفولتي  
 وخذوا جميع كراساتي المدرسية  
 وخذوا الطباشير .. والزقدم .. واللواح السوداء ..  
 وعلمني كتمة جديدة  
 أو علّقتو كخلقي في أذن حبيبي ..

أريد أصابع أخرى ..  
 للكتاب بطريقة أخرى ..  
 فلاناً أكرة الأصابع التي لا تهول .. ولا تضمر ..  
 كما أكرة أر شجر التي لا تموت .. حيد تلمس ..  
 أريد أصابع جديدة ..  
 عالية كصواري المراكب  
 وطويلة كعنق الزرافات ..  
 حتى أفصل لحبيبي قصيدة من الشعر ..  
 لم تلمسه قبلي ..

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.

أَرِيدُ أَنْ أُصْنِعَ لِكِ أَبْجِدِيَّةً  
غَيْرَ كُلِّ الْأَبْجِدِيَّاتِ.  
فَسِيرُ شَيْءٍ مِنْ وِقْتِهِ الْمَطَرِ ..  
وَشَيْءٍ مِنْ غَمَارِ الْقَرَ ..  
وَشَيْءٍ مِنْ هَزَنِ الْغُيُومِ الْمَهَارِيَّةِ ..  
وَشَيْءٍ مِنْ تَوْجُّعِ أَوْرَاقِ الصَّفَصَافِ ..  
تَحْتَ عَرَبَاتِ الْيَلْوَنِ ..

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 -

نَسَرَةٌ دَخَلْتُ عَلَيْهِ  
 فِي صَبَرِيَّةٍ يَوْمَ مِنْ أَيَّامِ آذَارِ  
 كَفَصِيَّةٌ حَمِيلَةٌ تَمَسَّيَ عَلَى قَدَّ مَيْطَرِ..  
 دَخَلْتُ الشَّمْسُ مَعْلُوٌ ..  
 دَدَّلَ الرَّبِيعُ مَعْلُوٌ ..  
 كَانَ عَلَى مَكْتَبِي أَدْرَاقٌ .. خَأْوَرَقَتْ  
 وَكَانَ أَمَامِي فِنْجَانُ قَرْبَوَةٌ  
 فَسَهَرَبَنِي قَبْلَ أَنْ أَشْرِبَهُ ..  
 وَكَانَ عَلَى جَدَارِي لَوْحَةٌ زَيْنَيَّةٌ  
 لَنْيُولٌ تَرَكَضَ ..  
 فَتَرَكَضَنِي لَنْيُولٌ حِينَ رَأَتِي  
 وَرَكَضَتْ تَخَوَّلَيْ ..  
 .

- 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.

نَسْرَةَ زُرْتِنِي ،  
 فِي صَبَّيْحَةِ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ مِنْ آذَارِ  
 حَدَثَتْ قَسْحَرِيرَةٌ فِي جَسَدِ الْأَرْضِ  
 وَسَقَطَ فِي عَطَابِنِ مَا .. مِنْ الْعَالَمِ  
 نَزَّلَتْ قُسْطَنْتُرْلَ ..  
 حَسِيبَةُ الْأَطْفَالُ فَطِيرَةٌ مَحْتُوَةٌ بِالْعَسْلِ ..  
 وَحَسِيبَةُ النِّسَاءِ  
 سِوارٌ مُرْصَدٌ بِالْمَاسِ ..  
 وَحَسِيبَةُ الرِّجَالِ  
 مِنْ عَدَدِ مَاتِ لِيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ...

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.

وَهِنَّ نَزَعْتِ مُعْظَلَةِ الرَّبِيعِ  
وَجَلَسْتِ أَمَانِي  
فَرَاسَةً تَحْمِلُ فِي عَقَابِرِ شَيَابِ الصَّيفِ  
تَأْكِيدَتْ أَنَّ الْأَطْفَالَ كَانُوا عَلَىْ حَقٍّ ..  
وَالنِّسَاءَ كُنَّ عَلَىْ حَقٍّ ..  
وَالرِّجَالَ كَانُوا عَلَىْ حَقٍّ ..  
وَأَنْتُ ..  
شَرِيقَةً كَالْعَسْلِ ..  
وَصَافِيَةً كَطَلَاسٍ ..  
وَمُذَهِّلَةً كَلَيْلَةِ 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.

- 3 -

عندما قلت لك : «أحبك» ..  
 كنت أعرف أنني أقوّى انفصالاً على شريعة القبيلة.  
 وأقرّع أجراسَ الفضيحة ..  
 كنت أريده أن أستلمَ السُّلْطَةَ  
 لتجعلَ غاباتِ العالمَ أكثرَ ورقةً ..  
 وبحارَ العالمَ أكثرَ زرقةً ..  
 وأنظفَارَ العالمَ أكثرَ براءةً ..  
 كنت أريده أن أُنْهِي عصرَ البربريةَ ..  
 وأقتلَ آخرَ الخلفاء ..  
 كان في نيمتي، عندما أحببتكِ ..  
 أن أكسيرَ أبوابَ الحرير ..  
 وأنقذَ اثناءَ النساءِ من أسنانِ الرجال ..  
 وأجعلَ حسماً ترقصُ في الهواءِ عبقريةَ  
 سباتِ الزعورِ الأحمر ..

- 3 -

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 قلتُ لكَ : «أُحِبُّكَ» .  
كنتُ أعرفُ أنِّي أخترُعُ أَبْجِيدِيَّةً جَدِيدَةً  
لِمَدِينَةٍ لَمْ تَهْرُأْ ..  
وَأَنْشَدَتُ أَشْعَارِي فِي قَاعَةٍ خَارِجَةٍ  
وَأَقْرَأْتُ النَّبِيَّ ..  
لَمْنَ لَدُّهُ يَعْرُفُونَ نِعْمَةَ السُّكُرِ ...

عندما قلتُ لكَ : «أُحِبُّكَ» .  
كنتُ أعرفُ أَنَّ الْمُتَوَهِّمِينَ سَيَتَعَقَّبُونِي  
بِالرَّمَاجِ الْمَسْمُوَّةِ، وَأَقْوَاسِ النَّشَابِ ..  
وَأَنَّ صُورِي سَتُلْصَقُ عَلَى كُلِّ الْبَيْطَانِ  
وَأَنَّ بَصَمَاتِي سَتُوزَعُ عَلَى كُلِّ الْمَخَافِرِ  
وَأَنَّ جَاهِزَةَ كُبَرَى سَتُعْطَى لِمَنْ يَحْمِلُ لَهُمْ رَأْسِي  
وَيُلْعَلَّ عَلَى بَوَابَةِ الْمَدِينَةِ ..  
كَبَرَتْ قَالَةُ فِلِسْطِينِيَّةٍ ...

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 gates  
Like a Palestinian orange.

عندما كتبت اسمه على دفاتر الورود ..  
كنت أعرف ..  
أن كل الأذميين سيقضون ضدي ..  
وكل العاطلين بالوراثة عن معاشرة الحب .. ضدي  
وكل المرضى بعمر الجنس .. ضدي ..  
عندما قررت أن أقتل آخر الخلفاء ..  
وأعلن قيام دولة للحب ..  
تلعنى أنت ملائكة ..  
كنت أعرف أن العصافير وحدها  
ستعلن الثورة معي ...

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.

حين وزّع الله النساء على الرجال

وأعطاني إِيَّاكَ ..

شعرت أنه انحاز بصوره ملشوقة إليك ..

وغالفت كل الكتب السماوية التي أُفطرت  
فأعطاني النبيه ، وأعطاهم الحنطة .

ألبسني الحرير ، وألبسهم القطن .  
أصعدت إِلَيَّ الوردة ..

وأهداهم الخصن ..

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.

حين عرضني الله عليه ..  
 وزهبت إلى بيته  
 فلرت أن أكتب له رسالة  
 على ورق أزرق ..  
 وأضيعت في مغلق أزرق ..  
 وأغسلت بالدموع الأزرق ..  
 أبدوها بعبارة : يا صديقي ..  
 كفت أريد أن أسلّه لونه اختار لي ..  
 خالله - كما خالوا لي -  
 لا يستلم إله رسائل الحب ..  
 ولد حب وله الله عليه ..

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.

هُنَّا أَسْتَمْتُ مُكَاخَافِي  
 وَرَجَعْتُ أَحْمَلُّ بِي عَلَى رَاحَةِ يَدِي  
 كَرَهَةَ مَانُولِيَا.  
 بَسْتَ يَدَ اللَّهِ ..  
 وَبَسْتَ الْقَمَرَ دَالِكَوَاكِبِ ..  
 وَاحِدًا .. وَاحِدًا ..  
 وَبَسْتَ الْجَيَالَ .. وَالْمَدْرِيَةَ .. وَأَجْنَحَةَ الْطَّوَاحِينَ  
 بَسْتَ الْعَيْنَوَمَ الْلَّبِيرَه ..  
 وَالْعَيْنَوَمَ الَّتِي لَدَنْزَالَ تَذَهَّبُ إِلَى الْمَدْرَسَهَ ..  
 بَسْتَ الْجُزَّ الْمَرْسُومَةَ عَلَى الْخَارِطِ ..  
 وَالْجُزَّ الَّتِي لَدَنْزَالَ بِذَاكِرَةِ الْخَارِطِ ..  
 بَسْتَ الْأَذْمَسَاطَ الَّتِي سَتَّمَسْطِيَتْ بِبَطِ ..  
 وَالْمَرَايَا الَّتِي سَتَّرَتْ سِرَمَيْنَ عَلَيْهِ ..  
 وَكُلَّ الْحَائِمَ الْبَيْضَاءِ ..  
 الَّتِي سَتَّحَمَلَ عَلَى أَجْنَحِيَطِ ..  
 جَبَطَهَ عَرْسِيَ ..

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.

لم أكن يوماً ملِكاً .  
 ولم أَخْرُجْ من سُلَّلاتِ الْمُلُوكْ .  
 غيرَ أَنَّ إِلْهَسَاسَ بَأْنَائِي ..  
 يُعْطِينِي الشُّعُورَ ..  
 بَأْنَتِي أَبْسُطُ سُلْطَنِي عَلَى الْقَارَاتِ الْخَمْسِ ..  
 وَاسْتَهِلُّ عَلَى أَزْوَاتِ الْمَطَرِ ..  
 وَعَرَبَاتِ الرَّيْحَنِ ..  
 وَأَهْتَلُّ أَلْدَافَ الْفَدَادِينِ خَوْقَ الشَّمْسِ ..  
 وَأَهْلَمُ شُعُورِي بِمِحْكَمَتِ أَحَدٍ قَبْلِي ..  
 وَأَلْعَبُ بِكَوَافِكَ الْمَجْمُوعَةِ الشَّمْسِيَّةِ ..  
 كَمَا يَلْعَبُ طَفْلٌ بِأَصْدَافِ الْبَحْرِ ..  
 لم أكن يوماً ملِطاً .. وَدَأْرِيدُ أَنْ أَكُونَهُ ..  
 غيرَ أَنَّ مُجْرِدَ إِحْسَاسِي بَأْنَلِي تَنَامِينَ فِي حَوْفِ يَدِي ..  
 يَجْعَلُنِي أَتَوَهَّمُ ، بَأْنَتِي قَيْصَرٌ مِنْ قَيَّادَةِ رُوسِيَا ..  
 أَوْ أَنَّتِي كِشْرَى أَنُو شِرْوَانْ ..

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.

لماز؟  
تشطّبين كلَّ الأزمنة  
وتقفينَ حركةَ العصوَرِ.  
وتعالينَ في راقيٍ جمِيعَ نساءِ العشَرَةِ؟  
واحدةَ .. واحدةَ ..  
ولدَ اعْتَرَضْ ..

لماز؟

أُعطيتِ من دونِ صِحَّةِ النِّسَاءِ، مفاتيحَ مُدْنِي  
التي لم تفتحْ أبْوابَطِ لذِيِّ طَاغِيَةٍ  
ولم ترْفَعْ راياتِها بِسِيَّدةِ لذِيِّ امْرَأَةٍ ..  
وأَهْلَبَتِ منْ صُنُودِي  
أَنْ يَسْتَقْبِلُوكِ بِأَذْنَا شَبَّيرِ، وَالْمَادِلِ، وَكَالِيلِ الْغَارِ ..  
وَأَبَا يَعْدِي، أَمَامَ جمِيعِ الْوَاحِدِينِ  
وَعَلَى أَنْفَامِ الْمُوسِيقِ، وَرَنَينِ الْرَّجَمَاسِ  
أُمِيرَةٌ مَدِيَّةِ الْحَيَاةِ ..؟؟

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?

علّمتهُ أُطْفَالَ الْعَالَمَ  
كَيْفَ يَمْهُجُونَ اسْمَكِيْ..  
فَتَحَوَّلَتْ شَفَاهُهُمْ إِلَى أَشْبَابَ تُوتٍ ..

أَدْعَيْتُ الرَّبِيعَ  
أَنْ يُمْشِطَ فَصَدَّتْ شَعْرَكَ الْفَاصِمَ  
خَاعَذَرَتْ بَأْنَ دُقَرَطَ قَصِيرَ  
وَشَعْرَكَ 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.

- 8 -

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.

- 8 -

مَنْ أَنْتِ يَا امْرَأَ؟  
 أَيْسَطَ الرَّاْفِلَةُ كَلْبَنِجَرَ فِي تَارِيْخِي ..  
 أَيْسَطَ الْطَّيْبَةُ كَعْيُونَ الْزَّرَانِبَ  
 وَالنَّاعِمَةُ كَوَرَّةِ الْخَوَّةَ ..  
 أَيْسَطَ النَّقِيَّةُ كَطُوقَ الْيَاسِمِينَ .  
 أَفْرُجُي مِنْ أَوْرَاقِ دَفَاتِرِي  
 وَفَرُجُي مِنْ شَرَاشِبِي سَرِيرِي ..  
 أَفْرُجُي مِنْ فَمَاجِينِ الْقَبْرَةَ ..  
 وَمَدْرَعِي السَّلَّرَ ..  
 أَفْرُجُي مِنْ أَزْرَارِ قَمَصَانِي  
 وَضَبْوَطِ فَنَادِيَيِ  
 أَفْرُجُي مِنْ كُلِّ أَشْيَايِي الصَّغِيرَةِ  
 حَتَّى أُسْتَطِعَ أَنْ أَذْهَبَ إِلَى الْعَوْلَ ..

- ٩ -

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.

٩  
 إِنِّي أُحِبُّكَ ..  
 وَلَا أَلْعَبُ مَعَكَ لَعْبَةَ الْحُبُّ ..  
 وَلَا أَتَخَاصِّمُ مَعَكَ كَمَا يَطْفَلُ الْمُطْفَلُ عَلَى أَسْمَائِ الْبَحْرِ ..  
 سَمْكَةَ حَرَاءُ لِلَّهِ ..  
 وَسَمْكَةَ زَرْخَاءُ لِي ..  
 خُذِّي كُلَّ السَّمَكَ الْأَحْمَرِ وَالْأَزْرَقِ ..  
 وَظَاهِي حَبِيبِي ..  
 خُذِّي الْبَحْرَ وَالْمَرَاكِبَ وَالْمُسَافِرِينَ ..  
 وَظَاهِي حَبِيبِي ..  
 إِنِّي أَضْنَعُ جَمِيعَ مُمْتَلَّكَاتِي أَعَادُكُنَّ ..  
 وَلَا أُخَلِّ فِي حِسَابِ الرَّبِّ وَالنَّسَارَةِ ..  
 فَأَنَا لَسْتُ سَوْيَ شَاعِرٍ ..  
 كُلُّ شَرْوَقٍ مُوْجُودٌ فِي رِفَاعَتِي ..  
 وَفِي عَيْنَيْكِ الْجَمِيلَتَيْنِ ..

وَسَافَرْتُ مَعَهُ إِلَى أَرْضِ الْدَّهْشَةِ ..  
وَنَسِيَتُ الْأَيَّامَ ..  
وَسَافَرْتُ مَعَهُ إِلَى أَرْضِ الْدَّهْشَةِ ..  
أَنْتَظَرْتُ قَطَارَ الْأَيَّامِ ..  
وَنَسِيَتُ الْأَيَّامَ ..  
فَاجَأَنِي .. وَأَنَا قَاعِدٌ عَلَى هَفَائِبِي  
رَاهَنِي كَدِيلِي مُتَوَهَّشٌ ..  
نَسِيَتُ يَدِي ..  
فَاجَأَنِي .. وَأَنَا أُقْرَأُ خُطُوطَ يَدِي ..  
نَسِيَتُ الْقُصْيَةَ ..  
فَاجَأَنِي .. وَأَنَا أَجْلِسُ فِي الْمَقْرَبِ مَعَ قَصْيَةَ ..  
لَهَا جَمِيعَهُ .. كَرَأْتُهُ امْرَأَةٌ تَدْخُلُ إِلَى مَقْبَعِهِ ..  
وَهَانِي .. وَهَانِي هَبَّابٌ عَلَى أَرْضِ الدَّهْشَةِ ..

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.

## -- II --

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.

•

أَحِبُّكَ كَالوَشْمٍ عَلَى زِرَاعٍ بَدَوِيٍّ .  
 وَأَتَسْلَعُ مَعْدِلٍ عَلَى كُلِّ أَرْضِهِ الْعَالَمِ .  
 لَيْسَ عِنْدِي جُوازٌ سَفَرٌ ،  
 وَلَيْسَ عِنْدِي صُورَةٌ فُوْتُوغرَافِيَّةٌ  
 مِنْذُ كُنْتُ فِي الشَّائِهِ مِنْ عُمُرِي .  
 إِنِّي لَا أُحِبُّ التَّصَاوِيرِ ..  
 كُلَّ يَوْمٍ يَتَغَيَّبُ لَوْنُ غُيُونِي .  
 كُلَّ يَوْمٍ يَتَغَيَّبُ مَكَانُ فِيِّي .  
 كُلَّ يَوْمٍ يَتَغَيَّبُ عَدْدُ أَسْنَافِي .  
 إِنِّي لَا أُحِبُّ الْبُلُوْسَ عَلَى كَرَاسِيِّ الْمُصَوِّرِينِ ..  
 وَلَا أُحِبُّ الصُّورَةِ التَّذَكَّرِيَّةِ ..  
 كُلُّ أَطْفَالِ الْعَالَمِ يَتَسَاهَّلُونَ .  
 وَكُلُّ الْمُعْذَبِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَسَاهَّلُونَ  
 كَسُنَانِ الْمَشْطِ .  
 لَذِلِّكَ .. نَقَعْتُ جُوازَ سَفَرِيِّ الْقَدِيرِ  
 فِي مَاءِ أَهْرَافِي .. وَشَرِبْتُهُ ..

وقررت ..  
 أن أطوف العالم على دراجة الحرية ..  
 وبنفس الطريقة غير الشرعية ..  
 التي تستحلط الريح عندما تُسافر ..  
 وإذا سألوني عن عنوانِ  
 أعطيتهم عنوانَ كلِّ الأزقة ..  
 التي افترضت مطناً رائعاً يرقصاتي ..  
 وإذا سألوني عن أوراقِ  
 أرسيتهم عينيكِ، يا حبيبي ..  
 فتركتُكِ أمر ..  
 لأنهم يعرفونَ أنَّ السَّفرَ في مدنِ عينيكِ ..  
 من حقِّ جميعِ المواطنينَ في العالم ..

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.

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.

انتهيت معلّب ..  
 مملكة شُوُوني الصغيرة ..  
 لم يعُد لدي أشياء أعملُها وحدي ..  
 لم يعُد عندي زهور أنسقُها وحدي ..  
 لم يعُد عندي كُتب أقرؤُها وحدي ..  
 أنتَ تدخلين بين عيني .. وبين ورقي ..  
 بين فمي .. وبين صوتي ..  
 بين رأسي .. وبين مخدقي ..  
 بين أصابعِي .. وبين لفافي ..  
 طبعاً .. أنا لا أشُو من سُلْطاني ..  
 ومن تدخلت في حركة يدي ..  
 وحركة جفني .. وحركة أخْتاري ..  
 فأشجارُ التيَّن لا تضيق بعضاً في رِها ..  
 واللُّؤُوسُ لا تضيق بسُكْنِي النَّبِيِّ الْأَصْمِ حفظ ..

لِيْسَ لِلَّهِ زَمَانٌ حَقِيقِيٌّ فَأَرْجِعَ لَرْفَتِي .  
أُنَا زَمَانِيٌّ .

لِيْسَ لِلَّهِ أَبْعَادٌ وَاضْحَىٰ

خَارِجٌ امْتِدَادٌ ذَرَاعِيٌّ ..

أُنَا أَبْعَادِيٌّ كَلْبَطٌ ..

زَوَالِيٌّ ، وَدَوَارِيٌّ ..

فُطُوطِيٌّ الْمُنْخَنِيَّ ..

وَفُطُوطِيٌّ الْمُسْتَقْبِيَّ ..

يَوْمَ دَخَلْتُ إِلَى غَلَبَاتِ صَدْرِي  
دَخَلْتُ إِلَى الْخُرَيَّةِ ..

يَوْمَ فَرِجَتِي مِنْطَرٌ

صَرْتِي جَارِيَّةٌ ..

وَأَشْرَقَتِي شَيْخُ الْقَبِيلَةِ ...

•

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.

•

أنا عَلَمْتُ أَسْمَاءَ الشَّجَرِ  
وَهُوَرَ الصَّادِيرِ الْمُلْمِيَّةِ  
وَأَعْطَيْتُ عَنْادِينَ النَّجُومِ الْبَعِيَّةِ.  
أنا أَدْخَلْتُ مَدْرَسَةَ الرَّبِيعِ  
وَعَلَمْتُ لِغَةَ الطَّيْرِ  
وَأَبْجَدَيَّةَ الْيَنَابِيعِ.  
أنا كَتَبْتُ عَلَى رَخَاتِ الْمَطَرِ  
وَشَرَّا شَيْفِ الشَّبَابِ، وَأَكْوَازِ الصُّنُورِ  
وَعَلَمْتُ كَيْفَ تَكْسِبُ الْأَرْانِبَ وَالشَّاعِلَبَ  
وَكَيْفَ تُمْسِطِينَ صُوفَ الْقَرَافِ الرَّبِيعِيَّةِ.  
أنا أَطْلَعْتُ عَلَى عَكَّابِ الْعَصَافِيرِ الَّتِي لَمْ تَنْشِرْ  
وَأَعْطَيْتُ خَرَاطَ الصَّيفِ وَالشَّتَاءِ  
لِتَعْلَمَيَّ، كَيْفَ تَرْتَفِعُ السَّنَابِلُ،  
وَنَرْقَبُ الصَّيْصَانَ الْبَيْضاَءَ،  
وَتَنْرَوْجُ الْأَسْمَالَ بِعَضَطَ،  
وَتَسْدَقُ الْحَلَبَيَّ مِنْ تَدَبِّي 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

لِلْفَلَّاْجِ ..

تَعْبَتِي مِنْ هَصَانِ الْحَرَّيَةِ ..  
فَرَمَّلْتِي هَصَانِ الْحَرَّيَةِ ..  
تَعْبَتِي مِنْ غَابَاتِ صَدْرِي ..  
وَمِنْ سِمْفُونِيَّةِ الصَّرَاصِيرِ الْمَلِيلِيَّةِ ..  
تَعْبَتِي مِنَ النَّوْمِ عَارِيَةِ ..  
فَوَقَ شَرَاثِيفِ الْقَرْ ..  
فَتَرَكْتِي الْغَابَةَ ..  
لِيَأْكُلَّنِي الْذِئْبُ ..  
وَنَفَرَّسْلِتِي شِيَخُ الْفَبِيلَةِ ..

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.

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.

السنتانِ اللتانِ كنْتِ فِيهِما حُبِّي  
 هُما أَهْمُ صَفَحتَيْنِ  
 فِي كِتَابِ الْكِتَابِ الْمُعاَصِيرِ ..  
 كُلُّ الصَّفَحَاتِ، قَبْلَهُما، بِيَضَاءٍ ..  
 وَكُلُّ الصَّفَحَاتِ، بَعْدَهُما، بِيَضَاءٍ ..  
 إِنَّهُما فَطَّ الْإِسْتِوَاءَ  
 الْمَارِّ بَيْنَ فَيْ وَدْمِكِ ..  
 وَهُما الْمِقَاسُ الْزَمْنِيُّ  
 الَّذِي تَعْتَدُهُ الْمَرَاصِدُ  
 وَتَضَيِّطُ عَلَيْهِ، كُلُّ سَاعَاتِ الْعَالَمِ ..

كلاماً رأيتك .. أياً من قصائدِي .  
 إنتي لد أياً من قصائدِي  
 والله حين أكون عَلَى ..  
 جميلة أنت .. إلَى درجةِ أنتي  
 حين أَفَرِ بِرَوْعَنْتِي .. أَلْرَفِ ..  
 تلذّمْتُ لغْتي ..  
 وتلذّمْتُ مُفَرَّدَاتِي ..  
 خَلَّصَنِي من هَذَا ابْرَشَطَانْ  
 كُوْنِي أَقْلَى جَمَالَ ..  
 حتى أُسْتَرِّ شاعرِي  
 كُوْنِي امْرَأَةً عَادِيَةً  
 تَنَاهَلُ .. وَتَعْطَرُ .. وَتَحْمِلُ .. وَتَلِدُ ..  
 كُوْنِي امْرَأَةً مُثَلَّ النِّسَاءَ ..  
 حتى أَنْصَالَيَ مع لغْتي ..  
 وَمَعَهُ فَسِي ..

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.

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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.

- ١٨ -

لست معلماً ..  
 لا عالِمٌ كيف تُحبّين .  
 فالسمّاٹ ، لا تحتاجُ إلى معلمٍ  
 لتعلّمَ كيف تَسْبِحُ ..  
 والعصافيرُ ، لا تحتاجُ إلى معلمٍ  
 لتعلّمَ كيف تطيرُ ..  
 لا سَبَحَيْ وَهَدَى ..  
 وطَيَّرَ وَهَدَى ..  
 إنَّ الْبَّلَّ يَسِّلَهُ دَخَاتِرٌ  
 وأَعْظَمُهُ عُشَاقُ التَّارِيخِ  
 كَانُوا لَمْ يَعْرِفُونَ الْقِرَاءَةَ ...

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.

ـ كـ

رسائلي إليك ..

تتخطى .. و تخطا ..

لأن الضوء أَهَمُّ من المصباح ..

والقصيدة أَهَمُّ من الدفتر ..

والقبلة أَهَمُّ من الشففة ..

رسائلي إليك ..

أَهَمُّ منك .. وأَهَمُّ مني ..

وأَنطِلَ الوثائق الوحيدة ..

التي سيلتشيف خيط الناس ..

جمالك .. و جنوني ..

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  
 أتمدد على رمال الشاطئ  
 وأمارس همایة التفليير بلطف ..  
 لو أني أقول للبحر .. ما أشعر به تحول  
 لترك شواطئه ..  
 وأصيافه ..  
 وأسمائه ..  
 وتنبئي ...

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

كَلَّا قَبَلَتْ ..  
 بَعْدَ طُولِ افْرَاقٍ  
 أَشْعُرُ أَنِّي ،  
 أَضْبَحُ رِسَالَةُ حُبِّي مُسْتَعِجَلَةً  
 فِي عُلَبَةِ بَرِيدِ حِمَارٍ ...

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.

يَنْدَعُ حُبِّي نَحْوَهُ  
 كَصَانٌ أَبْيَضٌ ..  
 يَرْفَضُ سَرْمَهُ وَفَارَسَهُ  
 لَوْ كُنْتِ يَا سَيِّدَتِي ،  
 تَعْرِفِينَ أَشْوَاقَ الْخَيْلُ  
 لَهْلَأْتِ فَهِيَ  
 لَوْزًا .. وَكَرْنَازًا .. وَفُسْتُقًا أَخْضَرًا ..

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

كُلُّ رَجُلٍ سَيُقْبَلُكَ بَعْدِي  
 سَيُكَتَّشَفَ فَوْقَ فَمِكَّا  
 عَرِيشَةً صَهْرِيَّةً مِنَ الْعَنْبَرِ  
 زَرْعَتْنِي أَنَا ...

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.

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.

إِبْتَدَأْتُ فَلِيلًا عَنْ هَدْرَقَتِي عَيْنِي  
 حَتَّى أُعِيزَّ بَيْنَ الْأَلْوَانِ  
 إِنْرَضَتِي عَنْ أَصَابِعِ الْمَسْكِ  
 حَتَّى أَعْرَفَ حَجْمَ الْكَوْنِ ..  
 وَأَقْنَعَ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ كُرُوَّةً ..

كَانَ الْمَطَرُ يَنْزَلُ عَلَيْنَا مَعًا ..  
 فَتَبَرَّأَ الْوَفُّ الْخَشَائِشُ  
 عَلَى مِعْطَفِيَنَا ..

بَعْدَ رَهْيَلَاتِ ..  
 صَطَرَ الْمَطَرُ يَسْقُطُ عَلَيَّ وَهَدِي  
 فَلَمْ يَنْبُتْ شَيْئٌ عَلَى مِعْطَفِي ..

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

أَتَلْعَمُ عَلَى سَرَالْ نَرِيدِيلِيْكِ مَتَجَمَّعًا  
كَطَفَلٍ لَمْ يَنْهَ مِنْهُ دَرَدَتِهِ ..

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.

آه .. لَوْ تَحْرَرَيْتَ يَوْمًا  
مِنْ غَرَبَيْةِ الْأَرَانِبِ ..  
وَتَعْرَفِينَ ،  
أَنِّي لَسْتُ صَيَادَكِ ..  
لَكُنِي حَبِيبُكِ ..

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

عندما تزوريني  
بتلوكِ جديه ..  
أشعرُ بما يشعر به البستانِ  
حين تزهُرُ لدئيم شجرة ..

١٦٠

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.

كما سافرت ..  
طالبني عطرك بلدى ..  
كما يطالبُ الطفلُ بعودته أمه ..  
تصوري ..  
حتى العطر ..  
تعرفُ الغربة ..  
وتعرفُ النفي ..

١٦١

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هل فَلَّتِ يَوْمًا .. إِلَى أَيْنَ ؟  
 الْمَرَكِبُ تَعْرُفُ إِلَى أَيْنَ .  
 وَالْمَسَالَةُ تَعْرُفُ إِلَى أَيْنَ .  
 وَأَسْرَابُ الْسُّنُونُ تَعْرُفُ إِلَى أَيْنَ .  
 إِلَّا هُنْ ..  
 هُنْ تَخْبَطُ فِي الْمَاء .. وَلَا نَعْرِفُ ..  
 وَنَلْبِسُ ثِيَابَ السَّفَرِ .. وَلَا نُسَافِرُ ..  
 وَنَكْبِطُ الْمَطَابِقَ .. وَلَا نُرْسِلُ ..  
 وَنَجِزُ تَذْكِرَتَيْنِ ..  
 عَلَى كُلِّ الطَّارِئَاتِ الْمُسَافِرَةِ ..  
 وَنَبْقِي فِي الْمَطَارِ ..  
 أَنْتِ .. وَأَنَا ..  
 أُجِبَّ مُسَافِرِيْنِ عَرَفْرَمَا الْعَصَرِ ..

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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.

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.

مَرَّتْ ، يَوْمَ عَرَفْتُكِ  
 كُلَّ خَرَاطِي ، وَنُبُوْاتِي .  
 وَحَرَّتْ كَالْخَيْرُولِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ  
 أُشْمَّ رَائْحَةَ أَمْطَارِكِ  
 قَبْلَ أَنْ تَبْلِّغَنِي ..  
 وَأَسْمَعْ إِيقَاعَ صَوْتِكِ  
 قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْطَحِي ..  
 وَأَفْلَّ ضَفَارِكِ بِيَدِي  
 قَبْلَ أَنْ تَضْفِرِي ..

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.

إِغْلَقِي جَمِيعَ كِتَابِي  
 وَأَقْرَأِي فُطُوطَ يَدِي  
 أَوْ فُطُوطَ دِجْرِي .  
 إِنِّي أَتَطَلَّبُ إِلَيْكِ بِأَنْبَارِ طَفْلِي  
 أَهَامَ شَجَرَةَ عِيدِ الْمِيلَادِ ...

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.

فَلَرَتُ أَمْسِ ، بِجُبْيِ لَلِّ  
تَذَكَّرَتْ فِجَاءَ ..  
قَطَرَاتِ الْعَسْلِ عَلَى شَفَّيْ  
فَلَاحَسَتْ السُّكَّرَ عَنْ جُدُرَانِ ذَاكِرَقِ ..

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?

أَرْجُوْكِ أَنْ تَحْرِمِي حَقْنِي  
إِنْ أَقُوْيِ أَسْلَحَتِي هُوَ الصَّمْتُ .  
هَلْ شَعَرْتِ بِمَلَغْتِي عَنْدَمَا أَسْكُتْ ؟  
هَلْ شَعَرْتِ بِرَوْعَةِ الْأَشْيَاوِ الَّتِي أَقْوَطُوْ  
عَنْدَمَا لَا أَقُوْلُ شَيْئًا ..

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.

ـ ـ ـ

لَمَذَا تَطْبِقِينَ مِنِّي أَنْ أَكْتُبَ إِلَيْكَ؟  
 لَمَذَا تَطْبِقِينَ مِنِّي  
 أَنْ أَتَعْرَكَ أَمَانَتِي كَرْجُلٍ بِدَائِيْ؟  
 الْمُتَقَابَةُ هِيَ الْعَلْمُ الْوَحِيدُ الَّذِي يُعْرِفُنِي.  
 عِنْدَهَا أُتَكْلُمُ ..  
 فَلَمَنِي أُمْتَفَظُ بِبَعْضِ الْتَّيَابِ .  
 أَمَا عِنْدَهَا أَكْتُبُ ..  
 فَلَمَنِي أُصْبِرُهُ رَأْيِاً، وَرَغْبَيَاً  
 كُعْصُفُوْرِ فَرَافِيْ لَدُ وَزْنَ لَهُ ..  
 عِنْدَهَا أَكْتُبُ ..  
 أُنْفَصِلُ عَنِ التَّارِيْخِ ..  
 دُعْنِ جَاذِبَيْهِ الْأَرْضِ ..  
 وَأَدْوَرُ كَلْوَكِبِيْ فِي خَضَاءِ عَيْنِيْكِ ..

إِنْزَعِي الدَّجَّارَ المَدْفُونَ فِي فَاهِدَتِي  
 وَاتْرُكِينِي أَعْيَشُ ..  
 إِنْزَعِي رَاهْلَتِي مِنْ مَسَامَاتِ جِلْدِي  
 وَاتْرُكِينِي أَعْيَشُ ..  
 إِنْتَهِيَنِي الْفُرْصَةُ  
 لَدْ تَعْرَفَ عَلَى امْرَأَةٍ جَدِيدَةٍ ...  
 تَشَطُّبُ اسْهَلَتِي مِنْ فَضَّلَتِي  
 وَتَقْطُعُ فُصُولَتِ شَحْرِي  
 الْمُلْتَفَةُ حَوْلَ عَنْقِي ..  
 إِنْتَهِيَنِي الْفُرْصَةُ  
 لَدْ بَحَثَتَ عَنْ طُرُقٍ لَمْ أُمْشِ عَلَيْهِ مَعَلِّمٌ ..  
 وَمَقَاعِدَ لَمْ أَجْلِسَ عَلَيْهِ مَعَلِّمٌ ..  
 وَأَمْلَأَتَ دَرَدَتِكُرْبَيْتِ ذَاكِرَتِي ..  
 إِنْتَهِيَنِي الْفُرْصَةُ  
 لَدْ بَحَثَتَ عَنْ عَنَادِينِ النِّسَاءِ ..  
 الْلَّوَاقِ تَرْكَمَهُنَّ مِنْ أَجْلِي ..  
 وَقَمَلَتَهُنَّ مِنْ أَجْلِي ..  
 غَلَّا أَرِيدُ أَنْ أَعْيَشُ ...

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(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.

- ٥٩ -

من الطائرة ..

يرى إنسانٌ عواطفه بشكٍ مختلفٍ ..

يتحررُ ألبُّ من غبار الأرض ..

من جاذبيَّة ..

من قوَّانيسها ..

يُصبحُ الحب .. سُرّةٌ من القطن لا وزن لها ..

الطائرة تُنَزَّلُ على سجادةٍ من العَيْم المُنْتَفَ ..

وعينَيْكِ ترْكُضانِ خلفَ ط

لْعَصْفُورَيْنِ فُضْلَيْسِينِ

يُدْرِّيْقانِ فَرَاسَةً ..

•

أُحْقِقْ أَنَا ..

عِينَ ظننتُ أَنِّي مَسَافِرُ وَهَدِيٍّ ..

فِي كُلِّ مَطَارٍ نَزَلْتُ فِيهِ

عَرَّمَا عَلَيْيَ فِي حَقِيقَةِ يَدِي ..

— 60 —  
(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.

— 60 —

قَبْلَ أَنْ أَرْفَلَ مَدَائِنَ فَمِكْ ..  
كَانَتْ شَفَّافَاتِ زَهْرَقِ هَبَرَ ..  
وَقَدْ هِيَ نَبِيَّ .. بَلْ نَبِيَّ ..  
وَهَرَبَرَتَيْنِ هَمَجَّدَتَيْنِ ..  
فِي بَحَارِ الشَّمَالِ ..

(٦٨)

قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ .. وَأَصْبَحْتِ حَبِيبِي  
قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ..

وَدَخَلْتِ فِي طَيَّاتِ لَهْبِي كَالْنِيْفِ الطَّوِيلِ ..  
كَالْنِيْفِ فِي الْعُرْوَةِ ..  
كَالْعَلْقِ فِي أَذْنِ امْرَأَةِ إِسْبَانِيَّةِ ..

كُوفِ إِذْنِ حَبِيبِي .. وَاسْلَتِي ..  
وَلَا تَنْقِشِينِي فِي شَرْعَيْهِ حُبِّي لِلَّهِ  
لَذْنِ حُبِّي لِلَّهِ شَرْعَيْهِ ..  
أَنَا أَكْتَبُهُ .. وَأَنَا أَنْفَذُهُ ..

فَمُرْعِتِي أَنْ تَسْمِي كَرْهَةَ مَارْغَرِيتَ بَيْنَ ذَرَاعَيِّ ..  
وَتَرْكِيْنِي أَحَلَّمُ ..  
مُرْعِتِي يَا حَبِيبِي  
أَنْ تَنْظَلِي حَبِيبِي ..

— ٦١ —

(excerpt)

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.

— 64 —  
(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?

١٢٩

ما زا تقولُ اُنوثلُّ عنيِّ?  
إذا عاشرلُّ،  
كُلُّ لد يرغُبُ أَحَدٌ في امتلاكهُ  
أَو كُلُّ حِلْمٍ مُحَايِدَةٍ،  
لد يُهُلُّطُ المُتَحَارِبُونَ ..  
ما زا يقُولُ نَرْمَالِي عنيِّ?  
إذا ترَكْتُهُما يَتَهَرَّبَانِ خَلْفَ ظَرْبِيِّ،  
وَنَحْمَتُ ..  
ما زا تقولُ شَفَقَاتِي عنيِّ?  
إذا ترَكْتُهُما تَأْكُلُونِ بَعْضَهُمَا  
وَذَهَبُتُ ..

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  
 أُحِبُّ أَنْ أَجَادِرَ جَمِيعَ إِشَارَاتِ الْمُرُورِ الْحَرَاءُ  
 أُحِسَّ بِسُرْعَةٍ طَفُولِيَّةٍ  
 لِمَرْتَكَابِ مَلَابِسِ الْمُخَالَفَاتِ  
 وَمَلَابِسِ الْحَمَّاَتِ ..

عندما تكون يدك مطسورةً في يدي  
 أُحِبُّ أَنْ أَكْسِرَ جَمِيعَ الْوَاعِ الزُّجَاجِ  
 الَّتِي رَكَبُوهَا حَوْلَ أَنْجَبِ ..  
 وَجَمِيعَ الْبَرَغَاتِ الرَّسْمِيَّةِ  
 الَّتِي أَصْدَرَتْ الْكُوْنِيَّةُ مُصَادِرَةَ الْحُبِّ ..  
 وَأَشْعُرُ بِنَشْوَةٍ لَا حَدَّدَ لَهَا  
 حِدَّتَ تَصْطَدِيَّ إِشَارَاتِ الزُّجَاجِ الْمَسْوَرِ  
 بِعَجَدَتِ سَيَارَتِي ..

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.

حين رقصتْ معي ، في تلك الليلة ..  
 حدثَ شيءٌ غريبٌ .  
 شعرتُ أنَّ نجمةً مُتوهجةً  
 تركَتْ غرفتها في السماءِ  
 والنجاتُ إلى صدرِي ..  
 شعرتُ كأنَّ غابةً كاملةً  
 تنبَّتْ تحتِ ثيابِي ..  
 شعرتُ ، كأنَّ طفلةً في عاصفَةِ الثالثِ  
 تقرأ .. وتكتبُ فُرُودَ ضبطِ المدرسيَّةِ  
 على قماشِ قميصِي ..  
 .  
 ليسَ من عاديَّ أنْ أرقص ..  
 وللنَّيِّ في تلك الليلة ..  
 لم أكنْ أرقصُ فحسبَ ..  
 وللنَّيِّ .. كنتُ الرَّقصَ ..

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.

٢١ -

يُوْمَ تَعْثِرِينَ عَلَى رَجُلٍ ..  
 يَقْدِرُ أَنْ يُحْوِلَ كُلَّ ذَرَّةٍ مِّنْ ذَرَّاتِكَ ..  
 إِلَى شِعْرٍ ..  
 وَيَجْعَلَ كُلَّ شَعْرَةٍ مِّنْ شَعَرِ أَنِّي .. قَصِيْدَةٌ  
 يُوْمَ تَعْثِرِينَ عَلَى رَجُلٍ ..  
 يَقْدِرُ - كَمَا فَعَلْتُ أَنَا -  
 أَنْ يَجْعَلَ تَفَسِيْدِيَّةً بِالشِّعْرِ ..  
 وَتَنَاهِيَّةً بِالشِّعْرِ ..  
 وَتَخَسِيْدِيَّةً بِالشِّعْرِ ..  
 فَسُوفَ أَتُوَسِّلُ إِلَيْكَ ..  
 أَنْ تَسْبِحِيهِ بِمَا تَرَدَ ..  
 فَلَيْسَ الْمُرِّيمُ أَنْ تَلُوْفِي بِي ..  
 وَلَيْسَ الْمُرِّيمُ أَنْ تَلُوْفِي لَهُ ..  
 الْمُرِّيمُ .. أَنْ تَكُوْفِي لِلشِّعْرِ ..

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.

أَعْرَفُ ..

وَمَنْ عَلَى رَصِيفِ الْمَحَطةِ ..

أَنْتِ تَسْتَطِرِينَ رَجُلًا آخَرَ ..

وَأَعْرَفُ .. وَأَنَا أَحَدُ مَقَابِلَكِ ..

أَنْتِ سَتُسَافِرِينَ مَعَ رَجُلٍ آخَرَ ..

وَأَعْرَفُ أَنِّي لَمْ أَكُنْ سَوَى مَرْوَهَةٍ صِينِيَّةً ..

فَفَفَتَتْ عَلَيْكِ هَرَاءُ الصِيفِ ..

أَعْرَفُ أَيْضًا ..

أَنَّ رَسَائِلَ الْحُبُّ الَّتِي كَتَبْتُ لَكِ ..

لَمْ تَكُنْ سَوَى مَرَايَا .. رَأَيْتِ فِيلُ غُرْوَرِكِ ..

وَمَعَهُ حَصَا ..

أَحَدُ مَقَابِلَكِ .. وَمَقَابِلَ حَبِيبَكِ ..

لَوْلَيْتِ أَسْتَحِي أَنْ أَصْفَعَ امْرَأَةً ..

تَحْمِلُ فِي مَقْبِسَةٍ يَدِهَا الْبَيْضَاءُ ..

أَحَدُ أَيَّامِ حَيَايِكِ ..

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

لَنْ يَكُونَ زَهَابُكَ مَأْسَادِيَّاً  
 كَمَا تَنْصُورُونَ ..  
 فَأَنَا كَشَجَارِ الصَّفَافَ  
 أُمُوتُ رَاجِحًا  
 وَأَنَا دَاقِفٌ عَلَى قَدَمِيْ ..

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 رُومَا .  
 حَانَتْرَقَتْ مَعْطَرَا ..  
 لَا تَنْتَظِرِي مِنِّي  
 أَنْ أَكْتُبَ فِيلِيْ قَصِيَّةَ رِثَا ..  
 فَمَا تَعْوَرْتُ ..  
 أَنْ أَرْثِيَ الْعَصَافِيرَ الْمَيِّةَ ..

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.

•

هل لَدَيْكَ هَلْ لَقْضَيْتَنَا؟  
 هل لَدَيْكَ هَلْ لَرَنَهُ السَّفِينَةُ الْمُنْقُوَّةُ  
 الَّتِي لَدَنْتَ تَطْفُّ ..  
 وَلَدَنْتَ تَسْتَطِعُ أَنْ تَغْرِّ ..

أَنَا شَخْصٌ ..  
 قَابِلٌ لِجَمِيعِ حَلَوْلِكَ ..  
 فَلَقَدْ شَرَبْتُ مِنْ مِلْحِ الْبَحْرِ مَا فِيهِ الْكَفَايَةُ ..  
 وَشَوَّتِ الشَّمُوسُ حِلْدِيَ ، بِمَا فِيهِ الْكَفَايَةُ ..  
 وَأَكَتِ الْأَسْمَاكُ الْمُتَوَهَّشَةُ مِنْ لَحْيِ ..  
 مَا فِيهِ الْكَفَايَةُ ..

أنا شخصياً ..  
 ضجرت من السفر ..  
 وضجرت من الفجر ..  
 فهل لميلٌ هل لرها السيف  
 الذي يخترقنا .. ورد يقتلنا ؟  
 هل لميلٌ هل ؟  
 لرها الأذنيون الذي يتعاطأ .. ورد يخدمنا ..

أنا شخصياً ..  
 أريد أن أستريح ..  
 على أي هجر، أريد أن أستريح ..  
 على أي كتف، أريد أن أستريح ..  
 فقد تعبت من المراكب التي لا أشرعاها لط ..  
 ومن الأرصفة التي لا أرصفة لط ..  
 فقد معي حلولك يا سيدني !  
 وخذلي توقيعي على بطر قبل أن أراها ..  
 واتركني ناماً ...

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.

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.

ـ ٦٤ـ

إِشْرَبِي فِنْجَانَ قَهْوَنَةٍ ..

وَاسْتَمِعِي بِمُهْدِهِ إِلَى كَلِمَاتِي ..

فَرَجَمَا ..

لَنْ نَشْرَبَ الْقَهْوَنَةَ مَعًا .. مَرَّةٌ تَانِيَّةٌ ..

وَلَنْ يُتَّمِعَ بِي أَنْ أَنْتَهُمْ مَرَّةٌ تَانِيَّةٌ ..

لَنْ أَتَحَدَّثَ عَنِّي ..

وَلَنْ أَتَحَدَّثَ عَنْكِ ..

فَنَّحْنُ صِفَرَانِ عَلَى شَمَالِ الْحُبِّ ..

سَطْرَانِ مُلْتَوِيَّانِ بِالْعَالَمِ الرَّصَادِ عَلَى هَامِشِهِ ..

وَلَكُنِي سَأَتَحَدَّثَ ..

عَمَّا هُوَ أَكْبَرُ مِنِّي .. وَأَكْبَرُ مِنِّي ..

وَأَنْظَفُ مِنِّي .. وَأَنْظَفُ مِنِّي ..

سَأَتَحَدَّثُ عَنِ الْحُبِّ ..

عَنْ هَذِهِ الْفَلَّاشِيَّةِ الْمَدْهَشَةِ

الَّتِي عَطَّتْ عَلَى أَكْتَافِنَا، وَطَرَرَنَاها ..

عَنْ هَذِهِ السَّمَكَةِ الْذَّهَبِيَّةِ ..

الَّتِي طَلَعَتْ إِلَيْنَا مِنْ أَعْمَقِ الْبَحْرِ

وَسَحَقَنَاها ..

عَنْ هَذِهِ الْجَبَّةِ الْزَّرَقاءِ

الَّتِي عَدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا يَدَهَا

وَرَفَضَنَاها ..

ليست القضية أن تأخذني حقيبة ..  
وتنزه بي ..  
كل النساء يأخذن حقائبهن في لحظات الغضب ..  
ويذهبن ..  
ليست القضية أن أطفئ لفافتي بعصبية ..  
في قماش المقعد ..  
كل الرجال يحرقون قماش المقاعد، عندما يغضبون ..  
القضية ليست ببرده البساطة ..  
وهي لا تتعلق بلـ .. ولا تتعلق بي ..  
فنحن صفاران على شمال القطب ..  
وسطران ملتويان بالقلم الرصاص على همايسة ..  
القضية هي قضية هذه السمنة الذهبية ..  
التي رحناها إلينا البحر ذات يوم ..  
وسمقناها 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.

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.

أنا مُتّهمٌ بالشّرّيارةِ  
 مِنْ أصدقاءِي .  
 وَمِنْ أعدائِي .  
 مُتّهمٌ بالشّرّيارةِ ..  
 وَبِأني أجمعُ النّسَاءَ  
 كَمَا أجمعُ طوابعَ البريدِ  
 وَعُلَيْهِ اللَّبَرِيتُ الفَارِغَةُ  
 وَأُعْلَمُ بِأَنَّهُمْ بَالْمَبَيِّنِ  
 عَلَى جُمِدَانِ غَرْفَتِي ..  
 يَرْجُونِي أَيْضًا بِالنَّرْجِيَّةِ ..  
 وَبِالسَّادِيَّةِ .. وَبِالدُّوَيْبِيَّةِ ..  
 وَبِكُلِّ مَا فِي الْهَبَّ النَّفْسِيِّ مِنْ أَمْرَاضٍ ..  
 لِيُمْبِيُّوا أَنْتَمْ مُمْقَفُونَ ..  
 وَأَنَّي مُنْحَرِفٌ ...

لَرَأْمَهْ يَا حَبِيبِي  
 يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَسْتَمِعَ إِلَى إِخَادِي  
 فَالْقَضَاهُ مُعَقَّدُونَ ..  
 وَالشُّهُودُ مُرْتَسُونَ ..  
 وَقَرَاءُ إِدَانَتِي، حَمَارَةُ قَبْلَ حَمَدَرَةِ ..  
 لَرَأْمَهْ يَا حَبِيبِي، يَفْهُمُ طُفُولِي  
 فَإِنَا أَنْتَيْ إِلَى مَدِينَةٍ لَا تُحِبُّ الْأَطْفَالَ ..  
 وَلَدَ تَعْرِفُ بِالْبَرَاءَةِ ..  
 وَلَمْ يَسْبِقْ لِطَافَ أَنْ اشْتَرَتْ وَرَدَةً .. أَوْ دِيَوَانَ شِعْرًَ ..  
 أَنَا مِنْ مَدِينَةِ فَحْشَيَّةِ الْيَدَيْنِ ..  
 فَحْشَيَّةِ الْقَلْبِ .. فَحْشَيَّةِ الْمَعْطَافِ ..  
 مِنْ كَثْرَةِ مَا ابْتَلَعْتُ مِنْ الْمَسَايِّرِ .. وَقَطْعَرِ الزُّجَاجِ ..  
 أَنَا مِنْ مَدِينَةِ جَلِيلَيَّةِ الْأَسْوَارِ ..  
 مَاتَ جَمِيعُ أَطْفَالِهِ مِنَ الْبَرَدِ ..  
 \*

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.  
 \*

لَنْ يَرِدُ أَخْرَى فِي الرَّعْتَادِ لَدَّهُ ..  
 وَلَيْسَ فِي نِيَّتِي أَنْ أُوْكِلَ مَحَامِيًّا  
 يُنْقِذَ رَأْسِي مِنْ حَبْلِ الْمِسْنَقَةِ ..  
 فَلَمَّا دَشَّتْ آلِدَّةِ الْمَرْأَاتِ ..  
 حَتَّى تَعَوَّذَتْ رَقْبَتِي عَلَى الشَّنَقِ ..  
 وَتَعَوَّذَ جَسَدِي عَلَى رُكُوبِ سَيَّارَاتِ الْإِرْسَاعِ ..

لَيْسَ فِي نِيَّتِي أَنْ أُعْتَدَ لَدَّهُ ..  
 وَلَأُرِيدَ حَكْمًا بِالْبَرَاءَةِ مِنْ أَهْمَّ ..  
 وَلَنْ يَنْتَهِ .. أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَقُولَ لَكِ ..  
 لَكِ وَهَدْلَكِ يَا حَبِيبِي ..  
 فِي جَلْسَةِ عَلَيْهِ  
 وَأَمَّا مِنْ جَمِيعِ النَّذِيرِ تُحَاكُمُونِي  
 بِتَرْمِةِ هِيَازَةِ أَكْثَرِ مِنْ اِمْرَأَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ..  
 وَاحْتِكَارِ الْعُطُورِ .. وَالْأَنَامِ .. وَالْمَشَاطِ ..  
 فِي رَقْنِ الْحَرْبِ ..  
 أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَقُولُ :  
 لَنْ يَرِدُ أَخْرَى وَهَدْلَكِ ..  
 وَاتَّعَشَ بَلْ ..  
 كَمَا تَنَعَّشُ قِسْرَةُ الرِّهَانَةِ بِالرِّهَانَةِ ..  
 وَالدُّمْعَةُ بِالْعَيْنِ ..  
 وَالسِّكِّينُ بِالْجُرْعَ ..

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.

أُريدُ أَنْ أَخُولُ ..  
وَلَوْ لَرَّةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ  
إِنِّي لَسْتُ تَائِيًّا لِشَهْرَ يَارِ ..  
وَلَمْ أَهَارِسْ أَبِدًا هَوَايَةَ الْقَلْرِ الْجَاعِيَّ ..  
وَنَذَوِيَّ النَّسَاءِ فِي حَامِضِ الْلَّبَرِيَّ ..  
وَكَنْتُ شَاعِرًا ..  
يَكْتُبُ بِصُوْتٍ عَالٍ ..  
وَيَعْشُقُ بِصُوْتٍ عَالٍ ..  
وَطِفْلٌ أَفْضَرَ الْعَيْنَيْنِ  
مَشْنُوقٌ عَلَى بَوَابَةِ مَدِينَةٍ ..  
لَدْ تَعْرَفُ الْفَفُولَةَ ..

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 تُخَابِرِينَ يا سَيِّدِي؟  
 لِمَاذا تَعْتَدِينَ عَلَيَّ بِرْهَنَهُ الطَّرِيقَهُ الْمُتَحَضَّرَهُ؟  
 حَادَمَ زَمْنُ الْحَنَانِ قَدْ حَاتَ.  
 وَمُوسَمُ الْيَاسِمِينِ قَدْ حَاتَ.  
 لِمَاذا تَسْتَعْلِمِينَ حَوْنَلَهُ  
 كَيْ نَخَالِنِي مَرَّهُ أُخْرِي؟  
 إِنِّي رَجُلٌ مَيِّتٌ.  
 وَالْمَيِّتُ لَا يَمُوتُ مَرَّتَيْنَ ..  
 صَمَلَهُ لَهُ أَظَافِرُ ..  
 وَلَهُمْ، مُطَرَّزٌ كَالشَّرْشَفِ الْمُقْسِقِي ..  
 بِالْطَّعَنَاتِ ..

التلفون .. كان ذات يوم  
 مهدداً بيدي دينيل ، هيدا من الملاسمين  
 وأصبحت اللذة قبلة مشنة ..  
 كان هاتيف ..  
 فراش عريض استلقى عليه  
 صار صليباً من الشوك أنزف فوقه ..  
 كنت أفرج بصوتك ،  
 عندما يخرج من ساعة الطلاق  
 كعصفور أحضر ..  
 أشربت قهوة معه ..  
 وأدفن معه ..  
 كان صوتك جزءاً لا يتجزأ من حياتي  
 كان ينبوعاً ، ومضلاً ، ومرؤها ..  
 يهدى لي الفرج ، وراحتة العباري ..  
 صار كنواهيس يعم الجمعة الفرجية ..  
 يغسلني بأمطار الغبوبة ..

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.

أَوْ قِفِي هَذِهِ الْمَذْجَةَ يَا سَيِّدِي ..  
فَشَرَّابِي كُلُّهُ مَقْطُوْعَةَ ..  
وَأَعْصَابِي كُلُّهُ مَقْطُوْعَةَ ..  
رَجَمَا .. لَدَ يَرَأُ صَوْنِي بِنَفْسِيَّا  
كَمَا كَانَ مِنْ قَبْلٍ ..  
وَلَكُنْتُ - مَعَ الْأَسْفَ -  
لَا أَرَاهُ .. لَا أَرَاهُ ..  
لَكُنْتُ مُصَابَّ 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.

تبسيئ ملابس الريبيين  
وتعلقين على شعر الزهور  
وفي رقبك الأجراس ..  
تقربين تعاليم (ماو)  
وكل سُتب الثورة الثقافية  
وتحشين في المسيرات الطويلة  
ترفعين لرفقات الحرية  
وتطالبين أن يحكم الطهّب العالم  
وأن يُسيراً عبّران 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.

وَهِينَ يُبَوِّجُلُّ الْحَبْ ..  
كُوَّهْشِنَ أَزْرَقِ الْأَنْيَابِ ..  
تَرْعَشِينَ أَمَاَهَ كَفَارَةُ هَذِهِ عُورَةُ  
وَتَرْمِينَ صُورَةً (مَادُ ) عَلَى الْأَرْضِ  
وَتَرْمِينَ مَعْرُطَ ..  
كُلَّ لِأَفْعَامَاتِ الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي رَفَعْتِ  
أَنْتِ وَزَمِيلَتِ ..  
وَتَلْتَجِينَ بَاكِيَةً إِلَى صَدَرِ جَهَنَّمِ ..  
وَتَنْزَدِجِينَ ..  
عَلَى طَرِيقَةِ جَهَنَّمِ ..

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.

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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.

أُطْمِنْتُ يَا سَيِّدَتِي !  
 فَمَا جَعَلْتُ لَدَّ شَمَلْ ،  
 أَوْ لَدَّ شَنَقَلْ عَلَى حِبَالِ غَضْبِي .  
 وَلَا جَعَلْ ..  
 لَدَّ رَاجَعَ دَخَالِي الْقَدِيمَةَ مَعَلِّمْ .  
 فَأَنَا رَجُل ..  
 لَا يَحْفَظُ بِدَخَالِتِي حُبَّبِي الْقَدِيمَةَ ..  
 وَلَا يَعُودُ إِلَيْطِي أَبَداً ..  
 لَكَنِّي جَعَلْ ..  
 لَدَّ شَلَّالْ عَلَى زُهُورِ الْعَزْنِ الَّتِي نَرَرَ عَرْطَفَتِي فِي دَاخْلِي  
 فَمَنْفِعْ تَعَلَّمَتْ أَنْ أُحِبَّ الزُّهُورَ السُّودَاو ..  
 وَأَشْتَرِي طِيل ..  
 وَأَدْرَرَ عَرْطَفَتِي فِي زَرَادِيَا غَرْفَتِي ..

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لَيْسَ فِي نَيْتِي ،  
أَنْ أُفْضِيَ الْمُنْتَهَى إِلَيْكِ ..  
أَوْ أَكْشَفَ الْأَوْرَاقَ الْمَغْسُوشَةَ  
الَّتِي كُنْتَ تَعْبَرُ بِطَرَّ .. خَمْرَ عَامِينَ ..  
لَكَنِي جَمِيعُ الْأَشْكَرِ ..  
عَلَى مَوَاسِيمِ الدَّمْجِ  
وَلِيَابِي الْوَجْعِ الْطَوْلِيَةِ ..  
وَعَلَى كُلِّ الْأَوْرَاقِ الصِّفَرِ ..  
الَّتِي نَشَرْتُهُ عَلَى أَرْضِ حَيَاةِ ..  
فَلَوْلَاكِ ..  
لَمْ أَكْتَشِفْ لَذَّةَ الْكَنَابَةِ بِاللَّوْنِ الْأَصْفَرِ ..  
دَلْذَةَ التَّفَلِيِّ .. بِاللَّوْنِ الْأَصْفَرِ ..  
وَلَذَّةَ الْعِشْقِ .. بِاللَّوْنِ الْأَصْفَرِ ..

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 الرَّحِيمَةُ  
ولن يكون بعدها رسائل ..  
هذه .. آخر غَيْمَةٍ رَّحِيمَةٍ  
تُعْطَى عَلَيْكِ ..  
ولن تعرفي بعدها المَطْرُ  
هذا آخر النَّبِيَّ فِي إِنَاءٍ  
وبعده ..  
لن يكون سُلْطَةً .. ولَنْ يَنْبَيِّ ..

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 نعرف في بعدي ..  
نقاء الطفولة .. وطراوة الجنون ..  
لقد عشت قلبي ..  
كطفل هاربٍ من المدرسة ..  
يختبئ في جمioبه العصافير .. والقصائد ..  
كنت معلم ..  
طفل الترلوست .. والشروع .. والتناقضات ..  
كنت طفل الشعر .. والكتابة العصبية ..  
أها أنت ..  
فلنلت امراة شرقية الشروش ..  
تنتظر قدراها ..  
في خطوط فناجين المفروة ..

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.

هـ أـ تـ حـ سـ لـ يـ يا سـ يـ دـ يـ !  
فـ لـنـ تـ لـوـ فـ يـ فـي الـ لـتـ بـ الـ زـ رـ قـ اـ .. بـعـدـ الـ يـ مـ  
وـ لـنـ تـ لـوـ فـ يـ فـي وـرـقـ الرـسـائـلـ ،  
وـ بـكـاـءـ الشـمـوعـ ..  
وـ حـقـيـقـيـةـ مـوـزـعـ الـبـرـيـدـ .  
لـنـ تـ لـوـ فـ يـ فـي عـرـائـسـ السـلـكـ  
وـ طـيـارـاتـ الـوـرـقـ الـمـلـوـنـةـ ..  
لـنـ تـ لـوـ فـ يـ فـي وـجـعـ الـتـرـوـفـ  
أـوـ فـي وـجـعـ الـقـصـادـ ..  
فـلـقـدـ تـفـيـتـ تـفـسـلـ فـارـجـ حـدـائـ طـغـولـتـيـ  
وـأـصـبـحـتـ نـشـرـ ..

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

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## — 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 الحب البحري

أنا بحرٌ، يا سيدتي  
 خذ تساليني عن تفاصيل الرحلة  
 ووقفْ ايدٍ قدرَعِ الوضولِ.  
 كلّ ما هو مطلوبٌ مني  
 أن تنسَى غرائزَ البحريَّةِ  
 وتطبِّعِ قوانينَ البحرِ ..  
 وتحرّقني كسلطةٍ مجنونةٍ  
 تُسطِّرُ السفينةَ إلى نصفينِ ..  
 وانْهُقَتْ إلى نصفينِ ..  
 وصيّافَ إلى نصفينِ ..

## — 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.

أَقْرَأْ جَسَدَكِ.. مَا تَشَفَّفَ  
 يَوْمَ طَرَدْتِي مِنِ الْقَبْلَةِ  
 لَدُنِّي تَرَكْتُ قَصِيَّةً عَلَى بَابِ خَيْرِيَّةِ  
 وَرَكِتُ لَلَّبِيْ مَحْرُطٍ .. وَرَدَةٍ ..  
 بَدَأْتُ عَصُورَ الْإِنْجَطَاطِ  
 إِنَّ عَصُورَ الْإِنْجَطَاطِ لَيْسَتِ الْجَرْبَلَ  
 بِمَبَادِيَّ الْأَنْجَوِ وَالصَّدْفِ ..  
 وَلَلْنَّجَطِ الْجَرْبَلُ بِمَبَادِيَّ الْأَنْجَوِةَ  
 وَشَطَبْتُ أَسْمَاءِ جَمِيعِ النِّسَاءِ  
 مِنْ زَاَكِرَةِ الْوَطَنِ ...

آه .. يا حبيبي ..  
 ما هو هذا الوطنُ الذي يتعاملُ مع الحبِّ  
 كرجلٍ بوليسٍ؟  
 فيعتبرُ الوردةَ مؤامرةً على انظامٍ  
 ويعتبرُ الفصيحةَ منشوراً سرياً ضيّعاً ..  
 ما هو هذا الوطنُ؟  
 المرسومُ على شكل جرادةٍ صفراءً ..  
 تزحفُ على بطنٍ من المحيطِ إلى الخليجِ ..  
 من الخليجِ إلى المحيطِ ..  
 والذي ينظمُ في النظرِ كقديسٍ  
 ويُدخلُ في الليلِ على سرّةِ امرأةٍ ...

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 حادة الحب من مناهجه المدرسية.  
وألغى فن الشعر ..  
وأمعن النساء ..  
ما هو هذا الوطن؟  
الذي يمارس العنوان على كل غمامه ماطر ..  
ويضيق لكل نسمه .. ملفا سريرا ..  
وينظم مع كل دردة ..  
محض تتحقق ..

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.

أَيْتُرُ الْمُهْشَةُ كُلُّ عَابِ الْأَطْفَانِ  
 إِنِّي أَعْتَرُ نَفْسِي مُتَحَفِّراً ..  
 لَنِّي أُحِبُّ ..  
 كُلُّ زَمِنٍ قَبْلَ عِيْنِيْكِ هُوَ اِهْتَمَانٌ ..  
 وَكُلُّ زَمِنٍ بَعْدَهُمَا هُوَ شَطَاطِيَا ..  
 فَدَرْ تَسَالِيْنِي مَلَازِيَا أَنَا مَعَلِّي ..  
 إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَخْرُجَ مِنْ تَخْلُفِي ..  
 وَأَرْجُلُ فِي زَمِنِ الْمَاءِ ..  
 أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَخْرُجَ مِنْ بَدَادِي ..  
 وَأَجْلِسَتْ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرِ ..  
 وَأَغْتَسِلَ بِحَادِ الْيَنَابِيعِ ..  
 وَأَتَعَلَّمَ أَسْمَاءَ الْأَزْهَارِ ..  
 \*

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.

•

أَرِيدُ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِي القراءَةَ وَالنَّسَابَةَ ..  
فَالنَّسَابَةُ عَلَى جَسَدِيِّ، أَوْلُ الْعِرْفَةِ،  
وَالرُّضُوُّ إِلَيْهِ رُفُوُّ إِلَى الْحَضَارَةِ ..  
وَمَنْ لَا يَقْرَأُ دَخَارَ جَسَدِيِّ ..  
يَبْقَى كُوَنَ حَيَاتِيِّ أَمِيًّا ..

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 محبتي في رأس السنة

أنتي أحببـ ..  
 ولـ أريدـ أن أربطـ بالـ طـ وـ أـ بـ الـ بـ يـ ..  
 ولـ بـ جـ كـ اـتـ الـ مـ وـ الـ جـ ..  
 أـ وـ سـاعـاتـ الـ خـسـوفـ وـ الـ مـسـوفـ ..  
 لـ لاـ يـرـضـيـ ماـ تـقـولـهـ الـ مـاصـيدـ ..  
 وـ فـطـوـ طـ فـ حـاجـينـ الـ قـرـوةـ ..  
 فـ عـيـنـاتـ وـ حـمـدـهـاـ حـصـاـ الـ نـبـوـةـ ..

## — 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?

هل تسميني لي أن أصطاف؟  
 أينظر المرأة التي تستوطن جبلةي المصبي.  
 هل تسميني لي أن أصطاف كا يصطاف الآخرون؟  
 وأتمنى بأيام الجبل .. كا يتمتع الآخرون ..  
 الجبل مرحة حريم إسبانية ..  
 ورأنت مرسومة عليه ..  
 وعصفانين عينيك ..  
 تأق أخواجاً أخواجاً من هرة البحر ..  
 كاتطير الطمات من أوراق دفتر أزرق ..  
 هل تسميني لذاكري أن تأسس حصاراً راحيلك؟  
 وتشمم رائحة البقدور والزعتر البري ..  
 هل تسميني لي .. أن أجلس على الشرفة الصيفية؟  
 دون أن يتسلق حستلك .. كعربيشة زرقاء ..  
 على نافذة بيقي؟

## تأخرين في هفائيم الوقت، وتسافرين

تجولت في شوارع وجميل  
 أينما كانت في سالف الزمان حبيبي ..  
 سالت عن فندق القديم ..  
 وعن المنشئ الذي كنت أشتري منه جرائد ..  
 وأوراق اليانصيب التي لا تربح ..  
 لم أجده الفندق، ولا المنشئ ..  
 وعلمت أن الجرائد ..  
 توقفت عن الصدور بعد رحيلك ..  
 كان واضحًا أن المدينة قد انتقلت ..  
 والأرضية قد انتقلت ..  
 والشمس قد غيرت رقم صندوق بريدك ..  
 والنجوم التي كنا نستأجرها في موسم الصيف  
 أصبحت برسم التسليم ..  
 كان واضحًا أن الرشحاء غيرت عنادين ..  
 والعصافير أضفت أورادها ..  
 وجموعة الرسلات الظرفية التي تحفظ بـ ..  
 وهاجرت ..  
 والبحر من نفسه في البحر ..  
 ومات ...

## 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.

تَوَقَّيْ عنِ الْفُؤَادِ فِي دَاخِلِي ..  
 أَيْسَطُ الْمَرْأَةُ الَّتِي تَنَاسَلُ تَحْتَ جَلْدِي كَعَابَةً ..  
 سَاعِدِيَّ .. عَلَى تَسْرُّ العَادَاتِ الصَّغِيرَةِ الَّتِي كَوَنْتُ مَعَلِّمَ ..  
 دُعَى اِقْدَرُعَ رَاحِلَتِ ..  
 مِنْ قَوَافِشِ السَّنَاءِ .. وَرُقُونِ التَّقْبِ .. وَبَلُورِ الْمَزَهِرَاتِ ..  
 سَاعِدِيَّ .. عَلَى تَذَكِّرِ اسْمِي ..  
 الَّذِي كَانُوا يُنَادِيُنِي بِهِ فِي الْمَدْرَسَةِ ..  
 سَاعِدِيَّ .. عَلَى تَذَكِّرِ أَسْكَانِ قَصَائِدِي  
 قَبْلَ أَنْ تَأْخُذَ شَكْلَ جَسَدِي ..  
 سَاعِدِيَّ .. عَلَى اسْتِعَاْدَةِ لُغَتِي ..  
 الَّتِي فَصَلَّتْ مُفْرَدًا تَطَّعِيلِي ..  
 دُمْ تَعْدُ صَالَةً لِسَوْالِي مِنِ النِّسَاءِ ..  
 \*

تَجَوَّلَتُ فِي أَزْقَاءِ صَوْبَابِ الْمُمْطَرَةِ ..  
 بَحْثًا عَنْ بِطْلَةِ تَقْبِي مِنِ الْمَاءِ ..  
 كَانَ فِي يَدِي خَرِيطَةُ الْمَدِينَةِ الَّتِي أَحَبَّيْتُ فَيْطِ ..  
 وَأَسْمَاءُ الدَّرْنَدِيَّةِ الْمُلْيَّةِ الَّتِي رَأَصْنَلَتُ فَيْطِ ..  
 وَلَكِنَّ شَرْطَيَ السِّيرِ ، سَخِيرٌ مِنْ بَلَاهِتِي  
 وَأَخْبَرَ فِي أَنَّ الْمَدِينَةَ الَّتِي أَجِدُ عَنْهُ  
 قَدْ ابْلَغَتَ الْبَرِّ ..  
 فِي الْقَرْنِ الْعَاشِرِ قَبْلَ الْمِيرَدِ ..

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.

## الكتُبُ فِي اِرْدِقَاعَةِ الْجَرْبَيَّةِ

أَسْتَأْذِنُكَ بِأَنْ تُصِرِّفَ ..  
فَالدُّمُّ الَّذِي كُنْتُ أَحْسَبُ أَنَّهُ لَا يُصْبِحُ مَاءً  
أَصْبِحَ مَاءً ..  
وَالسَّمَاءُ الَّتِي كُنْتُ أَعْتَقِدُ أَنَّ زُجَاجِلَ الْأَزْرَقَ  
غَيْرُ قَابِلٍ لِلَّسْرِ .. إِنْكَسَرَتْ ..  
وَالشَّمْسُ .. الَّتِي كُنْتُ أَعْلَقُهُ كَالْحَلَقِ الْإِسْبَابِيِّ  
فِي الْأَذْنِيَّةِ ..  
وَقَعَتْ مِنِّي عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَتَرَسَّمَتْ ..  
وَالْكَطَّمَاتُ الَّتِي كُنْتُ أَغْطِيَهُ بِطَرِّ عَنْهَا تَنَاهِيِّ ..  
هَرَبَتْ كَالْحَصَادِيَّةِ الْفَانِيَّةِ ..  
وَتَرَكَتْ عَارِيَّةَ ..

### - 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.

أَسْتَأْذِنُكَ بِالْفُرُجِ مِنْ هَذَا الْمَطْبَ الْمَوْرَأَيِّ  
 بَيْنَ نِرْدَيْتِ ..  
 فَلَمْ تَعْدْ عَنِّي شَرْوَةٌ لَنَا قَشْتِيلَيِّ ..  
 أَوْ لِضَاجْعَتِيِّ ..  
 لَمْ أَعْدْ مَهْسَأً لِلرَّجُومِ عَلَى أَيِّ شَيْءٍ ..  
 أَوْ لِلرَّفَاعِ عَنْ أَيِّ شَيْءٍ ..  
 فَقَدْ سَقَطْنَا فِي الزَّمَنِ الدَّارِيِّ  
 مِنْهُ الْمَسَافَةُ بَيْنَ يَدِيِّي وَخَاهِرَتِ ..  
 لَا تَتَغَيِّرَ ..  
 وَبَيْنَ أَنْفِي .. وَمَسَامَاتِ جَلَدِيِّ ..  
 لَا تَتَغَيِّرَ ..  
 وَبَيْنَ زَرْنَاهَةِ قَنْدِيلِكِ .. وَسَاحِفَةِ إِعْدَادِيِّ ..  
 لَا تَتَغَيِّرَ ..

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 ، بِالْخَرْجِ مِنْ هَذَا الزَّمْنِ الْفَسِيقِ ..  
زَمْنِ الْجِنِّينِ الْمُعَلَّبِ ..

وَالْعَاطِفِ الْبَاهِرَةِ كَظِفَارِ الصَّبَاعِ  
وَالْقُبُولَاتِ الَّتِي أَسْدَدَهَا مُرْغَمًا  
كَبِيَالَةٍ مُسْتَحْقَةٍ الدَّفْعَ ..

أَسْتَأْذِنُكَ .. بِأُهْنَدِ إِجَازَةِ طَوْلَةِ ..  
فَلَقَدْ تَبَعَّتْ مِنْ هَالَةِ الدَّرْشَوْقِ ..

وَالدَّرْحُبَ .. الَّتِي أَنَا فِي طَرِ ..

وَتَبَعَّتْ مِنْ هَذِهِ الشِّقَةِ الْمُفَرَّشَةِ  
الَّتِي صَارَتْ عَوَاطِفِ .. مُرَبَّعَةً كَجُدُّ دَانِيَطِ ..  
وَشَرُوْقِي مُسْتَطْبِلَةً كَدَهَالِيزِهَا ..  
وَطُوْحِي دَاهِمًا كَسَقْفِهَا ..

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.

أُريدُ أَنْ أُطْلِقَ الرَّصَاصُ  
عَلَى مَلَبَسِيِّ الْمَسْرَحِيَّةِ ..  
وَعَلَى عَدَةِ الشُّعْلِ الَّتِي تَسْتَعْلِمُ فِي التَّشْخِيصِ.  
عَلَى الرَّفَضِيِّ، وَاللَّيْلَاتِ،  
عَلَى الْأَزْرَقِ، وَالْبُرْقَانِ ..  
عَلَى عَشَرَاتِ الْقَوَافِرِ الَّتِي جَمَعْتُ فِي طَرِفِ فَصَائِلِ دِمِيِّ ...  
عَلَى غَابَةِ الْخَاتَمِ وَالْأَسَادِ ..  
الَّتِي أَسْتَعْلِمُ لِدِبَرِّازِيِّ .  
عَلَى الْأَهْزَمَةِ الْجَلْدَيِّيِّ الْمَرْفِقَةِ  
الَّتِي أَسْتَعْلِمُ فِي جَلْدِيِّ  
عَلَى دَبَابِسِ الشِّعْرِ ..  
وَمَبَارِدِ الْأَظَافِرِ ..  
وَالسَّلَاسِلِ الْمَعْدِنِيَّةِ ..  
الَّتِي لَجَأْتِ إِلَيْهِ، مَذْفَنَةِ 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 الرَّصَاصَ  
عَلَى كُلِّ قَصَائِدِي الَّتِي كَتَبْتُ لَكِ ..  
وَعَلَى كُلِّ اِدْهَادَاتِ الرِّئِسْتِيرِيَّةِ  
الَّتِي صَدَرْتُ عَنِّي ،  
فِي سَاعَاتِ الْعُبُّ 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 الدُّنْوَةَ مِنْ عِلْمِ رَبِّي

يَذُوبُ الْعَنَاءُ بِعَيْنِيْكَ مِثْلَ دَفَائِرِ حَاءٍ ..

يَذُوبُ الزَّمَانَ ، الْمَكَانَ ، الْحُقُوقَ ، الْبَيْوَثَ ،

الْجَاءُ ، الْمَرَاكِبُ ..

يَسْقُطُ وَجْهِيْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَ إِرْنَاءٍ ..

وَأَحْمِلُ وَجْهِيْ الْمَسَرَّ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ ..

وَأَحْلِمُ بِأَمْرَأَةٍ تَشْرِيهٍ ..

وَلَكِنَّ مَنْ يَشْتَرُونَ الْأَدْوَافِ الْقَدِيمَةَ

قَدْ أَخْبَرُونِيْ :

بِأَنَّ الْوُجُوهَ الْزَّيْنَةَ لَا تَشْتَرِيهِ الْمُسَاءُ ..

وَصَلَمَا إِلَى نُقْطَةِ الصِّفَرِ ..  
مَاذَا أَقُولُ؟ وَمَاذَا تَقُولِينَ؟  
كُلُّ الْمَوَاضِيعِ صَارَتْ سَوَاءً ..  
وَصَارَ الْوَرَاءُ أَهَمَّاً ..  
وَصَارَ الدَّمَاءُ وَرَاءً ..  
وَصَلَمَا إِلَى ذَرَّةِ الْيَأسِ ..  
حَيْثُ السَّمَاءُ رَضَاعَةٌ ..  
وَحَيْثُ الْعِنَاقُ قِصَاصٌ ..  
وَحَيْثُ مُهَارَسَةُ الْجِنَّينِ .. أَقْسَى حَرَاءً ..

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.

•

تحبّين .. أو لا تحبّين ..  
إنَّ القصصَةَ تُخْبِلُ أَنْتَ، عَلَى أَيِّ حَالٍ ..  
فَلَسْتَ أَجِيدُ الْقِرَاءَةَ فِي شَفَيْلٍ ..  
لَكِيْ أَتَنْبَأَ فِي أَيِّ وَقْتٍ ..  
سِينَفِيرُ الْمَاءُ تَحْتَ الرِّحَانِ ..  
وَفِي أَيِّ شَهْرٍ تَلُونِينَ أَكْثَرَ عُشَبَّاً ..  
وَأَكْثَرَ فَحْصَبَّاً ..  
وَفِي أَيِّ يَوْمٍ تَلُونِينَ قَابِلَةً لِلِّوِصَالِ ..

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.

## سأقول لك أحبك

سأقول لك: أحبك  
 حين تنتهي كل لغات العشق القديمة.  
 فلا يبقى للعشق شيء يقولونه، أو يفعلونه.  
 عندئذ ستبدأ مريمتي في تغيير حجارة العالم ..

## سأقول لك: أحبك

عندما أشعر أن كلما في صارت تستحق..  
 وتضيق المسافة بين عينيك وبين دخاني.  
 سأقول لك، عندما أصيبح قادرًا، على استحضار حفولي  
 وخيالي، وعساكري، وراكبي الورقية ..  
 واستعادة الزمن الأزرق ملوك، على شاطئي بيروت ..  
 حين كنت ترتعشين كسمكة بين أصابع ..  
 فاغطيك حين تمايل ..  
 بشفيف من نجوم الصيف ..

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.

سأقول لك «أحبك» ..  
 عندما أبدأ من حالة الفيصل التي تحيّنني ..  
 وأعود شخصاً واحداً .  
 سأقول لك ، عندما تصالح المدينة والصحراء في رأسي .  
 وترحل كل القبائل عن شواطيء دمي .  
 وأتحرر من الوشم الذي رقّ المحفور على جسدي ..  
 ومن كلّ صفات الطيف العربي  
 التي جربت على مدى ثمانين عاماً  
 فشوهت ذكورني ..  
 وأضدرت حماماً جلديّ ثمانين جلدة ..  
 بنتها الدنونية ..  
 لذك .. لن أقول لك أحبك ..  
 فازد صرخة تأذن تسعة شرقي لتطيير زهرة ..  
 والليل يعذّب كثيراً ، ليلاً نجحة ..  
 والبشرية تنتظر ألوان السنوات ، لتطيير نهيم ..  
 فما زالت تنتظرين بعض الوقت ..  
 لشيء حبيبي ؟؟

## — The Talk of Her Hands —

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

حَدِيثُ يَدِيْرِ

قَبِيرٌ مِنَ الصَّمْتِ ...  
يَا جَاهِلَةَ ...  
فَأَعْجَلُ مِنْ كُلِّ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ  
حَدِيثُ يَدِيْرِ ...  
عَلَى الطَّاْوِلَةِ ...

## — I Am Afraid —

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

أَخَافُ

أَخَافُ أَنْ أَقُولَ لِتَقِيِّ أُحِبُّط  
«أُحِبُّط» ...  
فَأَنْتَ فِي جَرَاهَا  
تَخْسِسُ شَيْئاً ... عَنْدَمَا تَصْبِطُ

## — 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 مَنَسًا أَحَدَى؟

شِعْرٍ .. وَجْهٍ .. قِطْعَتَانِ ذَهَبٍ  
 دَمَاهَتَانِ .. وَزَهْرَتَانِ يَخْلَفَ ..  
 مَا زَلْتُ مُحْمَارًا أَمَانَسًا ..  
 مِنْ مَنَسًا؟ مَنْ مَنَسًا؟ أَحَدَى ..

## — 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.

## أَغْتَصِبُ الْعَالَمَ بِالْكَلِمَاتِ

أَغْتَصِبُ الْعَالَمَ بِالْكَلِمَاتِ .  
 أَغْتَصِبُ الْلُّغَةَ الْأُمَّ .. الْأَحْوَ .. الْصَّرْفَ ..  
 الْأَخْعَانَ .. الْأَرْسَاءَ ..  
 أَحْبَابِيْمُ بَطَارَاتِ الْأَشْيَاءِ  
 وَأَشْكَلُ لُغَةَ أَخْرَى ..  
 فَيُطِيرُ سِرَّ النَّارِ .. وَسِرَّ الْمَاءِ ..  
 وَأَضْنِيْمُ الزَّمَنَ الْأَقْبَى ..  
 أُوقْنُعُ فِي عَيْنِيْكَ الْوَقْتَ ..  
 وَأَمْتُحُوكَ الْأَخْطَى الْفَاصِلَ بَيْنَ الْأَحْفَظَةِ 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.

