

THE LOVER'S WAY:

**A Critical Comparison of the *Naẓm al-Sulūk* by Ibn al-Fāriḍ with
the *Qaṣīdih-yi Varqāʾiyyih* by Bahāʾullāh**

by

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ بِهَيءُ الْإِبْهَى

*Dedicated to the memory of Mounah Khouri,
with gratitude to my loving wife, Ann*

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores the textual and thematic relationships between *Nazm al-Sulūk*, or “Poem of the Way,” by Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Abū al-Qāsim ‘Umar ibn al-Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn al-Murshid ibn ‘Alī, with the *Qaṣīdih-yi Varqā’iyyih*, or “Ode of the Dove,” by Mirzā Ḥusayn ‘Alī Nūrī, known as Bahā’ullāh. We begin with a discussion of sources and methods, then proceed to describe the historical and biographical circumstances surrounding the composition of each poem. After comparing the narrative structure of each poem, our analysis will center on a comparison of the poetics and rhetorical features operating in each text. There follows a detailed discussion of the thematic structures common to each poem. Our project concludes with an exploration of the goals and intention as expressed in each poem, comparing voice, audience, and the role of the poet. In conclusion, we will offer an evaluation of our findings.

We hypothesize that while Bahā’ullāh was asked to compose his ode in imitation of Ibn l-Fāriḍ’s *al-Qaṣīda al-Tā’iyyah al-Kubrā*, also known as the *Nazm al-Sulūk*, he used the request as an occasion to compose a poem that gave form and text to a mystical experience he attained while in retreat on the mountain of

Sar Galû, intimated in several comments he made concerning his sojourn there, quoted by his great grandson, Shoghi Effendi:

"I roamed the wilderness of resignation" He thus depicts, in the *Lawḥ-i-Maryam*, the rigors of His austere solitude, "traveling in such wise that in My exile every eye wept sore over Me, and all created things shed tears of blood because of My anguish. The birds of the air were My companions and the beasts of the field My associates." "From my eyes," He, referring in the *Kitāb-i-Īqān* to those days, testifies, "there rained tears of anguish, and in My bleeding heart surged an ocean of agonizing pain. Many a night I had no food for sustenance, and many a day My body found no rest....Alone I communed with My spirit, oblivious of the world and all that is therein."¹

By comparing the style, diction, content, and rhetorical features of his poem with that of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, we will evaluate his artistic achievement. Concurrent with this we will describe the singular elements of each poem and search out the bases for these unique features in the lives of the poets and the cultural context for their compositions. This will require a discussion of the belief systems reflected in each poem.

The poetic text is the basic authority to which we will turn. In attempting to understand properly that authority, we will have recourse to chroniclers, commentators, historians, and critics. Each source, however, must answer to the text for its reliability. The text itself will be made to answer for its problems and difficulties. Finally, we have drafted the first critical edition of Bahā'ullāh's

¹Bahā'ullāh quoted by Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, revised edition (Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust), 1974, p. 120. cf Bahā'u'llāh, *Kitāb-i-Īqān* (Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust), p. 249-51.

poem. This is found in Appendix 2 and translated into English in Appendix 3. We are fortunate to have in our possession photocopies of two manuscripts in the hand of Bahā'ullūh's companion and occasional secretary, Zayn al-Muqarrabīn. These we will consider authoritative over the Tehran edition,² prepared by a committee of scholars and published by The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of Iran, 1964, and reprinted in India. The master copy for this edition was also prepared by hand with an engraver's tool, using Persian calligraphic style. As a result, a number of errors crept into the text, while the Arabic original is further obscured by the Persian orthography. The method of printing was most likely a cyclostyling. The copy we used was from the New Delhi reprint. For Ibn al-Fāriḍ, we will rely on the critical edition prepared by A. J. Arberry³ and a recently published edition from Amman.⁴ Variant readings will be noted when they are significant. For the most part, we have had to rely on secondary materials for historical and biographical information. Occasional use has been made of the work of other scholars for the analysis of these poems or to answer particular questions raised by the texts. However, we have endeavored to approach each work with a fresh perspective. While this parallels

² Bahā'ullāh, *Āthār-i qalam-i A'la'*, reprinted from *The Writings of Bahā'ullāh*, Vol 3, 1964 (New Delhi: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust), p. 196-215.

³ Chester Beatty Monographs No. 4, *The Mystical Poems of Ibn Al-Fāriḍ*, edited in transcription from the oldest extant manuscript in the Chester Beatty Collection by A. J. Arberry (London: Emery Walker), 1952.

⁴ *Diwān Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, Ibrāhīm al-Samrā'i, ed. (ʿAmman: Dār al-Fikr lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ), 1985.

the approach advanced by the proponents of a "new criticism" espoused by American and European literary critics, such as F. R. Leavis and I. A. Richards, we have informed our close reading of these poems with a historical and philological approach enabling us to draw the most information from each text and enrich our understanding as much as possible. Since the texts themselves advance particularly ideological and theological concerns, while employing a rich symbolic vocabulary, it is necessary to apply modest hermeneutic methods to unpack these symbols, yet allowing them to function freely in our imagination.

In sum, our approach depends on close textual analysis, with recourse to relevant historical and interpretive sources. We will take careful note of the rhetorical and compositional techniques the poets employ. Methodological tools have been selected primarily according to their suitability to the structures and themes of the poems, not out of our own particular ideological inclinations. As such, we treat these critical methods as part of our tool kit. In this way, we tried to avoid the inappropriate application of techniques that would attempt to conform the text to suit our views and preferences, rather than allow the text to speak for itself. At the same time it will be our challenge to avoid a haphazard presentation of the materials and the salient issues they raise, not to mention the dangers of a random eclecticism in methodology.

CHAPTER ONE:
“Prepare Ye The Way...”

This chapter will discuss the origins and context in which Bahā'ullāh composed his great ode, known as the *Qaṣīdih-yi Varqā'iyyih*, or "Ode of the Dove". It will note some of the specific incidents in his life, including his position as the most influential exponent of the religion of 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī (1819-1850), known to history as the Bāb. Similarly it will cover what we know of the life of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the circumstances in which he composed his masterpiece, the *Naẓm al-Sulūk*, or "Poem of the Way."

لَفُرُوغَهَا كُلُّ الشَّمُوسِ تَخَفَّتْ
ظَهَرَتْ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ وَ عَزَّتْ
لِرَفْعَتِهَا رُوحُ الْعِلَاءِ تَعَلَّتْ^١

أَجْذَبْتَنِي بِوَارِقِ أَنْوَارِ طَلْعَةٍ
كَأَنَّ بُرُوقَ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ نَوْرِ حُسْنِهَا
لِبَهْجَتِهَا مِسْكُ الْعَمَاءِ تَهَيَّجَتْ

A face flashing with light
drew me to her; all the suns
dimmed before her radiance.

It seemed the sun blazed
from her beauty; she manifested
in all the worlds and grew mighty.

Her splendor stirred up
the musk-laden cloud of Heaven;
her stature lifted the spirit of loftiness.

¹Bahā'ullāh, "Qaṣīdih-yi Varqā'iyyih," *Asrār-i qalam-i 'alā'*, vol. 3 (Tehran, 1967), p. 196. I prefer, however, the reading in an unpublished manuscript in the hand of one of Bahā'ullāh's companions known as Zayn al-Muqarrabīn. A copy was graciously provided me by the Archives Department of the Bahā'ī World Center, Haifa.

With these verses, Bahā'ullāh begins his poem to the Maid of Heaven.

This is the figure whom Bahā'ullāh first saw in a vision while imprisoned in Tehran's foul dungeon, the infamous *Sīyāh-Chāl*, below the palace complex of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. It was she whom Bahā'ullāh portrays as the bearer of his prophetic mission. He describes this visionary experience in an important tablet known as the *Sūrat al-Haykal*.

While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above my head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden--the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord--suspended in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good-pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the brightness of the All-Merciful. Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both My inward and outer being tidings which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God's honored servants. Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: 'By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His glory unto all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if ye be of them that perceive.'²

This figure is Bahā'ullāh's Gabriel, his angel, his holy muse. She is also referred to as a *ḥūrī*, one of the denizens of Paradise mentioned in the Qur'ān.

Bahā'ullāh's experience of the divine world seems to be mediated by this feminine personification of the Holy Spirit. Clearly in the passage above, she is

² Bahā'ullāh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust), 1987, pp. 101-102.

described as a creation of God, not a deity herself. It is of further significance that Bahā'ullāh identifies her as the "embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord." Not only does this suggest that she is the fullest expression of an attribute of God, but she also embodies a human activity, one that Sufis are particularly concerned with: *dhikr*, the worship of God through His mention and remembrance, especially the chanting of His names, a discipline in which every Sufi, indeed, every Muslim believer, is exhorted to engage.

The ode unfolds as a dialogue between Bahā'ullāh and the Mystic Maid in which he describes her beauty, proclaims his love for her and recounts the suffering he has endured in the path of her love and service. She rebukes him; in reply, he protests his sincerity, worthiness, and ability to perceive her reality. She rejects his claims and challenges him to detach himself from all he thinks and believes and truly turn towards herself. She concludes with kinder words, wishing he could rend asunder the veils of "nearness" and learn a world-shattering secret, that remains unmentioned, though it could refer to the knowledge of his inner spirit and the station of prophethood latent within him.

BAHĀ'ULLĀH IN 'IRĀQ

Bahā'ullāh had been living in exile in the city of Baghdad since the beginning of 1853, having left Tehran on January 12 and arriving in Baghdad on

April 10.³ Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh ordered his exile in commutation of a death sentence issued following the notorious attempt on his life in 1852 by two distraught and misguided followers of the Bāb in the wake of their prophet's execution in Tabriz, July 9, 1850. A large number of summary arrests were carried out in the aftermath of the crime and many Bābis were tortured and executed. Bahā'ullāh was spared immediate execution largely due to his royal ancestry and the high regard in which he was held, but was forced to leave Iran with his family members and several companions. Bahā'ullāh had been one of the most prominent supporters of the Bāb. According to Bahā'ī sources, his lineage has been traced to Yazdigird III,⁴ the last of the Sāsānian rulers, conquered by the Muslim armies in 642 C.E. and murdered in 651. Bahā'ullāh was interrogated, then imprisoned for four months. He gained release partly due to the efforts of the Russian ambassador, and partly due to the confession by another Bābi, Mullā Shaykh 'Alī Turshizī, surnamed 'Aẓīm, who admitted to

³ *The Bābi and Bahā'ī Religions, 1844-1944: Some contemporary Western Accounts*, Moojan Momen, ed. (Oxford: George Ronald), 1981, p. 177. cf: Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh*, vol. 1, Oxford: George Ronald, revised edition, 1975, p. 13 and Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, (Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust), revised edition, 1974, pp. 108-9.

⁴ Balyūzī, Hasan, *Bahā'u'llāh, The King of Glory* (London: George Ronald), 1980, p. 11. Bahā'ullāh entrusted the task of compiling his genealogy to the eminent scholar Mīrzā Abū Faḍl Gulpaygānī. "Mīrzā Abū 'l-Faḍl writes that he was, in the course of his investigation, particularly impressed by the fact that so severe and unsympathetic a critic of the Bahā'ī Faith (and so hostile a commentator) as Ridā-Qulī Khān-i-Hidāyat, entitled the Amīru'sh-Shur'ara'[sic] (The Emir of Poets), had admitted in the *Nizhād-Nāmih* (The Book of Ancestry), that the Nūris of Māzandarān are descended from Chosroes I, the renowned Sāsānian monarch known as 'Adil (The Just). And final confirmation came from Hājī Mīrzā Ridā-Qulī, a half-brother of Bahā'u'llāh, who told Mīrzā Abū'l-Faḍl categorically, in answer to his query, that the Nūris possessed a genealogical table tracing their line back to Yazdigird the Sāsānian."

orchestrating the plot.⁵ There was no evidence of any involvement by Bahā'ullāh in the crime, though *Nabil's Narrative* mentions Bahā'ullāh receiving 'Azīm sometime in 1852. Nabil alludes to a topic of their discussions in which "Bahā'ullāh condemned his designs, dissociated Himself entirely from the act it was his intention to commit, and warned him that such an attempt would precipitate fresh disasters of unprecedented magnitude."⁶ Though the Shāh's wounds were relatively minor, the attempt on his life sealed the fate of the Bābī community in Iran, fortifying the allegations that they represented a major threat to the security of the Iranian state. A horrible spectacle ensued as Bābis were rounded up all over Iran and subjected to the cruelest tortures. Horrified foreign consuls complained to the court to no avail. Reports of the atrocities found their way into European newspapers.⁷

After his release, Bahā'ullāh, his family, and a few companions made their way across the Zagros mountains, on foot and in winter, to Iraq and established their household in Baghdad. Once he had settled there, he set out to revive the decimated community of the followers of the Bāb. Under the suspicious eye of the Persian consulate, he began receiving visitors from Iran. Many Bābis came to

⁵ Nabil-i A'zam, Muḥammad-i Zarandī, *The Dawn-Breakers, Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, Shoghi Effendi, ed. and transl. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust), 1974, pp. 636-37. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 599. See also Momen, , p. 135. *Nabil's Narrative*, of which Shoghi Effendi edited and translated volume 1, under the above title was the work of one Muḥammad-i Zarandī, surnamed Nabil-i A'zam. He was first a disciple of 'Alī Muḥammad Shirāzī (1819-1850) known as The Bāb, and later a disciple and close companion of Bahā'ullāh. He wrote a lengthy history of the ministries of the Bāb and Bahā'ullāh, as yet unpublished in total.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 599.

visit him and seek his counsel. Some returned to Iran with messages of encouragement to their co-religionists or Bahā'ullāh's answers to their queries regarding the Bāb's teachings. A conflict began to develop in the small community of Bābis in Baghdad. Bahā'ullāh's half-brother, Mīrzā Yaḥyā, who later claimed the title "*Subḥ-i Azal*," or "Morn of Eternity" was the nominal head of the Bābi community, though he spent most of his time either in hiding or in the company of Bahā'ullāh. He eventually became jealous of Bahā'ullāh's influence and a tool in the hands of his enemies. Bahā'ullāh decided to retire to the mountains near Sulaymāniyyah, leaving abruptly April 10, 1854, in hopes that the controversy would subside.⁸ He adopted the clothing and lifestyle of an ascetic, and assumed the name of Darvish Muḥammad-i Īrānī.⁹ He took with him, as a traveling companion, Āqā Abū'l-Qāsim-i Hamadānī. This unfortunate gentleman fell victim to highwaymen while tending to some personal business

⁷ Momen, *Op. cit.*, p. 132ff. See also E. G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bābi and Bahā'i Religions* (London: Cambridge University Press), 1918, p. 162ff.

⁸ Hasan M. Balyuzi, *Op. cit.*, p. 115ff. Bahā'ullāh returned to Baghdad exactly two lunar years later, March 19, 1856. Shoghi Effendi in the following passage from *God Passes By* relates a quote from Bahā'ullāh regarding the state of affairs in Baghdad at that time: "Finally, discerning, as He Himself testifies in the Kitāb-i Īqān, 'the signs of impending events,' He decided that before they happened He would retire. 'The one object of Our retirement,' He, in that same Book affirms, 'was to avoid becoming a subject of discord among the faithful, a source of disturbance unto Our companion, the means of injury to any soul, or the cause of sorrow to any heart.' 'Our withdrawal,' he, moreover, in that same passage emphatically asserts, 'contemplated no return, and Our separation hoped for no reunion.'" Based on this statement, we can speculate that the reason he changed his name was to avoid recognition so that the controversies and contention that had surrounded him in Baghdad would not follow him into Sulaymāniyyah. It also served to completely sever communication between him and all of his family and friends. The Bābi community in Baghdad, therefore, was left to its own devices, to pursue its own course and to rue the loss of its guiding hand.

⁹ It is likely that Bahā'ullāh concealed his identity not for the purposes of *taqiyya*, to conceal his religious beliefs and affiliations, but rather to allow him the solitude and seclusion he desired. Later, Bahā'ullāh would forbid his companions to dissemble their faith, but advised them to exercise *ḥikma*, or wisdom in their activities, so as not to arouse the passions of the Shī'a,

and was murdered. As a result, Bahāʾullāh was left completely alone. Still he maintained his residence, sometimes in a stone hovel, sometimes in a cave on the mountain known as Sar-Galū, a three-day hike from the nearest village. He kept to himself, on occasion venturing into the town of Sulaymāniyyah for provisions, until some of the Sufis of the Naqshbandī order sought him out. Their master, Shaykh Ismāʿīl, the *murshid*, or guide, of the Khālidiyyah branch of the Naqshbandī Order invited him to their *takyah*, or seminary, where he took up lodging. He continued to practice silence and seclusion, until they invited him join some of their gatherings. According to the accounts, Shaykh Ismāʿīl personally sought out the company of Bahāʾullāh after being shown an example of his writings. After posing a few questions about the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī (1165-1240), the great Andalusian mystic, teacher, and writer, they asked him to expound further on passages of the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, the encyclopedic and often abstruse composition that remains one of the greatest achievements of Sufi thought and discourse.¹⁰ Though we may never know with certainty the particulars of those gatherings, Bahāʾī accounts inform us that Bahāʾullāh's affect on the people of that region was sufficient to preserve his memory until recent times to the extent that efforts to obtain original documents he had prepared at the request of his hosts were rebuffed for fear that the *baraka*, or spiritual grace especially the religious authorities.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 118. See also, Shoghi Effendi, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-23.

believed to have been conferred by Bahāʾullāh on their families, would be withdrawn. The gatherings that Bahāʾullāh participated in were likely what the Sufis term *samāʿ*, or “auditions” in which sacred scripture, the teachings of the great *shaykhs*, leading Sufi teachers, or evocative poetry would be read aloud, upon which the master or his adepts would offer comments and interpretations for the enlightenment of the group and the elevation of their spirits. Bahāʾullāh greatly impressed his hosts with his answers to their queries regarding the meaning and import of these teachings and the facility with which he resolved the difficulties they presented. In one of these gatherings, perhaps in an effort to find some challenge he might fail to meet, they asked him to compose a poem in the style of the great ode, the *Naẓm al-Sulūk*, or “Poem of the Way,” also known as *al-Qaṣīdat al-Tāʾiyya al-Kubrā*, “The Greater Ode Rhyming in *tī*” by Ibn al-Fāriḍ, ʿUmar ibn ʿAlī Abūʾl-Qāsim al-Miṣrī al-Saʿdī (1181-1235), the much celebrated Sufi poet from Egypt, posthumously revered as a saint. Bahāʾullāh responded by reciting some 2000 verses, of which he chose 127 to be copied and shared. It is these which have come to us under the title *Qaṣīdih-yi Varqāʾiyyih*. With them we have a number of explanatory notes, attributed to Bahāʾullāh himself. ”

This remarkable display of inspiration and artistry astonished everyone.

When the Naqshbandīs in Iraq sought from Bahāʾullāh a poem like that

¹¹ Taherzadeh, *op.cit.*, pp. 62-3 and Effendi, pp. 122-23.

composed by Ibn al-Fāriḍ, they were asking for more than a display of erudition. Perhaps they were beginning to suspect that he might be one of those mysterious beings, or hidden saints, that filled the volumes of Sufi lore and excited the imagination of every initiate. This would be a true test of his saintly character. If he were a fraud, it would be obvious; if he were not, a more serious dilemma would rest in their hands. Appreciating these circumstances raises important questions that unfortunately fall outside the parameters of this study and the limits of the materials and sources available to us. The assessment of Bahā'ullāh's great-grandson, Shoghi Effendi, based on eyewitness accounts, the testimony of his own grandfather, and manuscripts unavailable to this writer, merits consideration.

Such was their reaction to this marvelous demonstration of the sagacity and genius of Bahá'u'lláh that they unanimously acknowledged every single verse of that poem to be endowed with a force, beauty and power far surpassing anything contained in either the major or minor odes composed by that celebrated poet.

This episode, by far the most outstanding among the events that transpired during the two years of Bahá'u'lláh's absence from Baghdad, immensely stimulated the interest with which an increasing number of the 'ulamás [sic] the scholars, the shaykhs, the doctors, the holy men and princes who had congregated in the seminaries of Sulaymáníyyih and Karkúk, were now following His daily activities.... Such was the esteem and respect entertained for Him that some held Him as One of the "Men of the Unseen" ...still others designated him as a "pivot of the universe," whilst not an inconsiderable number among His admirers went so far as to believe that His station was no less than that of a prophet. Kurds, Arabs, and Persians, learned and illiterate, both high and low, young and old, who had come to know Him regarded Him with equal reverence, and not

a few among them with genuine and profound affection, and this despite certain assertions and allusions to his station He had made in public, which, had they fallen from the lips of any other member of His race, would have provoked such fury as to endanger His life. Small wonder that Bahá'u'lláh Himself should have, in the Lawḥ-i Maryam, pronounced the period of His retirement as "*the mightiest testimony*" to, and "*the most perfect and conclusive evidence*" of, the truth of His Revelation. "*In a short time,*" is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own testimony, "*Kurdistán was magnetized with His love. During this period Bahá'u'lláh lived in poverty. His garments were those of the poor and needy. His food was that of the indigent and lowly. An atmosphere of majesty haloed Him as the sun at midday. Everywhere He was greatly revered and loved.*"¹²

Even taking into consideration the purpose of Shoghi Effendi's account and the bias of the author, these words may well reflect the impression left by Bahá'u'lláh upon some of the populace of that region. Notables who became acquainted with him during this period continued to correspond with him after his departure, and some even sought his presence in Baghdad. Two important treatises elaborating the same themes treated in his poems, one addressed in response to further queries from Shaykh Muḥy al-Dīn Qāḍī Khāniqīn on the one hand, and the other addressed in reply to Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān, the head of the Qādiriyya order in that region, suggest the esteem in which he was held. The late professor Ḥasan Balyūzī also provides corroborating evidence to the lasting impact Bahá'u'lláh had on his hosts.

There are many of its prominent citizens who treasure tenderly the memory of Bahá'u'lláh's sojourn amongst their forefathers.... Whenever Bahá'u'lláh came into Sulaymāniyyih, to make use of the public bath or to

¹²Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette: 1944, reprinted 1974, pp. 123-4.

make any purchases, He would stay in the *Takyih*, the theological seminary of Mawláná Khálid. The original mosque of which Mawláná Khálid had been the custodian was destroyed in later times, but had been rebuilt to the same proportions. Mawláná Khálid was, at the time of Bahá'u'lláh's sojourn, an old man highly revered amongst the Kurds. He requested Darvish Muḥammad to draw up a document which would perpetuate the custodianship of his institution for his descendants. That and other works from Bahá'u'lláh's pen are now owned by families in Sulaymāniyyih, who refuse to part with them at any price. Some three decades ago, a possessor of such a highly-valued relic stated that even should he be offered a million *dīnārs* (a million pounds) he would still refuse to let that priceless document go, because he was certain all bounties would be cut off from him and his family, should it leave their possession. ...Even the particular mountain, called Sar-Galú, which Bahá'u'lláh had especially made His home, is held to be a place holy and sacred.¹³

Further research is needed to obtain from additional sources information on Bahá'u'lláh's visit to, and his affect on, the region and its people. Even so, it is evident from the preceeding accounts that he was regarded by some as a saint who demonstrated miraculous powers, induced higher states of consciousness, and possessed *baraka*, transferrable spiritual grace. Otherwise, the places and objects he had contact with would not be thought to hold such value in recent times.

Word of the accomplishments of this remarkable stranger spread quickly through the region. Soon the Bābīs residing in Baghdad deduced from these reports about "Darvish Muḥammad-i Irānī," together with word of the murder

¹³Hasan Balyūzi, *Op. cit.*, pp. 118-19. The author noted one of his sources for this passage as follows: "The author is indebted to Mr. Mas'ud Berdjis for details of Sulaymāniyyah and its inhabitants during recent years."

of his traveling companion Āqā Abū'l-Qāsim-i Hamadānī, whose departure until then had not been linked to his master's, that Bahā'ullāh could be found in Sulaymāniyyah. His family dispatched an envoy, Shaykh Sulṭān, the father-in-law of Bahā'ullāh's faithful brother, Āqa-yi Kalīm, along with a companion, Javād al-Ḥaṭṭāb, to find him and petition him to return to Baghdad. When they succeeded in locating him, he perceived in the numerous, fervent, and anxious pleas for him to return, the will of God that he should abandon new-found friends for the ponderous duties awaiting him on the banks of the Tigris. He later wrote, "From the Mystic Source, there came the summons bidding us return whence we came. Surrendering our will to His, we submitted to His injunction."¹⁴

The first question we wish to address regarding the poem by Bahā'ullāh is this: what features and issues recommend this poem for an in-depth study, analysis, and comparison with the classic poetic achievement of Ibn al-Fāriḍ? Satisfactory answers to this question fall into three categories: historical, religious, and literary. The poem is one of the most significant literary works from the pen of Bahā'ullāh, the founder and central prophetic figure of the Bahā'ī Faith. The poem is also one of his earliest works and one of the first regarded by Bahā'īs as part of the body of Bahā'ī scripture. It is interesting to note that his

¹⁴Quoted by Shoghi Effendi, *Ibid.*, p. 126.

first revelation was also a poem in Persian, known as *Rashḥ-i ‘Amā*. While most of Bahā’ullāh’s writings were epistles and treatises, the number of his poems in Arabic and Persian is not inconsequential.

LITERARY CONTEXT

Assessing the literary merits of this ode will occupy much of our work. The standards we will employ for this evaluation will be elaborated on in the succeeding chapters; however, they include beauty of diction and imagery, freshness and originality, and the conscious response to, or conformity with, some of the standards of erudition commonly held by Arab critics, in particular the maintenance of meter and rhyme and the use of rhetorical figures. We will employ the same standards in regard to the ode of Ibn al-Fāriḍ. We will use the latter composition as an established point of reference to appreciate the task of composition undertaken by Bahā’ullāh.

His poem was composed sometime between 1855 and 1856, near the time of a major turning point in the history of Arabic literature. The Arabic language and letters were on the eve of a major transformation. A new Arabic translation of the Bible was about to be published. Every year, a handful of students were leaving the Middle East to study abroad. In a few decades, this trickle would turn into a steady stream of the best and brightest young minds seeking broader

horizons. Often they were sent with funding from either native governmental sources or from private and missionary sources, as Arabs began to search for the secret of Europe's growing ascendancy and to learn more about the wonders of these strange and powerful empires. The cumulative effect of these impulses and trends would lead to an Arab renaissance, the emergence of Arab nationalism, and result in new forms of government, economic organization, and even of literary art. A sea change had already begun in the Middle East when Bahā'ullāh was forced from his native home to the tumultuous world and waning fortunes of the once glorious Ottoman Empire.

While it is not unusual for a Persian to compose Arabic poetry, few critics have given serious attention to the Arabic compositions by non-Arabs, even by the most celebrated of Persian poets, such as Rumi. Recently, researchers and scholars have begun to consider the merits of poetry previously deemed unworthy of attention, in particular some of the vernacular poetry composed in the 20th Century and earlier. Similarly, important work has been done on oral poetry. Perhaps the time is right to encourage further research and evaluation of non-native Arabic poetry. The case of Bahā'ullāh is perhaps unique in that he founded a major religious movement, but the use of poetry by mystics and charismatic religious leaders is so common as to be considered expected, particularly among his hosts in Sulaymāniyyah. So it was entirely appropriate

that he would be asked to compose extemporaneously in order to demonstrate not only his erudition, but the degree of his spiritual attainment. To better appreciate his achievement, it should be noted that Bahā'ullāh was not well schooled in Arabic letters or, for that matter, well practiced in the intricacies of Sufi theology and ritual practice. According to his biographers and the testimony of his own pen,¹⁵ he received only the usual schooling that one would expect for the son of a court minister and member of the Persian nobility. He had no specialized training. He must have studied the Qur'ān and the basic commentaries, *ḥadīth*, theology, rhetoric, and some literature. Undoubtedly he also benefited from the less formal educational atmosphere of Persian *soirees* and speculative discussions involving those visitors who called on his eminent father, or at the court to which he may have been invited. At the same time, it should be noted that Bahā'ullāh was reared in a cultural milieu saturated with scriptural references, poetic aphorisms, and an ingrained appreciation for verbal artistry that was probably nearly reflexive in the upper classes of Persia in the 19th century.

¹⁵ Bahā'ullāh, *Lawḥ-i mubārak khīṭāb bih Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Muḥtaṣid-i Isfahānī ma'rūf bih Najafī*, (Langenhain: Baha'i-Verlag), 1983, p. 28-29. He states in his tablet to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, "The learning current amongst men, I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely..." This tablet is quoted in Bahā'ullāh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Shoghi Effendi, trans., Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1941, 1968, p. 39.

IBN AL-FĀRIQ

Let us now turn our attention now to the poem (and poet) Bahā'ullāh was asked to emulate. Ibn al-Fāriq composed his remarkable *diwān*, or collection of poetry, in Egypt and Arabia. Though his family was from Hama, Syria, he was born in Egypt in 1181, the son of a women's advocate before the Egyptian Court, the evident meaning of *ibn al-fāriq*, and received a modest education. He accompanied his father to the classes he taught and to court.¹⁶ As a youth he studied *ḥadīth* and Shāfi'ī law. According to some sources, he set out on the mystic path while still young. Professor Th. Emil Homerin has begun the difficult and important task of separating fact from fabrication in biographical and hagiographical sources regarding this great poet. He offers the significant observation that Ibn al-Fāriq's contemporaries viewed him primarily as a poet and teacher, with Sufi inclinations. His two sons were invested with the robe of the order of al-Suhrawardī, reportedly by the *shaykh* himself, during the poet's last visit to Mecca in 1331. However, we lack reliable evidence that Ibn al-Fāriq acted as a Sufi *shaykh* himself, though the evidence to the contrary is similarly unconvincing. Homerin cites stronger evidence that he made his living teaching

¹⁶R. A. Nicholson and J. Pedersen in the article, "Ibn al-Fāriq," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill), p. 763, identify the meaning of his name as that of a notary public. Nicholson states the same in his article on Ibn al-Fāriq in *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge: The University Press), 1921, p. 164. Th. Homerin corrects this in his book, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriq, His Verse and His Shrine* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press), 1994, p. 16.

poetry and *ḥadīth*. After returning from his first, and lengthiest visit to Mecca, he took up residence at al-Azhar, the famous mosque and school in Cairo. He was married, with two sons, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad. He also had at least one daughter, who was the mother of his grandson, ‘Alī Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who authored his grandfather’s biography, *Dibājah*. He had at least two students who became accomplished poets, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Khiyamī and Ibn Ismā‘īl. As a young man, he seems to have had a fondness for seclusion in the hills and deserts near Cairo, practicing asceticism and solitude. He continued this form of worship in the Hijāz. According to hagiographical accounts, when he returned to Cairo, many regarded him as a saint; he resided at al-Azhar, at that time, teaching as we have mentioned. He died there January 23, 1235.¹⁷ His tomb is visited to this day.¹⁸

His *diwān* was first edited by Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad al-Fārisī al-Shāfi‘ī al-Īkī.¹⁹ However, the edition by his grandson, ‘Alī, is the basis for nearly all its publications. It is of very modest length, but singularly remarkable in style, craftsmanship, and nobility of theme.

With his work, Sufi poetry reaches its apex in the Arabic language. R. A.

¹⁷ A. J. Arberry, *The poem of the Way*, Chester Beatty Monographs, No. 5 (London: Emery Walker), LTD, 1952, p. 5.

¹⁸ Homerin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

¹⁹ Chester Beatty Monographs No. 4, *The Mystical Poems of Ibn Al-Fāriḍ*, edited in transcription from the oldest extant manuscript in the Chester Beatty Collection by A. J. Arberry (London: Emery Walker), 1952, p. 8.

Nicholson observes that "the *Diwān* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, though small, is one of the most original in Arabic literature. Possibly the minor odes, which exhibit a style of great delicacy and beauty and a more or less copious use of rhetorical artifices, were composed in order to be sung with musical accompaniment..."²⁰

Ibn al-Fāriḍ's most studied and most celebrated poem is the daunting ode known as the "*Naẓm al-Sulūk*." Comprised of 760 couplets in the *tawīl* meter and rhyming in *ti*, the poem is, according to A. J. Arberry "entirely without parallel, and considered only as an example of rhyming virtuosity it must be accounted most remarkable."²¹ But it is not the length that is so astonishing about this poem. It is the poet's ability to elaborate his theme with such intricacy and beauty, while creating a dramatic tension sufficient to hold the reader's interest until the poem's sublime conclusion. Most Arabic *qaṣīdas* contain 50 lines or fewer and only a few exceed 100 couplets. It could be argued that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was on the verge of creating a new verse form in Arabic. Poems of this length occur as verse narratives in colloquial Arabic poetry, being oral epics, and in some classical *urjūʿ*; it is used in Persian more frequently as either narrative or didactic works known as *mathnawī*. His poem is none of these, yet shares features with each. It is at once lyrical, dramatic, narrative, and didactic.

Both poems are primarily concerned with conveying a mystical

²⁰Nicholson and Pederson, *Op. cit.*, 763.

²¹ Arberry, *Op.cit.*, p. 5.

experience, a divine vision that precipitated a fundamental transformation in the inner and outer life of the poet. This transformation resulted in the obliteration and reformulation of the identity of the individual self in relationship to its creator, the source of its material and spiritual life. The narrator of the poem claims to achieve such a complete state of servitude to the divine Beloved that he ceases to speak with his own voice so that the voice of God or His Messenger emerges. Ibn al-Fāriḍ may fall into the broad category of Sufis who practiced *zuhd*, or asceticism. Unlike some of the poets who later emulated him, we are confident that the wine referred to in his poem is symbolic, as are the references to erotic love. Like much mystical poetry, the passion communicated in these verses deliberately blurs the distinction between spiritual and erotic love; we have no indication that the poet is referring to a human partner.²²

MYSTIC VISIONS

Bahā'ullāh, too, was practicing asceticism and seclusion, in the mountains of Kurdistan when he recited his ode. In contrast to Ibn al-Fāriḍ, he chose asceticism and solitude more as a response to specific personal circumstances than to achieve a particular spiritual state or be enabled to access a high degree

²² Even Ibn al-ʿArabi (d.1240), the great Sufi writer and teacher from Andalusia, was compelled to write a commentary on his volume of poetry entitled *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq* to answer critics who accused him of writing erotic poetry and betraying his commitment to the mystical path. Ibn al-Fāriḍ was subjected to posthumous criticisms regarding alleged theological views in agreement with Ibn al-ʿArabi, but was not accused of improper passions. See below.

of mystic knowledge. While we have less information regarding this period than others of Bahā'ullāh's life, we do have a few comments from his own pen regarding his circumstances, state of mind, and particulars of purpose.

In the early days of Our arrival in this land, when We discerned the signs of impending events, We decided, ere they happened, to retire. We betook Ourselves to the wilderness, and there, separated and alone, led for two years a life of complete solitude. From Our eyes, there rained tears of anguish, and in Our bleeding heart there surged an ocean of agonizing pain. Many a night We had no food for sustenance, and many a day Our body found no rest. By Him Who hath My being between His hands! not withstanding these showers of afflictions and unceasing calamities, Our soul was wrapt in blissful joy, and Our whole being evinced an ineffable gladness. For in Our solitude We were unaware of the harm or benefit, the health or ailment, of any soul. Alone, We communed with Our spirit, oblivious of the world and all that is therein. We knew not, however, that the mesh of divine destiny exceedeth the vastest of mortal conceptions, and the dart of His decree transcendeth the boldest of human designs...Our withdrawal contemplated no return, and Our separation hoped for no reunion. The one object of Our retirement was to avoid becoming a subject of discord among the faithful, a source of disturbance unto Our companions, the means of injury to any soul, or the cause of sorrow to any heart.²³

Bahā'ullāh then renounced his seclusion, not out of preference, but against his personal wishes, in order to shoulder the responsibilities pressed upon him. His great-grandson, Shoghi Effendi, describes the situation in Baghdad, to which Bahā'ullāh returned, and includes his progenitor's own comments.

Kurds and Persians vied with each other, when confronting them [the Babis] in the streets, in heaping abuse upon them, and in vilifying openly the Cause which they professed. Little wonder that on His return

²³ Bahā'ullāh, *The Kitāb-i Iqān, the Book of Certitude*, Shoghi Effendi, trans. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust), 1974; pp. 250-1.

to Baghdád Bahā'ullāh should have described the situation then existing in these words: *"We found no more than a handful of souls, faint and dispirited, nay utterly lost and dead. The Cause of God had ceased to be on any one's lips, nor was any heart receptive to its message."* Such was the sadness that overwhelmed Him on His arrival that He refused for some time to leave His house, except for His visits to Kázimayn and for His occasional meeting with a few of His friends who resided in that town and in Baghdád.

The tragic situation that had developed in the course of His two years' absence now imperatively demanded His return. *"From the Mystic Source,"* He Himself explains in the *Kitáb-i Iqán* *"there came the summons bidding Us return whence We came. Surrendering Our will to His, We submitted to His injunction."* *"By God besides Whom there is none other God!"* is His emphatic assertion to Shaykh Sulṭán, as reported by Nabíl in his narrative, *"But for My recognition of the fact that the blessed Cause of the Primal Point [the Báb] was on the verge of being completely obliterated, and all the sacred blood poured out in the path of God would have been shed in vain, I would in no wise have consented to return to the people of the Bayán [the Bábis] and would have abandoned them to the worship of the idols their imaginations had fashioned."*²⁴

Bahā'ullāh indicates in these quotes his complete reliance on the will of God. He suggests that his decisions were divinely inspired and in contradiction to his own wishes and desires. He alludes to a mystical and visionary experience that seems to be a regular and important feature of his daily life. We will read in the poem how he reaches this state of detachment, resignation, and inspiration. His searing criticism of the Bábis parallels a statement made in his last note of commentary on the poem in which he levels a devastating criticism of the

²⁴ Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, pp. 125-6. The source of the first quotation by Bahā'ullāh is not mentioned, but it is probably the same *Nabíl's Narrative* cited above. According to the late Hasan M. Balyūzi, Shaykh Sulṭán wrote a chronicle describing his quest to find Bahā'ullāh in Kurdistan, his journey, and their return. Cf. Balyūzi, *op.cit.*, p. 122. The reference to the *Kitáb-i Iqán* is Bahā'ullāh's treatise cited above, p. 250. This book stands as his pre-eminent theological work and was written in Baghdád in 1861, five years after his sojourn in Sulaymāniyyah.

spiritual and intellectual conditions of the learned classes of his day.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ also may have experienced a mystic vision that gave him a sense of a sacred mission for his life. Nicholson comments that Ibn al-Fāriḍ, while in the wilderness, “had a vision of the Prophet.”²⁵ In a similar vein, Arberry states that, “dedicated from early manhood to the mystic’s way of withdrawal from the world, he was utterly satisfied in later days to remember with ecstatic pleasure the pilgrimage he made to the Sacred Places of Arabia, and to meditate upon the union with the Spirit of Muḥammad which he then experienced. When he died on 23 January 1235, he left behind him the memory of a holy life surrendered to the Will of Allah, and a small collection of exquisite poetry.”²⁶ The comments of Nicholson and Arberry portray a simple life guided by simple, yet sublime motives, in stark contrast to the tumult and torment that surrounded Bahā’ullāh. Yet the circumstances of each poet were more complex. The peasant and merchant classes in Egypt fell prey to political and economic vicissitudes that led to strife in the Egyptian court and among the learned figures that depended on their patronage. During his lifetime, Ibn al-Fāriḍ appears to have been able to shelter himself from their baneful influence with some success, hence his choice of residence at the al-Azhar mosque and college. Posthumous interpretation of his thought and his spiritual station became a highly charged

²⁵ *Encyclopedia of Islam, Op.cit*, p. 763.

²⁶ Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

political issue. Bahāʾullāh similarly sought refuge, with success, in Kurdistan where he composed his ode, only to have to return afterward to the center of the fray.

Nicholson and Arberry relied too heavily and uncritically on hagiographical material written two generations or more after the death of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, especially the biography by his grandson ʿAlī. We have a similar challenge with many of the sources for Bahāʾullāh's biography. Homerin takes a more cautious approach to this work; though he relies heavily on Issa Boullata, he builds his case for a fresh view of the life of the poet based on original research and presents newly discovered sources. He rightly acknowledges the strength of the sources for Sibṭ ʿAlī's biography, being the first two descendents of the poet, but also suggests that, in part, the motives behind the work may have been to resolve the growing dispute over his theological views, and in part, to lay the foundation for his canonization as a saint and the creation of a Sufi *tariqa*, order, for his physical and spiritual descendents. On the other hand, Homerin also acknowledges another, earlier source that corroborates the popular view of Ibn al-Fāriḍ as a pious mystic. However, the other notices by his contemporaries and his students suggest that he wrote a wider variety of poetry than represented in his *diwān*, including poems written in colloquial Egyptian that displayed a quick wit and an urbane sensibility. This may provide the impetus

for a fresh reading of his poetry, unencumbered by the centuries of Sufi commentaries attached to the study of his poetry. The work of Ḥilmi, Issa Boulatta,²⁷ and others point in the direction of appreciating his work as that of a poet, first and foremost, and secondarily for its mystical content that has led to an interpretation applied universally and may not be appropriate to all of his poetry. The following chapters will take up the questions we have raised.

²⁷Homerin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 15-28. See Issa Boulatta, "Toward a Biography of Ibn al-Fāriḍ," *Arabica* 28 (1981): 38-56; "Verbal Arabesque and Mystical Union: A Study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's 'Al-Tā'iyya Al-Kubrā.'" *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3 (1981): 152-69.; Ḥilmi, Muḥammad Muṣṭfā, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ wa al-Ḥubb al-ilāhī*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif), 1971.

CHAPTER TWO

The Way of Love

In the following pages we will analyze and compare the narrative trajectory as it develops in each poem. It builds, couplet by couplet, as the poets spin the tales of their mystical adventures. Each poem is based on a construct of interiority as the poetic voice communes alternately with itself and its beloved, although external recipients are mentioned. This communion is both an expression of the inner state the poet has been able to achieve and the provision of a set of guideposts for the reader or listener to follow should he seek to achieve a similar goal. So it is at once a song that wants to be sung and a manual for drawing closer to the divine spirit. It uses the metaphor of courtship, linking it with the underlying symbolic structure of the journey, a “mystic’s progress.” The narrative force of each poem is generated by a similar impulse toward a similar goal. Both poems are filled with a divine ecstasy, a torturous yearning for the unattainable—union with God. Yet, in striving for this goal, the soul may achieve something far more wondrous than the attainment it had imagined. The narrative structure of the two poems follows, generally, the broad outlines of the mystical path as defined and described in Sufi literature. Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Nāẓm al-Sulūk* adheres more closely to the pattern and terms of the “mystic’s progress” than Bahā’u’llāh’s *Qaṣīdih-yi Varqā’iyyih*. Similarly, Ibn al-Fāriḍ conforms more

strictly to the required compositional elements of the *qaṣīda*. These two sets of requirements intertwine to form the basis of the narrative structure in each ode.

The metaphor of the journey or path occurs frequently in Islamic mystical writings. The term *ṭarīqa* literally means path road or way, yet has the technical meaning of "Sufi order." The order is both an organizational structure, or fellowship, and a way of life, a spiritual course of study with a special set of requirements that involve study, discipline, and ritual practices. Common to most orders is a detailed concept of the mystical path consisting of series of stations or stages that mark the progress and attainments of the devotees. The *maqām*, a station earned or achieved and retained, is distinct from the *ḥāl*, an impermanent state of consciousness or perceptive condition that may be granted to the seeker by God, rather than it having been earned. The station often corresponds to an attribute or developed character trait that, once it is achieved, becomes a permanent aspect of the seeker's spiritual condition. It also indicates the degree of proximity to his goal, that of closeness to God or His Messenger. The stations are variously described and named in many works by the scholars and *shaykhs*, or masters. Ibn al-ʿArabī describes upwards of one hundred stations in his writings. Most of these correspond to attributes of God; when they are ascribed to, or reflected in human beings, he informs us that they can be either stations or states, depending on whether they are permanent and produce a

result or benefit, in which case they are stations. Otherwise they are transitory and are states.¹ Al-Qushayri enumerates forty-five stations in his *Risāla*.² Aḥmad al-Gazzālī chose eighteen stations and grouped them into eight headings to the later articles in his seminal work on Sufi thought and practise, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*.³ These comprised most of the last section of this work, grouped under the title, "The Way to Salvation." They are *tauba*, or conversion; *sabr* and *shukr*, patience and gratitude; *khauf* and *rajāʾ*, fear and hope; *faqr* and *zuhd*, poverty and asceticism; *tawḥīd* and *tawakkul*, belief in the oneness of God and trust in him; *maḥabba*, *shawq*, *uns*, and *riqā*, love, yearning, intimacy and satisfaction; *nīya*, *sidq*, and *ikhlas*, intention, truthfulness, and sincerity. Bahāʾullāh composed two short treatises of his own on the stations of the mystical path.⁴ These were addressed as epistles to the two Iraqi individuals, mentioned in Chapter One, in response to inquiries they had made to him. Both were composed in Persian shortly after his return from Sulaymāniyyah. In the first he identifies seven *marātib*, or stages, along the path to attainment (*sīr-i sālikān*), and calls them valleys. They are *ṭalab*,

¹William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1989, pp. 279-280.

²A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (New York: Harper and Row), 1970, pp. 74-79. See Qushayri, Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin, (986-1072) *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, Abd al-Halīm Mahmud, ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha), 1966.

³Al-Ghazzālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam), 1900?

⁴Bahāʾullāh, *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*. For the Persian, see *Āsār-i Qalam-i ʿAlāʾ* (Tehran[1964]; reprint, New Dehli: Bahāʾī Publishing Trust) 1972, pp. 92-157.

search, *‘ishq*, love, *ma‘rifat*, knowledge, *tawhīd*, unity, *istighnā*, contentment, *hayrat*, wonderment, and lastly *faqr-i haqīqī va fanā’-yi aṣlī*, true poverty and complete effacement.⁵ A thorough discussion of the major stages of the mystical journey, their meaning and significance would prevent us from addressing the subject at hand. Instead, we will name a few of those most important to the narrative and thematic structures of the two poems and reference them in the course of our discussions.

The first stage is recognition or conversion as the seeker obtains a glimpse of his goal, and decides to pursue the mystic, inner path towards God or the Beloved. For this reason Bahā’ullāh names the first valley “search.” The component of this stage of the journey are patience and restraint, pain, longing, and denial of the self and its appetites. If the devotee is successful in his or her search, he draws nearer to the Beloved, discovers some sign of the nearness of her presence and enters the stage of love. This stage includes yearning, ardor, ecstasy and pain. If his ardor is sufficiently intense, and God favors him, the seeker will attain knowledge, certitude, and vision. This is not *‘ilm*, or acquired knowledge, but *ma‘rifat* or *‘irfān*, inspired or experiential knowledge of God and the spiritual realms. True knowledge will lead to *tawhīd*, or divine unity. At this stage, multiplicity is effaced and the seeker sees only God. His words and deeds

⁵ *Ibid.*, and *Āthār-i Qalam-i ‘Alī* (Tehran [1963]; reprint, New Dehli: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust) 1972, pp. 92-137.

perform the will of God. His perceptive faculties are freed from all limitations of materiality and self. In this stage the seeker is purified of self and rewarded with the riches of God. This leads to contentment, for everything is from God and everything returns to God. The term we find in the writings of Ibn al-Arabī, and Bahāʾullāh as well, is *ḥayra*, bewilderment or astonishment. This form of knowledge is not confusion, but the recognition that divine knowledge and vision are sanctified from the limitations of human knowledge. There is only God and not/God. God is absolute existence and everything else is in a contingent state of partial being and partial nothingness. The mystic experiences something beyond the rational and perceives unity and multiplicity simultaneously. The last stages the seeker reaches comprise being and nothingness, death and eternal life, that is, *fanāʾ* and *baqāʾ*. His dies to himself and lives in God, his particular existence is effaced in the presence of God. He is then revived and subsists by the sustaining grace of God. This subsistence may also lead to a return to the world of humanity, while maintaining a state of absolute servitude.

As we begin to explore the materials of this poetry, we will refer to the stages or stations mention above. We now turn to the particular literary requirements of this form of poetry. Abbasid love poetry developed an elaborate system of stock characters and rhetorical figures that mystical poets such as Ibn

al-Fāriḍ adapted to their themes and arguments. The hero or lover common to earlier odes becomes an adept, mystic lover, or traveler of the path leading toward God or His beauty. A youth or maiden, usually unnamed, is the object of his affections and his quest for reunion. The quest or path represents the journey towards God and refers to the requirement of the discipline or practice of his particular *ṭarīqa*, or Sufi order. Along the way, the disciple encounters certain figures. These include the companions, usually drinking in a tavern, a symbol for the *takya*, the Sufi seminary or cloister. The narrator must deal with the spy, *murāqib*, who belongs to the tribe or clan of the beloved and will inform against him. He will then be met by visitors, *ʿuwwād*, from his own tribe who will encourage him to abandon his vain quest and return to the company of his tribesmen. He will also encounter the gossip and critic, *lāḥin* and *wāshin*, who slander and revile him. Eventually he proves himself worthy of the affections of the beloved. He attains a meeting or union. Then he returns to society to guide others. Often, the poem is addressed to a companion, apprentice, or devotee who is the recipient of his advice and witness to his mystical attainments.

DRAMA AND RECITATION

The narrative structure develops as a dramatic interchange between the lover and his beloved. The dramatic tension builds as the lover repeatedly

pleads for any kind of favor his beloved might deign to bestow, yet she rejects each advance as unworthy. In each new entreaty, the lover professes his sincere intentions and willingness to fulfill every condition exacted by his beloved. As the passion builds, the reader is carried forward, despite the lengthening pages, abstruse references, and abstract ideas. Both poems are replete with the complaints by each poet concerning the trials and torments required by the path of divine love and mystic attainment. The central motif of each poem is the holy figure of the beloved, mystical-erotic love and the passionate desire for union. The trajectory of each narrative gains its force and sweep from the torturous pursuit of that goal. This goal of mystic union has a long history of controversy, to which Ibn al-Fāriḍ fell victim.⁶ We will take up that issue in another chapter.

The interaction between the lover and the beloved provides the drama and passion. Sacrifice and death are the means for achieving the goal of union and bliss. This death is the annihilation of self, the stage of *fanāʾ*, an obliteration of all the physical and mental limitations or barriers between the lover and the beloved. Once the goal is achieved, the lover must endure the return to himself, though he is now transformed, in the stage of *baqāʾ*, subsisting in God. He is then charged with the mission of proclaiming his love, praising his beloved, and guiding others on the worthy path. Each poem gives its own shape to this

⁶ Homerin, Th. Emil, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, His Verse and His Shrine* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press), 1994, pp. 55-75.

journey, specific to the religious structure and system of belief held by the poets respectively, and colored by the individual circumstances of their lives. Passion, eloquence, beauty, and drama sustain the reading of each poem. In the following pages, we will examine, in some detail, the narrative techniques employed in such a project.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Nazm al-Sulūk* demands to be recited aloud, and is best appreciated if recited in one or two sittings. For centuries, native Egyptians and visiting pilgrims would come to the poet's shrine to honor his memory, seek his saintly blessings, and enjoy the ecstasy derived from the singers entertaining the pilgrims with passages from this poem. In addition to the public celebrations of his *mawlid*, his birth or "saint's day," and the Friday prayers held regularly in the mosque at his shrine, the recitation of verses from the *Nazm al-Sulūk* became a regular feature of the ceremonies of various Sufi orders, especially their *samāʿ*, or private "auditions." As such, the poem was used as a tool, both for instruction and for the attainment of a spiritual state, *ḥāl*, or transformation of rational consciousness, so that the adepts might receive a glimpse of the divine mysteries.

The oral recitation of the poem enables the reader to benefit from the musical language and emotional tenor of the work. While the intricacy of imagery and subtlety of ideas in the narrative require closer reading, the accumulation of images and ideas in the larger context convey the sense and

purpose of the poem far better than concentration on any single idea or statement. The images, arguments, and even the syntax of the sentences carry over from one couplet to the next. This style of diction applies even to the opening couplets, though later passages provide better examples of this point.

وكانسي محياً من عن الحسن جلّت	سقتني حمياً الحب راحة مقلتي
به سرّ سرّي في انتشالني بنظرة	فأوهمت صحتي أن شرب شرابهم
شمانلها لا من شمولي نشوتي	وبالحدق استغنيت عن قدحي ومن

The pupil of mine eye stretched forth its hand
To grasp my bowl (her matchless countenance
Transcending mortal beauty) and therefrom
Poured me the fever and the flame of love,
While with my glance I gave my friends to think
Draining their juice it was that filled my soul
(And I intoxicated) with deep joy;
Yet having eyes to drink, I could dispense
With that my goblet, since her qualities
And not my wine inebriated me.⁷

We cited A. J. Arberry's translation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's masterpiece into comprehensible English verse and have made use of his commentary.⁸ While his style is archaic, he was able to convey one of the most important features of the poem, its rhythmic flow and dramatic pace. He uses ten lines to translate three couplets and consistently overtranslates, in keeping with what seems to be his intention to explain the meaning of the poem and convey its instructional

⁷ A. J. Arberry, *The Poem of the Way*, Chester Beatty Monographs, No. 5 (London: Emery Walker), 1952, p. 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75ff.

aspects. Still, the pace and flow of the narrative is well reflected in the phrasing above. The Arabic couplets require the reader's eye to step from one hemistich to the next. With the *ṭawīl* meter, a walking pace is achieved, essential for the narrative effect.

DESCRIPTION OF IBN AL-FĀRĪD'S NARRATIVE

The overall structure of this poem, its length and thematic complexity, is unique in classical Arabic literature. It exceeds all conventional standards and forms. While the poem may be called a *qaṣīda* because it uses most of the standard features that define that verse form, it reads more like a heroic *mathnawī*. The *qaṣīda* is composed of a series of couplets or distichs, each ending with the same rhyme. Classical prosody requires the poet to maintain a constant metrical pattern throughout the *qaṣīda*, choosing from one of sixteen established meters. Both of these poems were composed according to the *ṭawīl* meter. This is one of the favorite meters in classical Arabic poetry and found in a number of famous poems from the Abbasid period by al-Mutanabbi, Abū Firās and others, as well as several *mu'allaqāt*, or famous pre-Islamic Arabic odes, especially the one composed by 'Antara.⁹ The ode has two parts or movements, the *naṣīb*, or amatory prelude, the *raḥīl*, or narrative section, and often concludes with a third movement, the *madiḥ*, in which the poet praises either his benefactor or his tribe.

⁹ See A. J. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London: G. Allen and Unwin; New York: Macmillan), 1957.

The setting, circumstances, and details of the sections change according to the poem's theme, subject, and location.

The *mathnawī*, by contrast, has a lighter rhythm and less demanding rhyme scheme that make it more suitable for narrative and discursive purposes. It is well suited for didactic exposition and is the basis of a popular epic form of poetry used for entertainment at court, in cafes, and at festivals. It has been widely used in Persian poetry, as well. It is composed of rhymed couplets and may achieve great length, as it does in the encyclopedic work of the Persian poet, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī,¹⁰ which numbers some 25,700 verses in Nicholson's edition. Quite distinct from these tales and treatises, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's epic-length ode is composed in the highest literary language. The form and material of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *qaṣīda* differs from the *mathnawī* in the dramatic structure of its narrative, as well. Reminiscent of the biblical *Song of Songs*, the poem develops as a dialogue, or call and response between lover and beloved, though the lover's complaints often read like soliloquies. At the climax of the poem, the two voices merge in a realization of the goal to which the lover aspired. The poem, however, is nearly ten times longer than the longest *qaṣīda* previously written.

Issa Boulatta has translated the title, "Naẓm al-Sulūk," as "The Stringing of

¹⁰ See *The Mathnawī of Jalālī'uddīn Rūmī*, R. A. Nicholson, ed. and trans. (Cambridge: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust), 1927, reprinted 1982; see also Franklin Lewis' recently published work.

Pearls."¹¹ I argue against this suggested meaning of the poem's title, namely that each couplet is an independent thought of singular beauty. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's couplets depend on each other syntactically much more frequently than in more traditional *qaṣīdas*. The title phrase has multiple meanings and references. One specific reference is to the constellation of the Pleiades, often referred to as a string of pearls in Persian, as well as Arabic verse. This image represents one esthetic goal of Arabic poetry. But it better reflects the more traditional notions of poetic composition than Ibn al-Fāriḍ's unique achievement. A. J. Arberry has translated this title correctly, I believe, as "The Poem of the Way." This assignation of meaning refers to the poem, *naẓm*, as a description of the Sufi way (*sulūk*), or traveling that leads one near to God. While *silk* as a concrete noun means thread, *sulūk* as a verbal noun has the root meaning of "a way of traveling," though it can also mean "behavior." The active participle *sālik* has the meaning of "wayfarer" referring to the Sufis and wandering dervishes. So the title¹² of this great ode by Ibn al-Fāriḍ plays on all these meanings. These titles and their suggested meanings describe a reading of, and a response to, the poem. They are the fabrication of *rāwīs*, or reciters, and compilers, not created by

¹¹ Issa Boullata, "Verbal Arabesque and Mystical Union: A Study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's al-Taḥyīya al-Kubrā," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3, 1981, pp. 152-69.

¹² It must be pointed out, however, that these are given titles. The poet himself never used any titles for his poems. In fact, titles are not a part of the poetic text until the modern era. They have been used as mnemonic devices by scholars, compilers, and critics since the Abbāsīd period.

the poet. The same is true of the title of Bahā'ullāh's poem, though "the dove" is mentioned in the last note he appended to his text, "Never will the dove of the heavenly realm warble upon the crimson leaves, nor will the cock of grandeur crow in the heavenly realm. " I have translated *varqā'* as "dove" for purposes of style, though to be precise, in Arabic it means "tawny pidgeon." One may infer from this passage that the poet conceives the poem's origin to be *'amā'*, the "heavenly realm " or "heavenly cloud." *'Amā'* is literally the cloud which is believed to surround the God's throne.

The narrative drive and dramatic structure of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem begin their arc of ascent when the lover's intoxication with the beauty of the object of his passion overwhelms his reason and inhibitions as indicated in the third and forth couplets:

<p>بِهِمْ تَمْ لِي كُنْتُ الْهَوَىٰ مَعَ شَهْرَتِي وَلَمْ يَفْشَنِي فِي بَسْطِهَا قَبْضُ خَشْيَةٍ رَقِيبٌ لَهَا حَاطِرٌ بِخُلُوةٍ جَلُوتِي¹³</p>	<p>فَفِي حَانَ سَكْرِي حَانَ سَكْرِي لَفْتِيَةٍ وَلَمَّا انْقَضَى صَحْوِي تَقَاضَيْتُ وَصَلَهَا وَأَبْنَيْتُهَا مَا بِي وَلَمْ يَكُ حَاضِرِي</p>
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Though in the tavern of my drunkenness
It came time to thank the youths by whom the concealment
of my passion was accomplished despite my reputation.
And when my sobriety ended, I sued to join her
Undeterred by the grip of fear in my elation with her.
I confided all to her, with no one near to spy on me,
I delighted in this private unveiling of the bride. (4-6)

The stage is now set for the lover to express his love boldly and declare his

¹³ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dhū'ayn*, Ibrāhīm al-Sāmra'ī, ed. and annot. (ʿAmmān: Dār al-Fikr li'l-Nashr wa'l-tawzīʿ), 1985, p. 27, lines 4-6, translation mine.

passion to her. He takes leave of his companions and the physical realm. The tavern disappears and we find ourselves peeking into the wedding chamber. The erotic metaphor, so commonly used to portray the mystical experience, is beautifully turned in the first five couplets. The desire aroused is the desire for a mystical, not physical union. Yet the time-worn metaphor is neither trite nor tired, but revived in the hands of this great poet. The boldness of the poet and the lover is both fresh and emblematic of his passion. He claims to have lost all self-regard. This expresses a level of detachment by which the mystic no longer cares about the blame or shame heaped upon him by his critics. His pride is the second quality he sacrifices for his love, sobriety being the first. Here, sobriety indicates lack of passion and blindness to the beauty of the beloved. The tavern in which the lover experiences the first joys of love, passion, and abandonment of self has two meanings. It usually refers to the cloister where the Sufis practice *dhikr*, or "remembrance," to celebrate their worship of God, and where they practice their disciplines designed to free them from the bonds and veils of self. Secondarily, the tavern can refer to the corruptions of the material world as in the poems of Ḥāfiẓ of Shirāz (d. 1389).

The lover begins his pleas to the beloved to grant him some small favor or token. A glance, even a scowl, any word, no matter how harsh, rewards his efforts.

هَبِي قَبْلَ يُفْنِي الْعَبُّ مَنِّي بَقِيَّةً أَرَاكِ بِهَالِي نَظْرَةَ الْمُتَلَفِّتِ
وَمَنِّي عَلَى سَمْعِي بَلَنُ إِنْ مَنَعْتَ أَنْ أَرَاكِ فَمِنْ قَبْلِي لِغَيْرِي
لَذْتُ¹⁴

Before love destroys what little remains of me, grant that
I may see you turn one glancing gaze my way.
Or if you deny me seeing you, let me hear "Thou shalt not!"
As you delighted another, long before me. (8-9)

The reference of "Thou shalt not" points to the story of Moses in Qur'ān 7: 143, in which the Prophet ascends Mt. Sinai and asks God, "O my Sustainer! Show Thyself unto me, so that I might behold Thee! Said God: Never canst thou see Me."¹⁵ It then follows that God reveals his splendor (*tajallā*) to the mountain, whereupon it scattered into dust and Moses swoons prostrate. We shall return to this passage of the Qur'ān in greater depth when we analyze the poem by Bahā'ullāh. With these verses, the *nasīb* or "erotic prelude"¹⁶ ends, and the *raḥīl*, or narrative section, begins, in which the poet complains of his difficulties as he describes an arduous journey and his lonely separation. Ibn al-Fāriḍ gives further respect to the traditional structure of the *qaṣīda* with his reference to the caravan several verses later.

لَا نَكْرَهُ كَرَبِي أَذَى عَيْشٍ أَزْمَةٌ بِمُنْقَطَعِي رَكْبٍ إِذَا الْعَيْسُ زُمْتُ¹⁷

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, lines 8-9.

¹⁵ Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān*, p. 223.

¹⁶ Ibn Qutayba, Abu Muḥammad 'Abd Allah ibn Muslim, *Kitāb al-Shi'r wa'l-Shu'arā'*, Tab'ah muhaqqaqah wa-mufahrasah (Beirut, Dār al-Thaqāfah), p. 196; quoted and translated by R.A. Nicholson in *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge: The University Press), 1930.

¹⁷ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dīwān*, *Op.cit.*, p. 27, line 18.

Then my distress would have reminded him of
the deadly crisis of travelers cut off from the caravan
when the fine-bred camels were bridled up and gone. (18)

Next the traditional figure of the spy enters the poem. This stock character of erotic verse usually serves to heighten the tension and drama in the genre of love poetry. The spy conveys to the tribe or the family of the beloved the threat to the honor of the tribe posed by the amorous encounter. Conflict usually ensues, affording the lover the opportunity to demonstrate the sincerity of his love, his willingness to sacrifice himself to prove it, and then to exhibit his valor and skill in battle. Here Ibn al-Fāriḍ reverses these expectations and makes the spy his intimate companion.

فنادمتُ في سُكري النُحولَ مراقبي بجملة أسرارِي و تفصيل سيرتي
ظهرتُ له وصفاً و ذاتي بحيثُ لا يراها ليلوِي مِن جوى الحُبِّ أبْلَتُ¹⁸

So I frolicked in my drunken state, wasted, giving away
All my secrets and the details of my life-story to my companion.
I seemed to him a sketch, while he could not see my essence
Because I was wasted by the affliction of passionate love. (19-20)

The spy is then rendered harmless in two ways. The lover cares not what the spy discloses because he has detached himself from shame. More important to the movement of the narrative, however, the spy can report little or nothing because the poet has become so emaciated by his trials that he is invisible, his voice a

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28, line 20.

whisper in the mind. The figure of the spy becomes a vehicle whereby the lover proves his self-sacrifice.

Next, the visitors to the lover enter the drama. These are the figures that attempt to bring aid and comfort to the distraught lover. They may be intermediaries to the families or the tribe sent to persuade the lover to return to his senses or to make peace with those he has offended.

فلو كشف العواد بي و تحقّقوا من اللّوح ما منّي الصبابة أبقت
لما شاهدت منّي بصائرهم سوى تخلّل روح بين أثواب ميت¹⁹

Had the visitors discovered me and deduced from my tablet
What little my ardent longing has left of me
They would have gazed only on a spirit
Passing through the garments of the dead. (21-22)

In this context, they serve to substantiate, and to witness, the lover's condition of dying to the material world. They also link the narrative to the story of Majnūn, the mythic lover often evoked by the Sufi poets as the archetypal martyr of love. The recitation of noble suffering continues to build, as he claims with each new aspect of suffering to become more purified and more sincere in his utter abandonment and submission to the object of his affection. The next figures mentioned are the chastiser and the slanderer. These are likewise standard characters in erotic poetry. The instigator, or "railer," as Arberry translates it, serves to goad the lover to ever more outrageous behavior through trickery or

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28, line 21.

deceit. He is the one who drives the price up at market. The slanderer seeks to undermine his good name, particularly accusing him of insincerity in the presence of the beloved. As in many other instances, the lover reverses the expected meaning of these figures and considers them bounties.

فَلَا حِوَاشٍ ذَاكَ يَهْدِي لِعِزَّةٍ ضَلَالًا وَذَا بِي ظُلٌّ يَهْدِي لِفِرَّةٍ
أُخَالِفُ ذَا فِي لَوْمَةٍ عَنْ تَقَى كَمَا أُخَالِفُ ذَا فِي لَوْمَةٍ عَنْ تَقِيَّةٍ²⁰

As for the reviler and the slanderer, the one would lead me
Into error, the other rants in heedlessness constantly.
I refute the first one's blame for fear of God;
I oppose the second's wickedness prudently. (51-52)

He claims his intent is to remain steadfast and fearful of God, and yet to let others think him insincere, so as to hide his true feelings from the people. He proceeds to elaborate on the beauty of the beloved and how it makes him able to endure all. At last he swears to his faithfulness by the noblest attributes of God: Majesty, Perfection, Beauty, Mercy, and even Wrath. His passion reaches a crescendo of abandon until he achieves the state of utter bewilderment.²¹ The stage is now filled. With all the stock characters, all the required boasts, vaunts, professions of passion and pain, the requisite literary structures and expectations have been met.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29, lines 51-2.

²¹ In the writings of Ibn al-'Arabi, this state is achieved when one "finds" God. It is not confusion, but the recognition that one has found, and yet not found God, of knowing and not knowing. For everyone and everything other than God dwells in a realm of partial, contingent existence. See William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1989, p. 3ff.

At this point, the beloved deigns to answer with chastening words.

فَقَالَتْ هُوَ غَيْرِي قَصَدْتُ وَدُونَهُ اقْتَصَدْتُ عَمِيًّا عَنْ سِوَاءِ مُحِبَّتِي²²

She replied, "You sought the love of someone else, and without it
You wandered blind, away from me, the pilgrim's goal." (84)

The lover has received his first bounty. He asked for the slightest glance from, or glimpse of, his beloved, or failing that, the words "Thou shalt not..." On the surface, he is chastised and all his faults and unworthiness detailed. Yet in her final words comes her gift to him, instruction regarding what he must do to attain her favor.

وَلَمْ تَهَوَّنِي مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ فِيْ فَنَاءٍ فَدَعُ عَنْكَ دَعْوَى الْحُبِّ وَادْعُ لَعِيرَهُ وَجَانِبَ جَنَابِ الْوَصْلِ هَيْهَاتَ لَمْ يَكُنْ	وَلَمْ تَفْنِ مَا لَا تُجْتَلَى فِيكَ صُورَتِي فَوَادِكْ وَادْفَعْ عَنْكَ غَيْبُكَ بِأَلَّتِي وَهَا أَنْتَ هِيَ إِنْ تَكُنْ صَادِقًا مَتَّ ²³
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You have not truly loved me if you have not passed away in me;
You have not past away as long as my image does not appear in you,
So cease your claim to love and proclaim your heart to another;
Put off your transgression with this.
As for nearness to the court of union, lo, there is nothing!
And lo! you are alive; but if you are sincere, then die! (99-101)

He responds readily to her advice, yet asks that she carry out the deadly deed,
though he scarcely deserves such a favor.

The contemplation of death, sacrifice, and martyrdom leads to scenes of
tribal conflict and battle, the purpose of which is to demonstrate valor, defend

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2, lines 99-101.

individual and tribal honor, and win the victory. Here the victory to be achieved is the goal of union with the beloved. The battle is a chance to prove himself worthy. He is at war with the self, struggling to vanquish earthly passions and transcend everything on this earthly plane. This is known to the Sufis as the "greater *jihād*." The "lesser *jihād*" is that which caliphs and nations engage in to defend the faith.

<p>أسى لم يفز يوماً إليها بنظرة ولو نظرت عطفاً إليه لأحييت ذرى العز والعلواء قدري أعلت²⁴</p>	<p>بكل قبيل كم قتل بها قضى وكم الورى مثلي أماتت صبابة إذا ما أعلت في هواها دمي ففي</p>
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How many a victim was slain by grief for her in every tribe
Though he never won a single day to gaze on her.
How many a man like me has fervent longing killed
Though had she glanced kindly on him he would have been revived.
But if she ordained the shedding of my blood for loving her
Then she raised my rank to the summits of honor and loftiness. (118-120)

He wants to join the ranks of her lovers slain, martyrs to her cause; yet he still harbors the desire to be revived. The sacrifice has not yet been obtained.

The lover's complaint takes an interesting turn after this, as he divides himself against himself in an attempt to conceal the secret of his rapture from his mind, so that in this state of abandon, he does not blurt out the truth. The lover proceeds to describe the tumultuous movement of his inner states. The ecstasy portrayed becomes more and more intense.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32, vs. 118-20.

وإن بُسِطَتْ كَفِّي إلى البَسْطِ كُفَّتِ
وَمِنْ هَيْبَةِ الإِعْظَامِ إِحْجَامُ رَهْبَةٍ
عَلَيْهَا بَدَتْ عِنْدِي كَأَيْثَارُ رَحْمَةٍ²⁵

وَيُطْرَفُ طَرْفِي إِنْ هَمَمْتُ بِنَظَرَةٍ
فَفِي كُلِّ عَضْوٍ فِيَّ إِقْدَامُ رَغْبَةٍ
لِفِيٍّ وَ سَمْعِي فِيَّ أَثَارُ زَحْمَةٍ

If I am about to look, my glance is averted;
And if my hand is stretched out, it is restrained.
So in every limb within me is a reaching desire
and in reverent fear a recoiling terror.
For in my mouth and ear the signs of commotion
Show within me like a deference to mercy. (139-41)

The lover becomes more and more narrowly focused on his goal and in drawing nearer to her, becomes a kind of *imām*, or prayer leader, who determines the direction one should face; in directing himself to her, he directs others as well, until he becomes the *qibla* or direction of prayer himself. This passage reaches a remarkable climax in which another level of union is achieved.

إِلَى كَمِ أُوَاخِي السِّتْرِ هَا قَدْ هَتَكَتْهُ وَ حُلُّ أُوَاخِي الْحَبِّبِ فِي عَقْدِ بَيْعَتِي²⁶

How long shall I clutch my veil?
There! I have destroyed it.
In lawful exchange I will cling
To the covering of God's covenant. (155)

The covenant is a favorite Sufi theme to which the poem repeatedly refers. Here it refers to Qur'ān 7: 172, in which God calls the progeny of men from the loins of their forebearers, and in this primordial state asks them to testify that God is their Lord. Elsewhere, we find frequent reference to this, to the pre-eternal state

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33-4, vs. 139-41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34, verse 155.

of faithfulness in the presence of the Lord to which the mystics endeavor to return. Yet in this the poet finds that a veil of desire still remains and this is, perhaps, the last barrier to be removed. He has thus returned to that state of uncreated union with God in which all dividing attributes--defining, individuating characteristics--are annulled.

هنا من صفات بيننا فاضمحلّت²⁷ فافنى الهوى ما لم يكن ثمّ باقياً

Love destroyed what could remain no longer
Those qualities here between us passed away. (159)

Love is the agency by which the veils are obliterated. He then describes the last subtle steps. He gives up his reputation and accepts blame. He gives up all hope for reward in this life and the next. He gives up wealth and poverty, and then relinquishes even the merit of these deeds. She alone becomes his reward.

After couplet 163, the narrative voice begins to shift and the classic *qaṣīda* form yields to exposition. The narrator has focused on the encounter with the beloved, but now addresses the protege and offers explanation. He has progressed through the final stages of the mystical path: union, *fanāʾ*, and *baqāʾ*, have all been achieved. Now the lover must return to the company of men and be of benefit to others.

و قدّ أن لي تفصيل ما قلت مجملاً و إجمال ما فصلت بسطاً لبسطتي²⁸

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34, verse 159.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35, verse 164.

And now it is time for me to explain what I have said in summary,
And compact what I have described abundantly. (164)

And then a few verses later, we read:

و ظَلَمْتُ لَهَا لَا بِي إِلَيْهَا أَدُلُّ مَنْ بِهِ ضَلُّ عَنْ سُبُلِ الْهَدَى وَهِيَ دَلَّتْ²⁹

I continued to guide toward her for her sake not mine
Whoever strayed from the path of guidance
For she is the one who guides. (174)

The narrative voice shifts and begins to offer loving counsel to other seekers of the true Beloved, but one friend in particular is mentioned. This draws the reader directly into the poem and into converse with the lover, now turned guide and master. But the speaker states that he guides through her to her. He has no self left except through her. Homerin suggests that the first 163 verses of the poem, ending here, could stand alone as any one of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's other *qaṣīdas*. "Then, abruptly, Ibn al-Fāriḍ informs his audience that it is time to explain himself. The approximately six hundred verses that follow are a wide-ranging discourse on the Sufi path, as the *al-Tāʾīyah al-Kubrā* takes the form of a guide to the perplexed."³⁰ While this oversimplifies the case, his point stands that the remainder of the poem is largely didactic and instructional, yet it is sustained by genuine moments of ecstasy, insight, and descriptive beauty.

After a short passage of wise counsel, the lover begins to describe to his

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35, verse 174.

³⁰ Homerin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

seeker friend the example of his own path of search, moving from generalities to specifics, culminating in bolder declarations of the degrees of unity he has achieved with the Beloved. A lovely passage follows, praising her as the source of all beauty, all attraction; all maidens are but a reflection of her perfect beauty. This, then is the *madiḥ*, or praise section of the poem in which the poet's benefactor is extolled in repayment of his or her generosity. If we were to accept Homerin's suggestion above, the *qaṣida* would be incomplete because it would lack this essential component of the poem, and the poet would not be rewarded for his services.

فكلّ ملبع حسنُهُ من جمالها معارُ له بل حسن كل ملبحة
بها قيسُ لبني هامَ بل كلّ عاشقٍ كمجنونٍ ليلي أو كُثيرِ عزة³¹

Every handsome youth, his beauty is lent from her;
Even the beauty of every lovely girl.
With her Lubna's lover Qays is enraptured,
Truly every lover, like Majnun for Layla and Kuthayyir for 'Azza. (242-3)

This expresses beautifully the unifying vision of the lover and the Islamic vision of the oneness of God, the Creator reflected in all creation. We find this concept expressed in Qur'ān 3: 190, "Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are indeed messages for all who are endowed with insight."³² The lover goes on to claim that he is the spirit and origin of the legendary lovers Qais, Kuthayyir, Jamil. "Every youth that ever

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 38, lines 242-3.

³² *Asad, Op. cit.*, p. 97.

loved, that youth was I..."³³ The lover then regains his sobriety, solitude, piety, and reserve in order to protect his friends from being tainted by the scorn visited on himself. The renewal of strict observance of Islamic law and firm belief sets the stage for an important transformation in the poem.

وفي الذكر ذكر اللبس ليس بمنكر
و لم أعد عن حكمي كتاب و سنة
منحتك علماً إن ترد كشفه فرد
سبيلي و اسرع في اتباع شريعتي³⁴

It cannot be denied that "covering" is mentioned in the scriptures
I have not transgressed the laws of the holy book and tradition.
I have given you knowledge, if you wish to discover it,
Then seek my path and hasten to follow my law. (285-6)

The "holy book and tradition" refer, of course, to the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*, while the Law is the *sharī'a*. The voice of the lover here gives way to the voice of the Prophet Muhammad Himself. He speaks of 'Alī as the youth who followed close in his footsteps. The lover claims to be faithful to the precepts of the Islamic religion; here the law of modesty is implied with "covering" or clothing. He claims on the one hand to be obedient and orthodox, in returning to modesty about himself; yet his larger claim is that of religious authority, based on his union with the beloved, even Muhammad, as in the verse below. Therefore, his law, *sharī'a*, with the root meaning of a way of going, should be followed as if it were Qur'ānic law. The speaker then enters upon lengthy counsel, while claiming he has passed beyond love and hate. It is difficult to be sure where the voice of

³³ Arberry, *Op.cit.*, p. 32.

³⁴ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op.cit.*, pp. 40-41, lines 285-86.

Muhammad gives way again to that of the lover, turned Sufi master. This indicates a still deeper level of union with the Beloved, the divine Spirit.

هَزْتُ صَحْوُ الْجَمْعِ مِنْ بَيْنِ إِخْوَتِي
بِأَحْمَدِ رُؤْيَا مَقْلَةٍ أَحْمَدِيَّة³⁵

و كل الورى أبناءُ آدم غير أني
فسمعي كليمي و قلبي منبأ

All humanity are the children of Adam
However , I alone attained conscious union.
My ear is Moses', my heart informed by the most-praised vision
and a Muhammadan eye.

A word must be said concerning voices in the narrative. Both poems use a primary speaking voice, the poetic first person. This voice should not be confused with the historical figure of the poet. It is a *dramatis personae*, or staged persona that occasionally resembles the poet or refers to historical circumstances. Each poet also gives the Maiden a speaking voice in the poem. In addition, the poetic first person changes, as he becomes spiritually transformed. The poetic voice speaks as the lover, the mystic, the guide; however, when he has reached his mystical goal, the identity of this voice becomes merged with the voice of the *maqsūd*, or the "intended one." In the above passage, the lover's voice returns to ecstatic rhapsody in praise to the beloved. The last third of the poem alternates between deeper and deeper mediations on the mysteries of unity between the lover and his beloved, laced with exaltations of her beauty and glory. The poem reaches a final climax in which the voice of Muhammad emerges once again.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42 verses 311-12.

The poem concludes with a return to the image of the wine cup where it began.

In this barest outline of the structure and narrative trajectory of the great ode can be discerned some indications of the remarkable achievement of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

The poem is at once a dazzling display of literary virtuosity, a *tour de force* in which the poet displays complete mastery of his art and the demanding

requirements of its forms and traditions. More than this, he brings all these rhetorical devices and poetic techniques into service of his theme and vision.

Issa Boullata correctly identifies the intentionality and rationalism of all the features of this poem. The excesses of language, conceit, and artifice perfectly reflect the excesses of passion by the lover; furthermore, they are appropriate to the loftiness and nobility of the poem's theme.

BAHĀ'ULLĀH'S NARRATIVE

We now turn, for comparison, to the ode of Bahā'ullāh, solicited in the style of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's masterpiece by the Sufi leaders in Sulaymāniyyah around 1855. Bahā'ullāh's poem shares many important thematic features with Ibn al-Fāriḍ's great work. The poem describes the lover's rapture with the beauty of the mystic Beloved and his efforts to unite with her. This poem also has a dramatic structure based on the call of the lover and the response of the Beloved. Bahā'ullāh's poem, however, is much shorter. It avoids great flights of eloquence and intricate elaboration. The two voices of lover and beloved retain their

distinct character.

Bahā'ullāh's poem begins with the first vision of the beloved. This is a bold opening compared with the mannered style of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

أَجْذَبَتْني بَوَارِقُ أَنْوَارِ طَلْعَةٍ كَأَنَّ بُرُوقَ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ نُورِ حُسْنِهَا لِيَهْجَتْهَا مِسْكُ الْعَمَاءِ تَهَيَّجَتْ	لَفُرُوعِهَا كُلُّ الشَّمُوسِ تَخَفَّتْ ظَهَرَتْ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ وَ عَزَّتْ لِرَفْعَتِهَا رُوحُ الْعِلَاءِ تَعَلَّتْ
--	--

A face flashing with light
drew me to her; all the suns
dimmed before her radiance.

It seemed the sun blazed
from her beauty; she manifested
in all the worlds and grew mighty.

Her splendor stirred up
the musk-laden cloud of Heaven;
her stature lifted the spirit of loftiness. (1-3)

Her great beauty and her inaccessibility are stressed in the succeeding passages.

She is nobler and loftier than anything in creation; in fact, she is the source of all that is beautiful, noble, lofty, and holy. The imagery describes the beloved in non-physical terms. She is a spiritual being. Her body is composed of light; her beauty is heavenly. Her habitation is in the precincts of the throne of heaven.

Yet all creation is drawn to her.

لَوْهَقَ جَعَدَهَا رَأْسُ الْوُجُودِ تَمَدَّتْ وَعَرْشُ الْعَمَاءِ أَرْضَ عَلَيْهَا تَمَشَّتْ	لِسَهْمِ شَفَرِهَا صَدْرُ الصَّدُورِ تَقَبَّلَتْ وَعَايَتِي الْقُصُوى مَوَاقِعَ رَجُلِهَا
--	--

The heart of hearts accepted the arrows
of her lashes; all creation stretched its head
to the snare of her locks.

Her footfalls are my final goal;
though she strolls the land of clouds
that shroud God's throne. (9-10)

The lover's lament begins, for she is beyond his reach. Just as all creation
derives its beauty from her, the pain of his yearning for her is likewise universal.
The lover is the source of all anguish and torment in his separation from her. He
begins his struggle to find a worthy approach to her, a fitting expression of his
love. This entails pain, search, and sacrifice.

على قلبي وهذا من أول منيتي
رقت حروف القرب فوق كل تربة
رُميت برهي الذعد من بعد قربتي
بالسيف جابتني فذاك جزاء احبتي

بسطت بكل البسط لإلقاء رجلها
طلبت حضور الوصل في كل وجهة
ولو كنت سارعاً في وصل نورها
وإن رفعت أيدي في مد وصلها

I spread myself as a carpet
for her to cast her foot upon my heart;
this, from the beginning, was my goal.

I sought reunion everywhere;
I dotted the letters of nearness
on every grain of dust.

If only I were swift in reaching her light;
I was cast far, far away
after being so near. (12-14)

On the one hand, she has already stepped into his heart; on the other, such proximity is still a distant goal. She has no need of him, for she strides the clouds of heaven, like Gabriel in Muḥammad's vision. He is like Majnūn, the legendary lover, searching everywhere, even sifting the dust for traces of Layla. The vivid image of the reaching hand being cut off relates to a similar image in "*Nāẓm al-Sulūk*." There, too, it is described as an act of love and offers an interpretation applicable here. This is the penalty for theft, for reaching for something that does not belong to the lover. Her favors are withheld, so any attempt to reach out to her is a kind of theft. The image is carried forward in the next two verses. The lover's hopes are like a sapling cut down by the sword of rejection. He responds by declaring his willingness to sacrifice himself. He continues to recite his sufferings and woe until these lines.

عن ذكرها كلّ اللسان تكَلَّتْ
قميص السود في كلّ غرفة
قبضت بكلّ القبض في بسطة

وصلت الى غاية الذلّ رتبة
حور القصور من هزن سرّي تقمصت
وردت بكلّ الحزن في كلّ قلبة

I reached the nethermost depths
of disgrace; while every tongue
grew weary of recounting it.

Every castle's maids have draped themselves in black;
they mourned in every chamber
because of my deep despondency.

I perish by all the sorrow ;
in each heartbeat I am gripped

and lost in each release. (34-6)

The lover has sacrificed his pride and his dignity and suffered to the point of being helplessly entangled by her love. This hyperbole provokes the beloved's first response.

و نادتنني من ورائي و قالت ان أصمت فكم من حسين بمثلك قد أرادني فكم من حبيب فوقك قد أحبني	فخذ لسانك عن كل ما قد تحكمت فكم من علي كشبهك من أحبتي فكم من صفي كفوك من أهل صفوتي
---	--

She called out to me
from behind "Silence!
"Restrain your tongue from such talk."

"How many Husayns like you
have labored for me; how many 'Alis
just like you have loved me!

"How many lovers loved me better than you;
how many my peers, of the choicest men,
have cried out like you." (37-9)

The lover is chastised for his pride and unworthiness. He is nothing special to her. In the succeeding verses, the Maiden describes and praises herself. This is her first gift to the lover, offering her own words as a fitting description of her attributes.

ومن مَشْرِقي شمس الظهور كنجمة وعن نور سري سر الوجود كنملة و عن فطرتي فطر الاله تديننت	وعن مظهري نور البسيط كلمعة ومن نار حبي نار الوقود كقبسة و من كفتي كف السناء تضممت
---	---

"Compared to my dawning, the sun of revelation
is like a star; to my manifestation,

unbounded light is but a gleam.

"In the light of my inner being, all created
being is like an ant; in the fire of my love
the flames of hell are but an ember.

"Only his nature, he who was confirmed
in true faith, is like mine; with my palm
the hand of Moses was held close on Sinai." (41-3)

She first describes her radiance and her spiritual authority and power. She then chastises the lover once again, rejecting his love for her as polytheistic, because he thinks that he could be her partner, when she is without peer. His belief is really *ẓann*, doubt or vain imagining. She then extends him the favor of instructing him on what her love requires.

و حرق الحشا في الحب من أول بيعتي
و شتم التوالى في كل يومة
و عن ملتي قهر القضاء كشفقة

سفك الدماء في مذهب العشق واجب
يقظ الليالي من لذغ كل ملذغ
وعن سنتي سم الردى كشربة

"Blood shed in the sacred path of love
is obligatory; a heart scorched
by love is the first sign of allegiance I exact.

"Keep wakeful every night
from the scorpion stings of the vicious;
their ceaseless vilification will fill your days.

"According to my religion, deadly venom
is like sherbet³⁶; in my faith,
the sentence of death is sweet compassion." (58-60)

³⁶ *Shorba*, literally means "sweet drink" in Arabic. However, the Persians devised the means of preparing the first frozen desserts, the antecedant to sorbet and ice cream centuries ago.

These statements confirm the path he has already chosen. He simply has not yet reached the point of complete self-sacrifice. He has been seeking her for himself, seeking reward. He must give up all he desires and not only accept her decree, but seek it out joyfully. In the next lines, the lover offers this.

و غلية اما لي و مقصود سرّتي
فها أنا أمل بما قد تعدّت
فها أنا راكن بما قد تقضت

و ناديتها سرّاً بأن يا حبيبتي
فها أنا حاضر بين يديّ قدرتك
فها أنا طالب بكلّ ما أنت تحبّ

I cried out to her secretly from afar,
"O my Love! The aim of all my affairs
and desire of my soul!

Lo! I am ready, captive in your hands
of might. O how I hope
for what you have decreed.

Here I am, seeking all of you,
your every wish;
How I long for what you have decreed. (62-4)

He declares his desire for every wound she might inflict, for every ordeal that comes his way. He then details these, but without the tone of outcry and protest. His suffering is linked with the prophets and holy women of the Hebrew Bible, and the Gospels.

كان سيوف القهر حدّت لجيدتي
و ضرة أيوب و نار خليلة
وضجة داود و نوحه نوحه

كان بلاء الدهر لنفسي قد نزل
حزنة يعقوب و سجنة يوسف
تأسف آدم و هجرة يونس

و فرقة حواء و حرقه مريم
و محنة شعيا و كرب زكريّة
من رشح حزني قد قضى لكل ما قضى
وعن طفع همّي قد بدا كلّ بليّة

It was as if all fate's afflictions poured down
for me alone; it was as if every sword
of wrath was drawn upon my neck.

The sorrows of Jacob, Joseph
in his prison cell, Job's ordeal
and the fire of the Friend of God.

Adam's remorse, Jonah's flight,
David's cry and Noah's lament;
Eve's separation, Mary's agony,

Isaiah's tribulation and Zachariah's torment;
The deluge of my sorrow destined all that was decreed;
from the overflow of my distress, all afflictions began. (71-75)

The tone of these and the following lines has a poignancy and resignation that
differs from the self-centered pain of the previous complaint. He seems to
lament that his suffering has been the cause of other's woes. For himself, such
pain is sweet.

مرّ البلاء في سبيل حبك حلوة
و عن عنقي رسم الحديد تعيّنّت
ما مضى يوماً إلّا وقد نرقت فيه
وشهد البقاء من عند غيرك مرّة
من رجلي أثر الوثيق تبقيّت
من تلويح نظم أو تصريح نثرة

Bitter affliction suffered in the your path
of love is sweet; the honey of eternity
without your presence is most bitter.

Iron scars upon my neck are plain
to see; shackles'

marks upon my legs remain.

Not a day has passed but I am
scorched by insinuating verse
and insolent prose. (80-2)

The lines above refer to actual events in Bahā'ullāh's life. The hundreds of pounds of chains and collars he bore in Tehran's Siyāh-Chāl crippled him for life. The Iranian ambassador in Baghdad frequently circulated false reports of his activities in Baghdad before his flight to Kurdistan and again after his return. But these sufferings have a purpose, they are part of a process to cleanse the lover of self, to empty his heart of everything so he may find his beloved therein. As a result, he achieves the encounter he longs for.

وسرّي قد فار من شدّ شدّتي
و ابقاء نفسي كان من أعظم حيرتي

روحي قد راح وقلبي قد ذاب
بقيت بلا روح و قلب و مهجة

My spirit has departed and my heart
has melted; my soul has boiled out
from my sore misery.

I survived without spirit, without heart,
without life's blood; that I still remained
was my great bewilderment. (83-84)

بذاك ابلتني القضا في كلّ حين
وصلت إلى عين اللقاء في سريرتي

كذاك احاطتني البلاء عن كلّ شطرة
عرجت إلى غاية الوجد وحدة

Thus affliction compassed me
from every side; their decrees
devastated me at every turn.

I ascended to the apex of oneness,
alone; I attained reunion,
a fountain within my soul. (86-7)

He continues to empty himself as he reaches out to his beloved. He commands what remains of his heart, his soul, and his life-spirit to depart. Then she answers him. She tells him to be patient; she knows his testimony. He must forget all. His knowledge is true, but is that of a child. Her standards exceed all earthly and heavenly limitations.

The Maiden speaks the penultimate twenty-seven couplets of the poem. She asserts her spiritual pre-eminence. She chides her lover again for seeking only a fancied nearness. She then bids him to discover, but not disclose, his inner secret.

فأنشهد جمال القدس فيك بلا كشفة	فأخرق حجاب القرب عنك بلا رمزة
فأصبر لأن عيون الغيب قد تبكّت	فأسكن فإن قواة العرش اضطرب

"Rend asunder the veil of nearness without a glance;
gaze on the beauty of sanctity
unveiled within you.

"So be silent, lest the power of the heavenly throne
be shaken; forbear, because the eyes
of the unseen realm have wept. (119-120)

The lover is warned not to divulge what he has seen, for his secret knowledge could destroy the world. The poem concludes with a series of beatitudes extolling the virtues of the faithful lovers. These last passages leave a sense of

mystery, wonder, and beauty. Unlike in the poem of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, mysteries are glimpsed, but not disclosed. The poem stirs the imagination of the reader and avoids elaborate descriptions and explanations. The Maiden retains her individual character, a singular being within the heart of the poet. His heart is ennobled by her presence within. Because she maintains her individuality, the reader likewise encounters her. The arena for union is the interiority of the lover, but that union is not yet consummated. This suggests a major thematic difference between the two poems. Bahāʿullāh's poem describes an encounter, a meeting, Ibn al-Fāriḍ describes a union.

The preceding pages convey the broad outlines of narrative structures in the two poems. In the next three chapters we will examine the materials of these poems in greater detail. The first concerns itself with rhetoric and artistry, the next two with theme and symbol. These are the underlying questions that will guide our argument: How might we evaluate the relative literary merits of each? How do these poems utilize, manipulate and depart from the conventions of their genre? To what extent is Bahāʿullāh's poem imitative or original?

CHAPTER THREE

Trials and Triumphs

Bahā'ullāh and Ibn al-Fāriḍ compose in the tradition of mystical love poetry. They accept and utilize a similar stock of themes, conventions, images, conceits, and tropes to express a vision, an experience, a relationship with the divine realm. The literary structures depicting romantic love have long been used as an extended, complex metaphor for the relationship between the mystic or devotee and his Lord. Access to this divine realm is gained through the favors of a resplendent feminine being. The relationship between the poet-lover and the manifestation of God in feminine form is expressed through a conventional romantic drama, as detailed in the preceding chapter. A consideration and comparison of how each poet utilizes these conventions, how he meets or plays on the expectations of his audience, will provide some evidence of the unique aspects of each work. A comparison of style will help us to appreciate the particular artistry displayed in each work. In our discussion of technique and style we will touch on meaning and theme. The larger questions raised in the course of this discussion will be explored more fully in the next chapter which will examine the symbolic structure, an element central to the poetic vision and

aesthetic impact of each poem.

The poet, writer, or revealer binds the spiritual or mystical experience to the physical and emotional experience of the lover. The spirit of God is represented as a beautiful, attractive figure--sometimes male, sometimes female. Common elements in this literature are easy to identify: beauty, passion, loss, search, suffering, separation, and the desire for union shape the narrative structure and supply the warp and woof of the symbolic matrix. This provides the artist with reliable means of access to his audience. He plays on common elements and universal constants in human experience to which he can fix particular artistic ideas and cosmic vision. This symbolic structure offers the poet a greater range of symbols, metaphors, and references to draw upon as he shapes his work. Yet because the erotic metaphor has been used so widely, the body of literature with which it resonates threatens to overwhelm the individuality of the work. There is a danger that the poem will lose all its specificity and originality in the mass of literary objects that it references. How does each poem distinguish itself in this genre and how closely does each work perpetuate its features and meet the expectations of its readers? The points of reference for our evaluation will be the extent to which each poet utilizes the strengths of the poetic tradition, while crafting a unique vision. How effectively do they utilize the creative tension between imitation and innovation, genre and

particularity? In their unique contributions, do the poets add to the momentum and movement of Arabic poetry? Do they provide a foundation upon which others may add their own contributions? And most importantly, how do the poems affect their audience, including ourselves? Reading poetry is not an objective exercise. Poetry depends on communication and response. The responses the present writer also has have their place in this study. We consider the ongoing development of literature as a cultural process and a product that exists within a matrix of influences, involving the dynamics of various responses. Paul Losensky, in his book on Safavid-Mughal poetry, *Welcoming Fighānī*,¹ articulates an approach and method using three aspects of the relationships between different poets: *istiqbāl*, *javāb-gūī*, and *naẓīrah-gūī*. These might be translated respectively as “reception, response, and resemblance.” He compares this aesthetic activity to the European Renaissance practice of *imitatio*. Each of these terms describes an interactive relationship with other poems. This also describes aspects of the links between the poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Bahāʾullāh. These efforts might be compared to composers of music who take a melody or theme from another composition or from folk music and recast it in a new musical structure. The effect on the listener is similar. The pleasing aspects of the melody satisfy the audience with the familiar and delight them with the novel.

¹Losensky, Paul E., *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Gazal* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers), 1998.

As the poet engages the work of another writer, he also engages the audience and participates in an interactive creative process. These dynamics are an important feature in Arabic poetry from the earliest times through the work of the neo-classicists writing during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries in Egypt, Iraq, and the Levant.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetics elaborate, enhance, and modify the "new style" developed at the Abbasid court (750-1256 C.E.) and soon to decline in the aftermath of the Mongol apocalypse. This style began to emerge during the Umayyad caliphate (661-750 C.E.), especially in the compositions of 'Umar ibn Abi Rabī'a (ca. 643-719) and Bashshār ibn Burd (ca. 714-83). It becomes fully realized in the refined, intricate, and witty poetry of Abū Nuwās (747-813), Abū Tammām (ca. 805-45), and al-Mutanabbī (915-65). These poets took the Arabic ode out of the context of its Bedouin origins and adapted it to the cosmopolitan and refined culture of the Abbasid court. Their grand diction, wit, and artistry were highly prized at the court and in the cafes of Baghdad, Damascus, and Fustāt. Andalusian and Persian influences enhanced the high style. Ibn al-Fāriḍ takes the highly patterned and polished rhetorical style to its ultimate conclusion. An admirer of al-Mutanabbī and Abū Tammām, he patterned a number of poems after their examples. He successfully elaborated on al-Mutanabbī's achievement by composing an ode in response to his in the

exceedingly difficult rhyme of *ādhā*. This is an example of what we referred to above in the matter of Persian poetry as *istiqbāl*, "reception" or perhaps *nazīrah-gūī*, "resembling." It was a kind of literary *tour de force* that allowed him to display his unique talents, while responding to the best the Arabic poetic tradition could offer. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, however, was not an Abbasid poet. With the demise of the Seljuks, the Abbasids who had ceased being independent rulers, briefly regained independent control of central Iraq under the caliph al-Nāṣir (1180-1225). The Uyyubids controlled Egypt and the Levant and dealt more effectively with the Crusader intrusions, while the Mongols were marching down from Central Asia, soon to dismantle what little remained of the once great empire.² Ibn al-Fāriḍ shunned the court and refused their patronage. This distaste for the corruption of political life may have been part of his motivation for taking up residence at al-Azhar mosque and university. While playing on familiar themes, he displayed a new sensibility that wedded a playful wit and elaborate artistry to detached view of the earthly life, though not shunning all its pleasures. He also composed poems in colloquial Egyptian, but only a few fragments survived. This indicates that he was not constrained by the canons of literary expectation, nor trapped by the standards of eloquence and prosody established 5 centuries early by the grammarian al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad of Basra (d.

² Marshall S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1974, pp. 279-86.

ca. 790 C.E.) and others.

In Chapter 2 we discussed the broad outlines of the narrative or drama. A discussion of these include specific stages to which each poem refers: attraction, separation and loss, search, rejection, tests and trials, aid and favors, sacrifice and death, resurrection and union, and return. These stages or states have specific references to the mystical journey that will be addressed in Chapter 4. Let us now examine certain symbolic and stylistic particulars within this framework. Beauty as an active, divine attribute is a central element of our discussion. This attribute is personified by the Maid of Heaven. She is a *tamthil*, or representation of the divine presence, and an embodiment of God's remembrance. These poems also embody this attribute in the form of carefully crafted, highly patterned, and referenced speech.

THE POWER OF BEAUTY AND ATTRACTION

Each poem begins with a description of the poet's first encounter with his beloved. The writer chooses the medium of poetry, the most highly regarded of all arts, the most treasured and loved expression of Islamic civilization, whether of the Arabic or Persian-speaking realms, to convey his mystical experience. In the poem by Bahā'ullāh, beauty is the central figure, the key element. It is an attribute of the divine and human realms. He encounters a divine spirit represented as a resplendent, feminine being, his holy beloved. Her beauty is

described in physical and cosmic terms. Hyperbole, *mubālagha*, is a dominant feature of this description. Emphasis is placed on her superlative beauty, her awesome power over her lovers, and her uniqueness. No other beauty, no other beloved can be compared with her. The first two couplets of Bahāʿullāh's *qaṣīda* demonstrates this vision, this artistic and spiritual truth as they portray the beauty of her radiance and her form:

لَفُرُوعُهَا كُلُّ الشَّمُوسِ تَخَفَّتْ ظَهَرَتْ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ وَ عَزَّتْ	أَجْذَبْتَنِي بِوَارِقِ أَنْوَارِ طَلْعَةٍ كَانَ بُرُوقُ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ نُورِ حُسْنِهَا
--	--

A face flashing with light
drew me to her; all the suns
dimmed before her radiance.

It seemed the sun blazed
from her beauty; she manifested
in all the worlds and grew mighty. (1-2)

The first hemistich creates a powerful, attractive, visual image of beauty that is intensified by sound and syntax. Bahāʿullāh uses variations of the structure of Arabic syntax to heighten this effect. The hemistich begins with the verb-object compound *ajdhabatni* meaning “she attracted me,” “physically pulled” or “transported.” Then he follows with the agent, “by pulsing lights of a face.” He uses a slightly unusual construct here, an indefinite *iqāfa*, or construct, with three terms. This intensifies the feeling of attraction by deferring the agent until the end of the hemistich, burying it in the construction and keeping it mysterious

and undefined. *Ṭalʿa* means guise, face, or appearance and comes from the verb “to rise,” as the sun, moon, or stars rise. The second hemistich confirms this meaning with the mention of “suns,” while the middle term of the construct, “lights” enhances it. This creates an intricate web of beauty and meaning.

In the second hemistich the heavenly feminine beauty appears to Bahāʿu’llāh and is thus revealed, yet covered in light, the brilliant light of the sun and the shimmering lights of the stars. Bahāʿu’llāh portrays this heavenly figure as the source of beauty in the creation of the cosmos and the earthly beauty of the human world. The second couplet confirms this meaning.

كَانَ بُرُوقَ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ نَوْرِ حُسْنِهَا ظَهَرَتْ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ وَ عَزَّتْ

It seemed the sun blazed
from her beauty; she manifested
in all the worlds and grew mighty.

Literally, the sun’s light is *burūq*, or “flashing” like lightning, from the *nūr*, or “radiance,” of her beauty. This suggests that her beauty lends the sun its warmth and radiance. Like the sun, her beauty is the source of light and warmth, of life itself. The term used here for beauty is *ḥusn*. In Qur’ānic usage, this means goodness or beauty “as approved by mental perception.” In general usage it means visual beauty, especially of symmetry.³ We might read these

opening verses as a description of a new process of creation. A feminine

³ Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1984, p. 570, article on *ḥusn*.

representation of beauty is the central agent of this unfoldment.

Beauty awakens a creative faculty of the mind, a faculty of energy and power. The image of lightning bolts suggests this power. Beauty is not an object or artifact to be admired and presented. Rather it is a transformative power, an attribute of God invested with the ability and purpose to re-create the world. Hence, she “manifested” and “grew mighty.” I preferred to translate *ẓahara* as “manifested” instead of “appear,” because the concept of manifestation in Bahā’ullāh’s writings is central and ubiquitous. The existence of all creation depends on its manifestation of God’s attributes.⁴ He is fully manifested in the persons of His messengers and prophets. As quoted in the first chapter, Bahā’ullāh identifies the heavenly maiden as the “embodiment of the remembrance of the name of my Lord.”⁵ The worlds in which she is manifest are the worlds of God, realms of physical and spiritual existence, as in the Qur’ān, *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, “*rabb al-‘ālamīn*,” “Lord of the worlds.”

The structure of the poem exhibits a different style and structure than the traditional *qaṣīda* in the way the couplets are formed and linked. Originally, the couplet had to stand alone as a distinct syntactic and rhetorical unit. Here the couplets tend to be less self contained or closed. They are often linked to each other by narrative and rhetorical devices, and even by syntax. We observe this in

⁴ Bahā’u’llāh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā’u’llāh*, p. 184.

⁵ Chapter 1, p. 2; see note.

the first two couplets of *Qaṣīdih-yi Varqā'iyyih* and frequently in *Nazm al-Sulūk* .

To re-iterate Bahā'ullāh's opening

أَجْذَبْتَنِي بِوَارِقِ أَنْوَارِ طَلْعَةِ
كَانَ بُرُوقُ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ نَوْرِ حُسْنِهَا
لَفُرُوعِهَا كُلُّ الشَّمُوسِ تَخَفَّتْ
ظَهَرَتْ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ وَ عَزَّتْ

A face flashing with light
drew me to her; all the suns
dimmed before her radiance.

It seemed the sun blazed
from her beauty; she manifested
in all the worlds and grew mighty. (1-2)

In this example *jinās al-ishtiqaq* connects the second hemistich of the first couplet with the first couplet of the second hemistich. This type of *jinās* is the correspondence of two terms linked by their derivation from the same tri-literal root. We have included a glossary of a few of these terms in the appendix. *Jinās* is supposed to occur within the same couplet. In addition, the two terms of the *jinās* are linked by an implied contrast of paired meaning. The suns in the first couplet are described as if they were stars. Not only are they plural, but they sparkle or twinkle (*bawāriq*).

The third couplet expands this with the term *bahja*, a symbol for radiant beauty. It carries the connotation of joy and the pastoral beauty of the meadow. Appropriately this "stirs up the musk-laden cloud of heaven." 'Amā' is the

heavenly cloud that surrounds God's throne.⁶ It suggests the impenetrable mystery of the God's essence, as well as His abundance. The second hemistich adds *raf'a*, meaning physical stature and high rank. It uplifts loftiness itself. On the one hand it uses the rhetorical device of *mubālagha*, or hyperbole, a stock element of love poetry. On the other hand, as a spiritual figure this evokes a neo-platonic concept of ideals. She is the source of those ideals which are in turn the source of all creation. In Bahā'ī thought, this is once again the concept of divine attributes which are thought to animate all creation. As the bearer of revelation, she gives the attributes their qualities. Each attribute of the Maiden affects the realms of creation, both heavenly and earthly, of which one is beauty that gives the sun its radiance. Her splendor stirs the fragrant, creative cloud of heaven. Her stature and rank are the source of loftiness in creation. The figure of the Maid of Heaven operates at several levels. She represents the spirit of God, embodies His remembrance, and conveys the Beauty of the divine world. At the same time she manifests certain attributes of God. Since her qualities are derived from God, they retain some of their dynamic, creative power that affects the world of creation, the physical realm and the realm of the human spirit, represented by the poetic voice.

The words for 'cloud' and 'loftiness' in the verses above are linked

⁶ Lane, *Op. cit.*, p. 2161.

through a type of *jinās al-mudāri*, or a correspondence in which the two words differ only in one radical, or root letter. Bahā'ullāh seems to prefer to use *jinās* in instances where the words can be linked conceptually, as well as in form or sound.

In the next couplet her breath sounds the trumpet of resurrection and initiates the fulfillment of the prophecy in the Revelation of St. John and in Qur'anic reference. We now understand the described creative process to be re-creative. The Maid of Heaven is initiating the re-creation of the universe.

بِنَفْخَتِهَا صَوْرُ الْقِيَامِ تَنْفُخَتْ بِنَفْحَتِهَا ظِلُّ الْغَمَامِ تَمَرَّتْ

Her breath blew the trumpet
of Resurrection; with her breeze
shadowing clouds spread over. (4)

Her breath represents the promulgation of the word of God, suggesting that the day of resurrection is the day of a new revelation. In the first hemistich is another instance of *jinās al-ishtiqaq*, a correspondence of two words having the same root, but different meanings and different derivation, here the verb *tanaffakha* and the noun *nafkha* (blow and puff). The first and second hemistichs begin with an example of *jinās al-musahhaf* in which the corresponding terms differ by only one diacritical point (breath and breeze). The clouds are associated with the return of Christ in Christian scriptures and the Day of Resurrection in

the Qurʾān. This is one of many examples throughout the poem of *talmīḥ*, or allusion to sacred scripture. The next two couplets elaborate images of divine revelation.

بَلُمَعَتِهَا طُورُ الْبَقَاءِ تَظْهَرَتْ لِعِزَّتِهَا نُورُ الْبَهَاءِ تَجَلَّتْ
عَنْ مَغْرِبِهَا شَمْسُ الظُّهُورِ تَظْهَرَتْ مِنْ مَشْرِقِهَا بَدْرُ الشُّهُورِ تَكْرَّتْ

By her brilliance the mountain of eternity
appeared; by her might
the light of glory became effulgent.

From her western horizon the sun
of manifestation appeared; from her eastern horizon
the full moon of revelation returned. (5-6)

The mountain of eternity, *ṭūr al-baqāʾ*, is Mt. Sinai, associated with divine revelation throughout Judaic, Christian, and Islamic scriptures. *Lumʿa* is the brightness of teeth shown in a smile or a flashing sword raised as a signal. So from one flash of her teeth, all guidance proceeds. *Nūr al-bahāʾ*, or light of glory, may refer to Bahāʾuʾllāh, born in the province of Nūr in Iran. This presents an important case of *jinās al-mudārī*. Moses and Bahāʾuʾllāh are linked and equated by this device. The comparison implies that with only a smile, she manifested Sinai and Moses, while the light of Bahāʾuʾllāh proceeded from her might (*ʿizza*). The horizons suggest the power of God to reverse the courses of the sun and moon and overturn human expectations. It is reminiscent of Muḥammad's vision

of Gabriel astride the horizons when he received his first revelation. This is an example of the rhetorical figure of *ṭibāq*, a type of contrast or opposition created by the use of two words opposite in meaning in the same couplet. Here we have two such pairs that also reverse the reader's expectations, the sun rising from the west and the Moon setting in the east.

و عن شعرها طيب الوصال تنفّحت و عن طرفها عين الجمال تقرّت

From her hair the scent of union wafted;
by her glance
the eye of beauty was brightened. (7)

The hair of the beloved ensnaring her lovers is a stock figure in Persian love poetry.⁷ This figure completes a sequence begun two verses before. The lovely scent of her hair in verse 7 and the bright, guiding face in verse 8 draw us closer and closer to the beloved until we are tangled in her locks in verse 9. The beauty of the beloved is unveiled through her hair and her face. The hair expresses union, it streams out from the head and face of the beloved and provides a means of contact and connection. The hair also displays dark contrast to the luminous face. The face, both *wajh* and *ṭalʿa*, is a source of light. The hair and eyebrows are dark.

This couplet introduces a third term for beauty, *jamāl*. Lane's *Lexicon* suggests that *ḥusn* connotes the beauty of the eyes, *bahja* refers to cheeks, and *jamāl* to the nose. *Jamāl* also refers to beauty of conduct or comportment. All aspects of beauty are united in the Maid: physical beauty, the power of spiritual illumination, character, and demeanor. Lines seven and eight use the device of personification, *tashkhiṣ*. Beauty has an eye and guidance a bright face.

⁷ See the *Divān* of Ḥāfiẓ and Rūmī's *Divān-i Shams*.

بنور وجهها وجه الهدى قد اهتدى بنار طلوعها نفس الكليم تزكّت

By the light of her face, the face of guidance
is guided; by the fire of her appearance,
the soul of Moses is purified. (8)

The poet also uses *jinās al-ishtiqaq*. This is accomplished when the poet links two words derived from the same root, "guidance" and "guided," and "light" and "fire."

The beauty of the maid of heaven captivates not only Bahā'u'llāh, but all creation (*al-wujūd*), as in the following couplet.

لسهم شفرها صدر الصدور تقبلت لوهق جعدها رأس الوجود تمدّت

The heart of hearts accepted the arrows
of her lashes; all creation stretched its head
to the snare of her locks.

These are stock images in Arabic and Persian love poetry. The "arrow of her lashes" varies slightly from Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who describes her glances as arrows in several of his poems.

سهم شهم القوم أشوى و شوى سهم الحاذك أحشاي شي⁸

The arrow of the astute among the people skewered me
but the arrow of your glances utterly roasted my vitals.

and

يا رامياً يرمي بسهم لعائله عن قوس حاجبه الحشا إنفاذا

O you who casts the arrows of your glances

⁸ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dihān*, p. 8.

from the bow of your brow deep in my vitals.⁹

Bahā'ullāh's use of the image is lighter, less graphic and violent than Ibn al-Fāriḍ's. Both poets emphasize that such suffering is desired. The strength of the image rests on its effective portrayal of physical and emotional love. In *Nāẓm al-Sulūk*, the glance can rescue the love-lorn poet.

و قلتُ و حالي بالسبابة شاهدُ و وجدي بها ماحيُ والفقدُ مثبتي
هَبِي قَبْلَ يُفْنِي الحُبُّ مِنِّي بَقِيَّةً أَرَاكِ بِهَا لِي نَظْرَةَ الْمُتَلَفِّتِ¹⁰

I spoke to her, though my state was clear witness to my fervent love,
though my finding her effaced me and my utter loss impaled me, saying

"Grant me, before love destroys what little remains of me
That I may see you turning one glance my way." (7-8)

Bahā'u'llāh, in a note to the following verse, expresses a similar desperate desire:

قلت لها روحي فداك و ما بي لقاك أرحمي فلا تكشف عني فضيحتي

I said, "May my soul and all I have be your sacrifice,
that we may meet; have mercy!
uncover not my shame.

اي وما حلَّ بي من مراتب البيان والمعاني وما عرفت فيه من شؤونات الاسماء
والصفات وما ملكني الله في عوالم الغيب والشهادات اهدى لَانْ اُلاقيك مرة واحدة
واشاهدك نظرة واحدة استغفرك يا إلهي حينئذٍ عما ادَّعيت بين يديك ولكن
فوعزتك يا إلهي إن لم أكن كذلك أريد أن أكون بحولك كذلك لَانْ من دون ذلك لن
يفنِّعني ولن يسكن به قلبي و لو تعطيني كلَّ من في السموات و الأرض اذا أسألك يا
إلهي بالذي شهد في سبيلك ما لاشهد احد دونه بأن تنزل على عبدك من آيات حبك
الكبرى و علامات ودك الأبهى حتى يرضي نفسي فيما ترجوه و إنك أنت على كلِّ

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17, verse 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

His explanatory note states in part:

Whatever pertains to me regarding degrees of exposition (*al-bayān*), inner meaning, and what I recognized in it of names and attributes and that wherewith God has endowed me in the seen and unseen realms, I sacrifice that I may meet you just once and catch one glimpse of you.

Bahā'ullāh continues to address the Maid in his note as the poetic voice spills over into a prose explanation. He offers perhaps his most precious, God-given gifts, his understanding and his verbal expression, as a sacrifice so that he may glimpse her.

If we compare the opening verses of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's "*Naẓm al-Sūluk*," we hear a much different voice and observe a different esthetic principle in operation. His verse seethes with word play; love for the beloved is mirrored in his love for the richest possible poetic language. He strives to make his verbal artistry worthy of his subject. Poetic beauty attempts to rival the spiritual beauty of the beloved. Ibn al-Fāriḍ first describes his beloved to a companion. He stresses the power of her beauty and appearance to intoxicate him. He hopes to keep his love a secret.

سقتني حُمياً الحبُّ راحةً مقلتي فأوهمتُ صَحبِي أنْ شَرِبَ شَرايهم	وكنسي محباً من عن العُسنِ جَلَّتْ به سرُّ سرِّي في انتشاني بنظرة ¹¹
--	---

She gave me to drink the feverish wine of love

¹¹ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

While my pupil's palm clasped my cup—her face
Whose splendor exceeds all beauty.
I let my friends suppose that their wine
Had rejoiced my soul though by just a glance I lost my senses. (1-2)

As with Bahā'ullāh's ode, the first term used for beauty is *ḥusn*. The rich language of these first two couplets is the most distinctive feature of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's art. It is at once playful and sublime. In the verses above, the striking image of the eye having a hand with which to drink the wine of beauty served up in the goblet of his beloved's face is itself a singular feat of poetry. The play of symbol, metaphor, and rhetorical device further attests to the mastery of poetic art displayed throughout this work. The first couplet gives an example of *jinās al-maqlūb*, in which the paired words, *ḥumayā* and *muḥayā*, wine and face, differ only in a reversal in the order of the first two letters of each. The second verse contains two examples of *jinās al-ishtiḳāq*, in which the pairs are derived from the same roots. Both pairs are *iḍāfa* constructs. The third couplet contains an example of *jinās al-maqlūb* and *jinās al-ishtiḳāq*. The fourth couplet uses a pair linked by *jinās al-musaḥḥaf*, the difference in the letters being diacritic points. In short, every verse displays one or more of these types of ornamentation and word play. This heightens the musical tonality of the poem and often forges fortuitous links of meaning. The sounds of these verses fill the mouth and throat making their recitation a delightful experience for reader and listener. It is

interesting that the sensuality of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem lies more in its music and diction, less in its imagery of the beloved maid. Issa Boulata aptly describes this artistry as an expression of the same esthetic sensibility that produced the intricate architectural forms known as Arabesque. "Ibn al-Fāriḍ's repetition of forms in subtle varieties yet in the unity of a beautiful order is no more highly mannered and ornamented than is the repetition of vegetal or geometric forms in arabesque. These forms are impressions of the endless forms of phenomenal existence itself, the repeated patterns of which establish a sense of continuity and timelessness, an infinity of order and harmony."¹²

Bahā'u'llāh's ode opens with a series of visual images, not to describe the Maid of Heaven physically, but to describe her effect on him, and through him, I would argue, on all creation. Her appearance re-creates the world and the being of the poet-lover through her beauty, splendor, and divine grace. In Bahā'u'llāh's ode, the narrator repeatedly considers the Maid's transformation of the world, even the universe, as well as her power over him. In the ode of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, the lover-poet describes her effect on himself, primarily. Through the intoxicating power of her countenance she transforms the poet. In later passages, he will also mention her power over all creation, but the narrator emphasizes individual transformation. For most of the first 55 verses, the poet describes his

¹² Issa Boulata, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 1981, p. 152-69.

own experience, his own suffering and concerns. Finally in verse 55 he mentions her beauty again. But it isn't until line 70 that he suggests something about her shape and form. That verse and the following bear quoting for their merit and for the parallels found in Bahā'ullāh's ode.

وَمَطْلِعِ أَنْوَارٍ بَطْلَعِيكَ الَّتِي لِبَهْجَتِهَا كُلُّ الْبَدُورِ اسْتَسْرَتْ
وَوَصْفِ كَمَالٍ فِيكَ أَحْسَنُ صُورَةٍ وَأَقْوَمُهَا فِي الْخَلْقِ مِنْهُ اسْتَعْدَتْ
وَنَعْتِ جَلَالٍ مِنْكَ يَعْذِبُ دُونَهُ عَذَابِي وَتَحْلُو عِنْدَهُ لِي قَتْلَتِي¹³

By the rising lights of your face whose loveliness
from which every moon tries to hide itself;
By your perfection the most beautiful and noble forms
in all creation are derived from it;
By your splendor without which whatever sweetens torments me
and in whose presence my murder is sweet to me. (71-3)

These verses are part of a litany of her attributes, which are rather the attributes of God, not physical qualities. They are described as the source of physical qualities in creation, though they, like the moon, are embarrassed to show themselves in her presence. The lack of physical specificity in these lines emphasizes the ideal, spiritual depiction of the beloved. We never get the sense that physical love, or an actual lover, could be inferred. Other poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *diwān* are not so spare in their descriptions of physical beauty. Note this description taken from another of his poems written in the difficult rhyme of *ādhā*, after the *qaṣīda* of al-Mutanabbī.

¹³ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

خضر اللّعى عذبُ المقبلُ بكرة قبل السوك المسك ساد و شاذا
من فيه و الالفاظ سكرى بل أرى في كل جارحة به نبأنا¹⁴

His lips are cool and his kisses sweet in the morning
His breath is finer than musk, even before he brushes his teeth.
His mouth and his glances are intoxicating,
But I see a winemaker in every limb.

Bahā'ullāh describes the radiance of his Maid of Heaven in terms similar to those used by Ibn al-Fāriḍ in "*Naẓm al-Sulūk*," but with more detail. He describes the suns or stars in the first line of his great ode, but the differences between the two introductions to these poems points to a larger issue. Almost all the first 70 verses by Ibn al-Fāriḍ describe the speaker of the poem, his love, his torment, and the Maid's affect on him. Bahā'ullāh concentrates more on the Maid herself, particularly in the first section of his poem. The Maid of Heaven seems more present to the reader. Among her physical attributes mentioned in the *nasīb*, Bahā'ullāh includes face, countenance, limbs, stature, breath, hair, fragrance, side, teeth, lashes, locks, voice, and footsteps. Her non-physical attributes include radiance, beauty, might, loveliness, light, effulgence, majesty, beauty of character. A list derived from Ibn al-Fāriḍ includes these physical attributes: countenance, face, voice, glance, back, perfume, form, and ear. Her

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

non-physical attributes include loveliness, beauty, virtues, perfection, majesty, splendor, effulgence, lights, radiance, compassion, might, and wondrous (*badʿ*) beauty. Bahāʿullāh’s use of physical description provides a much more vivid image of the maid. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, on the other hand, gradually unveils the qualities of the maid of heaven throughout the poem. Even though the lists of attributes for each poem are very similar, the total effect is much different. In the ode of Bahāʿullāh, the interplay between the two figures of the lover and the Maid, presented through their dialogue, carries the reader forward much the way one is drawn into a theatrical drama. Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s work draws the reader along primarily through the voice of the poet-lover and his internal or mystical-emotional process. We are drawn into the world of his experience and encounter the Maiden vicariously. Bahāʿullāh gives us a more immediate experience of encounter. With Ibn al-Fāriḍ, the poet’s voice and persona are our guide. With Bahāʿullāh, the word, the poem is our guide. The divine encounter in *Naẓm al-Sulūk* is interiorized. He clearly delineates a course of spiritual growth through the process of divine intervention in the struggle (*jihād*) to subdue, even annihilate the self so that one may receive the spirit of God. Yet the emphasis is weighted on the individual soul and its struggle to lose individuality. The same struggle in the poem of Bahāʿullāh is exteriorized, though the union will take place within him. The result places more emphasis on divine intervention and

the power of divine revelation. The burden on the individual seeker is that of recognition, obedience, and self-sacrifice. Another aspect of the difference between the two works is the different use of instruction and explanation. For Bahāʾullāh, the Maid of Heaven attracts, then instructs; the poet-lover demonstrates. For Ibn al-Fāriḍ, the maid attracts and captivate; the poet-lover instructs, explains, and demonstrates. Bahāʾullāh marginalizes his explanations to the footnotes.

SEPARATION AND LOSS

This is the beginning of the lovers' tests and trials. Once the lover falls in love, the quest for attainment begins. This search is not possible without separation and passionate desire for union. The romantic structure requires that after the first taste of love, the lover must experience separation and loss. Ibn al-Fāriḍ begins this stage in the "*Nāẓm al-Sulūk*" with this verse:

و وجدت وحالي بالصبابة شاهد هبي قبل يفني الحب مني بقية	و وجدني بها ماحي والفقد مثبتني أراك بها لي نظرة المتلفت ¹⁵
--	--

I spoke though my state was clear witness to my fervent love,
though my finding her effaced me and my utter loss impaled me:
"Before love destroys what little remains of me, grant that
I may see you turn one glancing gaze my way." (8-9)

As the lover senses that he may be losing himself to love and her presence as

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, verses 8-9.

well, he makes a respectful appeal for her favors, though he knows he will be denied. But in that denial, he hopes to find small favor in that. The *nasīb* continues with the lover's complaint. It quickly builds in intensity with copious use of hyperbole. In this there is an element of boasting, traditional to the genre, noticeable in the following lines of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

و حزنني ما يعقوب بثّ أقله و كلّ بلى أيوب بعض بليتي
و آخر ما لاقى الألى عشقوا إلى الردى بعض ما لاقيت أول محنتي¹⁶

What Jacob complained is the least of my sorrows;
and all Job's afflictions are but a part of my torment.
The end that those lovers reached in ancient times
who died of their passions is only a portion
of what I encountered in my first ordeal. (15-16)

In Bahā'ullāh's verses:

وغايتي القصوى مواقع رجلها وعرش العماء أرض عليها تمشّت
وفي كلّ عين قد بكيت لوصلها وفي كلّ نار قد حرقت لفرقتي

Her footfalls are my final goal;
though she strolls the land of clouds
that shroud God's Throne.

In every eye I cried to join her;
in every fire
I burned with separation.¹⁷ (10-11)

His lament begins with the recognition of her loftiness and her place in a realm to

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27, verses 15-16.

¹⁷ Bahā'ullāh, *Op. Cit.*, p. 199.

which he has no access. The next verse describes his separation and search. In both poems, the beginning of the *raḥīl* movement corresponds to the stage of the mystic path that involves search. Inaccessibility implies rejection. He uses the rhetorical figure of metaphoric contrast, or "*takāfu*", here "fire and tears." This, too, is a common element in this genre of poetry. Ibn al-Fāriḍ has several ornate examples of this *takāfu* in his poetry. The following example is from the *Naẓm al-Sulūk*.

هوىَ عبْرَة نَمَتْ به وجوىَ نَمَتْ به حَرْقُ أدواؤِها بي أودت
فطوفان نوح عند نوحى كاذمُعي وإيقادُ نيران الخليل كلوعتي¹⁸

A passion, betrayed by a tear, an ardor shown by it
feverish flames of illness have destroyed me.
So the typhoon of Noah was like my tears and sighs;
and the flames of Abraham's inferno are like my searing pain. (12-13)

This is one of the first trials of the lover as he learns the true station of the beloved. The process of spiritual transformation has begun. The torments of the lover's passions cause him to begin to loose the bonds of self and ego. He abandons pride and embraces humiliation, rejection, and unworthiness. This stage also includes the shift from the *nasīb* portion of the traditional *qaṣīda*. The *raḥīl*, or journey, begins once the poet has concluded his reminiscence on the traces of his departed lover and her caravan. Ibn al-Fāriḍ even mentions a caravan to suggest that the *raḥīl* has begun.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. Cit.*, p, 27.

فلو سمعت أذن الدليل تأوّهي لآلام أسقام بجسمي أضرت
لأنكره كربى أذى عيش أزمه بمنقطعي ركب إذا العيس زمت¹⁹

If the guide had heard my moaning and given ear
to the agonies of diseases eating at my corpse
then my distress would have reminded him of
the deadly crisis of travelers cut off from the caravan
when the fine-bred camels were bridled up and gone. (17-18)

Separation forces the lover to begin his quest for reunion. But in the wilderness
or desert, solitary travel can be deadly. Bahā'ullāh's poem presents this as a form
self-sacrifice represented by a reference to the martyrdom of the Prophet
Muhammad's grandson, Husayn. Just as we found in the *Naẓm al-Sulūk*, the
intensity of the search and the pain of loss build quickly.

و حزن حسين قد أحملت لحزنه كور الوجود في كون قدوتي

I bore the misery of Husayn for her;
The orb of creation was molded
after me in sorrow for him.. (20)

and

و عن حرقتي نار الوقود توقدت ومن زفرتي نور الشهود تذوت

From my torment, hellfire blazed out;
from my groans the light
of creation began to glow. (24)

and

وعن دمعي بحر المحيط كقطرة ومن حرقتي نار الخليل كجدوة

The ocean is but a drop
from the flood of my tears; the fire of Abraham

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

is but an ember from my fever's flame. (26)

Bahā'ullāh uses the same figures as Ibn al-Fāriḍ in these verses. Both poets use hyperbole and references to the sufferings of prophetic and saintly figures to express the intensity of their passion, pain, and search. This comparison also locates their sufferings in the context of religious love drama. As *Naẓm al-Sulūk* develops, reference will be made to the classic lovers of Arabic poetry, but their sensuality is carefully controlled.

Despite the clear parallels between the two poems, Bahā'ullāh's ode differs subtly in tone. His vaunts are not as grand. We may be able to detect more reference to his actual life circumstances in part because we know more of the historical details of his life. Yet more than this, perhaps in the immediacy and personal specificity found in his poem, we may find another herald of the modern style that would emerge in compositions of poets several decades later. Bahā'ullāh was in self-imposed exile from Baghdad. He, indeed, had suffered greatly at the hands of the Persian authorities because of his love for this new religion he espoused. Unfortunately we know much less of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life. We know that he gave up all material comforts to pursue his mystical path. We also know that he returned from his sojourn in the Hijāz to Egypt because of the illness of his spiritual guide. These sufferings pale before the severity of Bahā'u'llāh's imprisonment, banishment, and exile, not to mention the treachery

of his family and co-religionists. This poignancy can be found in the following verses.

رُميت برهي الذعد من بعد قربتي	ولو كنت سارعاً في وصل نورها
بالسيف جابتني فذاك جزاء احبتي	وإن رفعت ايدي في مدّ وصلها
و قصده لم يك إلّا لقطع نسبتي	وهمي لم يك إلّا لوثق عروة
أرحمي فلا تكشف عني فضيحتي	قلت لها روجي فذاك و ما بي لفاك

If only I were swift in reaching her light;
I was cast far, far away
after being so near.

And if I reached out my arms toward her,
she would answer me with a sword;
thus was my love requited. 15

All I wanted was a tie to surely bind;
all she sought was a sword
to cut our sapling down.

I said, "May my soul and all I have be your sacrifice,
that we may meet; have mercy!
uncover not my shame."²⁰ (14-17)

The gentler, humbler tone that distinguishes this poem marks a conscious departure from the grand rhetoric of Classical Arabic poetry. This marks the inception of what we might call "modern" in Arabic poetry.

These statements issue from the lovers in their first throes of anguish. This stage of separation, loss, and rejection reflects a selfish, immature love, though each claims to have given all in selfless sacrifice to the object of his desire.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

The first replies of the beloved speak to this point. The Maiden rebukes each lover and deems their complaints unworthy. Ibn al-Fāriḍ is told:

فَقَالَتْ هَوًى غَيْرِي قَصِدْتُ وَدُونَهُ اقْتَصِدْتُ عَمِيًّا عَنْ سِوَاءِ مُحِبَّتِي
وَعَرَّكَ حَتَّى قُلْتُ مَا قُلْتُ لَابَسًا بِهِ شَيْنٌ مِثْلُ لَبْسِ نَفْسِي تَعْنَتْ²¹

You have sought a passion other than me; deprived of that
you have searched blindly, turning away from my pilgrim-place,
beguiled until you said these things, disgraced by falsity
and afflicted by vanities of self. (84-5)

Bahā'ullāh's Maid rebukes him similarly.

وَنَادَتْنِي مِنْ وَرَائِي وَقَالَتْ إِنْ أَصَمْتُ فَخُذْ لِسَانَكَ عَنْ كُلِّ مَا قَدْ تَحَكَّمْتَ
فَكَمْ مِنْ حُسَيْنٍ بِمِثْلِكَ قَدْ أَرَادَنِي فَكَمْ مِنْ عَلِيٍّ كَشَبِهَكَ مِنْ أَحِبَّتِي
فَكَمْ مِنْ حَبِيبٍ فَوْقَكَ قَدْ أَحْبَبَّنِي فَكَمْ مِنْ صَفِيٍّ كَفُوكَ مِنْ أَهْلِ صِفُوتِي

She called out to me
from behind "Silence!
"Restrain your tongue from such talk."

"How many Husayns like you
have labored for me; how many 'Alis
just like you have loved me!

"How many lovers loved me better than you;
how many my peers, of the choicest men,
have cried out like you. (37-39)

The tests and trials of the lover begins with separation and loss. In his loneliness

he grows weary of self and recognizes his need for, and dependence on, the

favours of his beloved. He learns humility and submission.

²¹ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

AID AND FAVOR

With the Maid's first replies, the lovers receive aid. Ibn al-Fāriḍ acknowledges this in the ninth line of his poem. After he begs her for one glance he says:

و مَنِّي عَلَى سَمْعِي بَلَنُ إِنْ مَنَعْتَ أَنْ أَرَاكَ فَمَنْ قَبْلِي لَغَيْرِي لَذْتُ

If you deny my seeing you, grant my ears the bounty
Of "Thou shalt not," as you delighted another long ago.²² (9)

Any sort of acknowledgement of the existence of the lover, even firm rejection, is counted as a bounty and favor. The reference is to Moses, when God refused his request to see the face of God on Mt. Sinai. More importantly, in the maid's rejection, she instructs the lover in the proper behavior and attitude by which she might be approached. Tests and trials are opportunities for growth. So when Bahā'u'llāh's Maid of Heaven rejects, point by point, the claims he advanced during his lament--his claim to recognize her, to love her, and to suffer for that love--she in effect shows him how he may reach his goal. Regarded in this light, the stock figure of the cruel lover is overturned. Her cruelties are kindnesses that enable the lover to become worthy. When she dispels any illusion of his uniqueness, she grants him humility. Bahā'u'llāh is only one of many lovers like Ḥusayn and 'Alī. When she praises them for not wavering, for being willing to

²² Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

lose all reason, she teaches him constancy. When she shows him that she is far more wondrous than the attributes he has chosen for her, she informs him of what she is worthy. Her first favors to him, then, are to grant him knowledge of her true station and to point out a worthy station for him. In sum, she directs him to the path of *fanāʾ*, or self-annihilation. In this way she shows him how to love her more fittingly. He must be unwavering like her lovers of old, despite their torment. He must lose his wits and his ego-centered self must pass away as happened to Moses when he witnessed God's effulgence on Mt. Sinai. We will treat this theme in more detail in the next chapter.

SACRIFICE, DEATH, AND REBIRTH

Another common construction in Arabic love poetry is that of the lover wasted by love. The martyr to love is a particular form of this. In mystical poetry it is used as a symbol for the Sufi concept of *fanāʾ*. The notion is that the lover must die to himself. All that is material, appetitive, and limited stands as a barrier or veil between the lover and his beloved. This obstacle must be removed for the spiritual quest to succeed and unity to be achieved. Examples abound in both poems. The first sufferings described by Ibn al-Fāriḍ in the *nasīb* foreshadow the lover's attainment of this stage. They provide an important

antecedent to the development of this theme.²³

فلو كشف العواد بي و تحققوا
لما شاهدت مني بصائرهم سوى
من اللوح ما مني الصبابة أبقت
تخلل روح بين أثواب ميت²⁴

If my visitors were able to discover me, they would realize
this tablet is all that love has left of me;
Their eyes would see only the interstices of spirit
between the garments of the dead.(38-39)

These sufferings do not rise to the level of martyrdom because they are imposed upon the seeker. The lover has not yet desired nor freely offered himself as a total sacrifice; therefore, the beloved rejects his complaints. In the following verses of Bahāʾullāh the maiden counsels her lover on *fanāʾ*.

و موج البحر قد كف من موج باطني
وعن نظرتي موسى البقاء تصعقت
من نفخ روعي عظم الريم تهزت
و روح القدس قد هاج من نور بهجتي

"The waves of the sea were calmed
by the wave within me; the Holy Spirit
was roused by the light of my splendor.

45

"On seeing me, immortal Moses fell stunned, prostrate;
from one glimpse of me the holiest
of mountains was crushed to dust.

"With the spread of my Cause, the spirit of all
souls was massed; from the breath of my spirit,
moldering bones sprang to life.

²³ See page 18 above, the discussion of separation and loss. Similarly, Bahāʾullāh's references to Husayn also foreshadow the recognition of the necessity of martyrdom.

²⁴ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. Cit.*, p, 28.

Bahā'ullāh wrote his own explanatory notes to verse 46 in which he cites several passages from the Qur'ān. These include Qur'ān 20: 105-107, 52: 1-9, and 59: 21. It is quite significant that Bahā'ullāh provides a commentary to the poem in the form of explanatory notes. While reminiscent of Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, Bahā'ullāh's notes were composed in a different context. Like Ibn al-ʿArabī, Bahā'ullāh wants his poem to be properly understood. The critics to whom it is addressed are more anticipated than actual respondents to the poem. The items and objections addressed are sometimes topical, though more often contextual and stylistic. Bahā'ullāh anticipates the objections of literary critics on points of grammar, morphology, and metrics, as well as interpretation. Ibn al-ʿArabī had to respond to accusations of eroticism and a perceived betrayal of his spiritual values. Both poets provide explanatory comments to elucidate their intended meaning. The following example from Bahā'ullāh is a verse taken from his *nasīb* and the commentary on it regarding Moses on Sinai and the appearance of the maid. It elucidates the meaning of *fanāʾ*.

بنور وجهها وجه الهدى قد اهتدى بنار طلعتها نفس الكليم تزكّت
By the light of her face, the face of guidance
is guided; by the fire of her appearance,
the soul of Moses is purified.

Bahā'u'llāh states in his note to this verse:

When Moses, a man whose merciful soul was made to dwell in the human temple, was sanctified from the sandals of lustful and casual thoughts, he drew

forth the hand of divine power from the mighty pocket of his cloak of honor. He reached the holy, beautiful, and blessed valley, the heart of which is the throne of eternal majesty and the seat of the mighty splendor of lordship.... After lifting the veils of glass from the vase, he poured the pure wine of the everlasting presence and he attained the valley of eternal consciousness. After erasing the stages of contradiction he came to know, because of fervent attraction and desire for encounter, the city of perpetual partaking and entered the city of "Lo! Its people are companions of the Fire of God, the Ancient One, and they shine with the Light of God, the Sovereign One...From a tree that "is neither of the east nor of the west," he perceived and advanced from the plane of passing away and wonderment to the plane of perpetuity and the glories therein....²⁵

This remarkable passage touches on key issues and themes that recur in both poems. We will take them up in detail in the next chapter. May it suffice to point out that Bahā'ullāh's retelling of the story of Moses interprets the entire episode within a symbolic framework familiar to students of Islamic mysticism and Sufis themselves. The passage that speaks of the lamp and the niche; the quotation "neither of the East nor of the West" refers to the well known *āyat al-nūr*, "the verse of light." and links it to Moses through the use of the symbols of fire and light.²⁶ This linkage is extremely significant. It interprets the symbols of fire and light associated with the Prophet Moses and suggests that the light kindled in *āyat al-nūr* are the lights of guidance and prophethood. This implies that this renowned passage in the Qur'ān may be interpreted as a prophecy concerning the coming of another Messenger of God. The more evident points of

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp, 197-198.

²⁶ *Qur'ān* 24: 35.

this note deal with the process of the purification of one's soul and the death of the lower, appetitive self (*nafs*.) Both poems depict the stages of purification and death that the lover must pass through before utter annihilation takes place and union with the beloved is achieved. This is the purpose and goal of the sufferings endured by the lovers.

In *Nazm al-Sulūk*, Ibn al-Fāriq's Maid instructs him on this point.

<p>و لم تفنّ ما لا تُجتلَى فيكَ صورتي فؤادك و ادفَعْ عَنْكَ غَيْكَ بِالنَّتِي وها أنتَ هيْ إِنْ تَكُنْ صَادِقاً مَتِ من الحبِّ فَاخْتَرِ ذَاكَ أَوْ خَلِّ خَلَّتِي²⁷</p>	<p>فَلَمْ تَهَوَّنِي مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ فِيّ فَانِيّاً فَدَعْ عَنْكَ دَعْوَى الْحَبِّ وَادْعُ لغيره و جَانِبِ جَنَابِ الْوَصْلِ هَيْهَاتَ لَمْ يَكُنْ هُوَ الْحَبُّ إِنْ لَمْ تَقْضَ لَمْ تَقْضَ مَارَبّاً</p>
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You have not truly loved me if you have not passed away in me;
You have not past away as long as my image does not appear in you,
So leave off your claim to love and proclaim your heart to another;
Put off your transgression with this.
As for nearness to the court of union, lo, there is nothing!
And lo! you are alive; but if you are sincere, then die!
This is love! If you don't die, you don't reach the goal of love;
So choose this or leave me be and lose my companionship. (99-101)

Compare this with the exhortation by the Maid to Bahā'ullāh.

<p>وسقى دماء القهر عن دمّ مهجتي وقمع القضاء عن طمع كلّ حاجة و حرق المشافي الحبّ من أول بيعتي و شتم التوالى في كلّ يومة و عن ملّتي قهر القضاء كشفقة كذاك جرى الأمر في فرض سنّتي</p>	<p>فشرب بالماء الدهر عن كلّ كناسة و قطع الرجاء عن أمش كلّ راحة سفك الدماء في مذهب العشق واجب يقظ الليالي من لذغ كلّ ملذغ وعن سنّتي سمّ الردى كشربة خلّ دعوى الحبّ أوفاً رضى بما جرى</p>
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²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31-2, verses 99-101.

**"Quaff fate's afflictions from every cup;
taste defeat's bloody streams
pouring from my heart.**

**"Sever your hopes of any touch
of relief; prevent the fulfillment
of every craving need.**

**"Blood shed in the sacred path of love
is obligatory; a heart scorched
by love is the first sign of allegiance I exact.**

**"Keep wakeful every night
from the scorpion stings of the vicious;
their ceaseless vilification will fill your days.**

**"According to my religion, deadly venom
is like sherbet; in my faith,
the sentence of death is sweet compassion.**

**"Cease your claim to love, or submit to this course;
this command proceeds
according to precepts of my religion."²⁸ (56-61)**

Both lovers readily assent to the demands of love's course. The entire trajectory of the narrative and argument of the *Nāẓm al-Sulūk* proceeds from this point. The lover accepts the challenge and offers up his whole being to his beloved. Throughout the rest of the poem he recounts to his novice companion all he experienced in the realms of union. It details many permutations of death, rebirth, and unity with the divine spirit. The levels of meaning and complexity of thought are as intricate as the syntax and word play of his verses.

²⁸ Bahā'u'llāh, *Op. Cit.*, p. 205-6.

Bahā'ullāh accepts the same challenge. The *Qaṣīdih-yi Varqā'iyyih* differs significantly because the profession of sacrifice does not suffice for the attainment of his goal. He passes through several more stages of suffering, sacrifice, and annihilation. He exhorts his own spirit, heart, mind, and life's blood in accordance with the Maid's commands.

<p>من نفس ما بقى فيها من بقية فما لك قدر بمقدار ذلتي فما لك من عز في بلاد ذليلة في رضا حبيبك من شد و رخوة</p>	<p>أناديك يا روح الحياة أن ارتحل فيا روح العماء من العرش أنزلي أصاحي يا فؤادي إن اخرجني فيا صبري أصبر في كل ما شهدت</p>
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I call out to thee, "O spirit of Life, depart from me! Let not the least remnant of self remain.

O spirit! From the cloud-shrouded throne descend! Your merit of glory is nothing in the measure of my meakness.

**O my master, Arise!
O my heart be gone; you have no majesty,
despised in the lowlands.**

O my patience! Endure contentedly all that you have borne of hardship for the good-pleasure of your beloved." (94-97)

Just prior to this passage, he claimed to have reached his goal of a true meeting with his beloved, within his own soul. Striving for even higher attainment, he recites the lines above. The Maid responds that he is on the right course, but this

is only a beginning. Much more is required, for his love and understanding are immature, like that of a child. She then guides him to a greater truth within himself. The active repartee between lover and beloved enhance the drama, liveliness, and immediacy of this poem. The persistent deferral of the goal or climax of union heightens the reader's anticipation and intensifies the effect of the poem.

What is remarkable about this poem of Bahā'ullāh is not that he could follow the form and pattern set by Ibn al-Fāriḍ as requested by his companions in Sulaymāniyyah. What surprises the reader of his verses is that he is able to use the traditional form so effectively and with such originality. We suggest that unlike the poets who would emerge in Egypt and Lebanon a few decades later, Bahā'ullāh was not a classicizer. He was not pursuing a project to revive the vigor of Arabic poetry and restate the aesthetic values articulated and demonstrated by poets and critics during the Abbasid period. He composed a response to the challenge of his petitioners in Sulaymāniyyah, a *jawāb-gū'ī* to the poem of Ibn al-Fāriḍ. While some may object to certain aspects of his style, influences from Persian literary and linguistic features, and a flexible approach to Arabic grammar, all these are the stock and trade of any good poet. Poetry often tortures syntax, morphology, and diction to achieve a specific esthetic goal. Furthermore, with the perspective of transformational grammar we can step

away from the trap of a prescriptive approach to grammar and syntax. The poet said what he wanted to say the way he wanted to say it. His departures, if any, are not due to ignorance or lack of skill in manipulation the Arabic language and its literary forms. Bahā'ullāh's poetic sensibility responded to the needs of his audience to compose within the traditional form of the *qaṣīda*, maintaining the overall structure of the verses and their progression through the traditional thematic movements. At the same time he is neither imitative nor constrained. His successful manipulation of the traditional forms to his own ends creates a freshness and originality that would be a hallmark of the Romantic Movement which began in Arabic literature in the early 20th Century with poets in Egypt and the Levant, such as Ilyā Abū Māḍī, Khalīl Muṭrān, and others. We would do well, also, to compare this poem to the efforts of the *Mahjar* poets, Arab poets who were writing in Arabic in the Americas near the beginning of the 20th Century, among them Amīn al-Riḥānī. Upon further research and analysis, Bahā'u'llāh may be found to be at the very beginning of the *naḥḍa*, the modern renaissance of Arabic literature and culture that arose in the latter half of the 19th Century. It began in earnest in Lebanon and Egypt while he was imprisoned in Akka, 20 years after this poem was first recited.

Chapter Four

The Celestial System

Bahā'ullāh's ode is structured according to the traditional form of the mystical search for union with the divine beloved. We have noted previously some of the principle variations from the pattern. In the pages that follow, we identify the major religious themes and discuss their importance in the context of the principle teachings of Bahā'ullāh's religion, the Bahā'ī Faith. Particular attention will be given to the form in which these teachings are expressed in this poem and how they relate to Sufi thought and practice. However much can be made of the divergences of Bahā'ī belief and practice from Islamic orthodoxy, we shall argue that these differences as expressed in the poem are only occasionally significant. The poem attempts to correct some of the excesses of Sufi aspirations common to the last several centuries of Sufi literary expression. We will not attempt an exhaustive discussion of the symbolic structure of the two odes by Bahā'ullāh and Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Rather we will select a few key groups of symbols and compare them as we elaborate on the themes to which they refer. The more ubiquitous symbols in both poems tend to form clusters, or what I call constellations. These constellations represent a complex of themes and ideas that require some exegesis. In addition, the process of constructing meaning from

these constellations for each poem will clarify the differences and highlight certain of their unique features. Such an effort will provide material evidence related to the poetic vision discernible in each ode.

THE MAID OF HEAVEN

The first constellation of symbols we encounter in both poems is that of the beloved. In Bahā'ullāh's writings, she is often called "the Maid of Heaven," a translation of the term *ḥūriyyah*. The primary speaking voice of the poem refers to her as "she." Her constellation includes *mazhar*, "manifestation," *nūr*, "light," "sun," and *ḥabībati*, "my love." In three significant couplets she elaborates her essential qualities:

وَمِنْ مَشْرِقِي شَمْسِ الظُّهُورِ كَنَجْمَةٍ	وَعَنْ مَظْهَرِي نَوْرِ الْبَسِيطِ كَلِمَةٍ
وَعَنْ نَوْرِ سِرِّي سِرَّ الْوُجُودِ كَنَمَلَةٍ	وَمِنْ نَارِ حَبِّي نَارِ الْوُقُودِ كَقَبَسَةٍ
وَعَنْ فِطْرَتِي فَطَرَ أَلَا هِ تَدَيَّنَتْ	وَمِنْ كَفَّتِي كَفَّ السَّنَاءُ تَضَمَّنَتْ

"Compared to my dawning, the sun of revelation
is like a star; to my manifestation,
unbounded light is but a spark.

"In the light of my inner being, all created
being is like an ant; in the fire of my love
the flames of hell are but an ember.

"Only his nature, he who was confirmed
in true faith, is like mine; with my palm

the hand of Moses was held close on Sinai." (41-43)

The Maid of Heaven is described as the source of all revelations and the light of all messengers of God. This is the same light Shi'ites refer to as the *al-nūr al-Muḥammadiyyah*, or "Muḥammadan light" of unerring guidance that they believe passed from Muḥammad to 'Alī, and then successively to his chosen descendants. The light of her inner being is reflected in all created beings. The third verse is the most allusive and complex of the three. I have translated *fiṭra* somewhat inadequately as "nature." The term is glossed in the text as "the nature of God through which Man was created." The poem suggests, here as elsewhere, that she is the "creative nature" of God, the source of all created being. This means that she is a representation of the primal revelatory spirit manifested in Muḥammad and all messengers of God. The second hemistich refers to Qur'ān 28:32, "Put thy hand into thy bosom: it will come forth [shining] white, without blemish. And [henceforth] hold thine arm close to thyself, free of all fear."¹ This suggests that she was Moses' inner being and that when God commanded him to hold close his hand, she was holding him. We may then infer that either she purified his hand from all error and defect, or his hand became her hand. She is also the source of being, *al-wujūd*, and brings all creation into being. The light images that accompany these references can be

¹*The Message of The Qur'ān*, Muḥammad Asad, trans. and expl., 2nd ed. (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus), 1984, p. 594.

equated with the light referred to in the first chapter of Genesis.² The "one confirmed in true faith" refers to all the Qur'anic figures called *ḥanif*. Muḥammad, prior to his call to prophethood, is said to have been "*ḥanif*." This is one of the terms used to describe the religion of Abraham and Moses prior to receiving their revelations. Literally it means to be inclined toward righteousness and away from error, or away from a false religion toward the true one. In translating this term, I tried to convey this sense. This verse clearly signifies the true station of the divine Beloved and those who are her true lovers: the prophets of God who have been given a revelation or book. A fuller discussion of this station is given below. Lesser figures in this constellation derive from her attribute of "beloved." We could depict this symbolic structure as a solar system; the principle symbol is a sun or star and the related, yet subordinate symbols or figures are planets, some with moons or satellites. In such a scheme, the different types of beauty, *ḥusn*, *jamāl*, and *bahja* would be a planet and the great women of Arabic lore would be their moons. In this system the prophets and the Maid of heaven form one constellation. Their planets might be the companions or siblings; Khadija, Ḥusayn, 'Alī, Abū Bakr, and others would orbit Muḥammad. Aaron and Joshua would orbit Moses. For the Maiden, the poets hope to join her solar system.

² See Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: WW Norton), 1996.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ names and describes the Maiden only through her attributes and effects. This conveys the sense that, in reality, she cannot be named or adequately described. It may also reflect an aspect of *adab*, or good manners and proper conduct, that the lover should not name his beloved and declare her identity. In any case, Ibn al-Fāriḍ also refers to the Maiden principally as “she.” Her names include *maḥbūba*, or the “beloved.” She also represents the spirit of Muḥammad. In the course of the poem, the poet, or more precisely the principle voice speaking in the poem, is joined to this constellation. He is represented by *anā* or “I.”

We have pointed out that both poems begin with a description of the Maiden. In Bahāʾullāh’s ode, she appears in a firmament of descriptions and scriptural allusions. In the ode by Ibn al-Fāriḍ the Maid appears in a universe represented by the tavern. She is visible to him alone, though he is surrounded by his companions. In the tavern, a common symbol for the Sufi cloister or *takya*, the wine is passed around. Wine represents an array of allusions ranging from sacred scripture to the ecstasy obtained from the presence of God’s chosen one, represented by the maid or the beloved.

MANIFESTATION

As suggested above, the constellation of symbols that represent the

manifestation of God mirrors the constellation of the Beloved. Bahā'ullāh's description of the Maid resembles Ibn al-Fāriq's in important ways. We commented in a previous chapter on the following lines; we now consider the way the qualities and attributes mentioned in the lines function.

كَانَ بُرُوقُ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ نُورِ حُسْنِهَا ظَهَرَتْ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ وَ عَزَّتْ
لِبَهْجَتِهَا مِسْكُ الْعَمَاءِ تَهَيَّجَتْ لِرَفْعَتِهَا رُوحُ الْعَلَاءِ تَعَلَّتْ

It seemed the sun blazed
from her beauty; she manifested
in all the worlds and grew mighty.

Her splendor stirred up
the musk-laden cloud of Heaven;
her stature lifted the spirit of loftiness. (2-3)

Ibn al-Fāriq states:

و وصف كمال فيك أحسن صورة وأقومها في الخلق منه استمدت
و نعت جلال منك يعذب دونه عذابي و تحلو عنده لي قتلتني
و سر جمال عنك كل ملاءة به دق عن إدراك عين بصيرتي³

By the quality of your perfection, the fairest form
in all creation derives its shape from you.
And by your splendor without which pleasure is my torment
and makes my death so sweet to me.
And by your beauty's hidden essence, every pretty trait
is manifested in all the worlds and perfected.
The beauty which captivated intellect and beguiled me in passion
has done beautifully in exalting you and abasing me. (71-3)

³ Ibn al-Fāriq, *Diwan*, p. 30.

The common phrase "manifest in all the worlds and..." shows how close these poems are, thematically. Yet the styles differ sharply as do the effects on the reader. So many of the attributes in this section of *Nazm al-Sulūk* are repeated in the ode of Bahā'ullāh. In both poems the, beautiful qualities of the Maid are manifested and perceptible in all realms of existence. The poets describe them as the source of all noble attributes that appear in God's creation. This is one of the strongest links between the poems: the concept of the Mystic Maid and her relationship with the created world and the soul of the poet-lover. She is the life of the world, she is its beauty, and all the most beautiful women in the world gain their beauty from her. She is what we love about them. Ibn al-Fāriḍ makes this very clear in the following lines. The mystic reconciles the spiritual joy he feels with the delights found in the created world, especially the *eros* of woman.

<p>على حسب الاوقات في كل حقبة مناللبس في أشكال حسن بديعة وأونة تدعى بعزة عزت وما إن لها في حسنهما من شريكة كما لي بدت في غيرها وتزيت</p>	<p>وما برحت تبدو و تخفى لعلّة و تظهر للعشاق في كل مظهر ففي مرة لبنى وأخرى بثينة ولسن سواها لا ولا كن غيرها كذاك بحكم الإتحاد بحسنها</p>
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She appears and conceals herself
Perhaps in accordance with every age and time
she appears to the lovers in every form.
She attires herself in every exquisite shape
So once it was Lubna, another time Buthaina, and again
She was called by Azza and mighty she was.
And they were none but her;
they were faithful to none but her

and yet in beauty, she had no peer.
Therefore by the law of unity, by their beauty
as she appeared to me
in her other form she was clad.⁴ (250-4)

The names mentioned in these verses refer to the women extolled by the pre-Islamic poets grouped under the title *‘Uthri*. The male counterparts to them are the pre-Islamic poets Qays, Jamil, and Kuthayyir, respectively. *‘Udhri* poetry exemplified the virtues of chaste and faithful love. J. C. Burgel following von Grunebaum offers this comment, “*‘Udhrite* love is absolute love, love as idea, love as religion. Such love is almost of necessity tragic....We do not know how Muḥammad regarded *‘Udhrite* love...his own attitude is obviously contrary to *‘Udhrite* behavior.”⁵ It was to have some resonance in the moral code of Islamic law and the emerging norms of the new Islamic society, but its primary elements, especially chastity, tragedy, and sacrifice, lent themselves easily to the work of the Sufi poets. As a group, it represents an important source used in the development of the “new style” that would be found in Abbasid poetry, based on a new formulation of the traditional elements of pre-Islamic poetic forms and standards. In both of the above passages, Ibn al-Fāriḍ offers a very clear depiction of the power and function of the attributes of God in creation.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 39

⁵ J. C. Burgel, “Love, Lust and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam as Reflected in Literary Sources,” *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, ed. (Malibu: Undena Publications), 1979.

Bahā'ullāh's poetry reflects a similar view. Though the following line raises other issues, it addresses this point.

و عن شعرها طيب الوصال تنفّحت و عن طرفها عين الجمال تقرّت

From her hair the scent of union wafted;
by her glance
the eye of beauty was brightened (7)

و سرّ ظهور لاح من ظهورها كلّ الوری و بالأصل قامت قیامتی

The mystery of revelation shown from her
radiated to all humanity; She rose
and my resurrection rose for her. (19)

Bahā'ullāh elaborates the concepts of manifestation and revelation frequently in his prose; it is one of the central themes in his writings.

Know thou that every created thing is a sign of the revelation of God. Each, according to its capacity, is, and will ever remain, a token of the Almighty. Inasmuch as He, the sovereign Lord of all, hath willed to reveal His sovereignty in the kingdom of names and attributes, each and every created thing hath, through the act of the Divine will, been made a sign of His glory. So pervasive and general is this revelation that nothing whatsoever in the whole universe can be discovered that doth not reflect His splendor.... Were the Hand of Divine power to divest of this high endowment all created things, the entire universe would become desolate and void.⁶

In another tablet he writes:

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct

⁶ Bahā'ullāh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh*, Shoghi Effendi, ed. and trans. (Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust), 1976, p. 184.

evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God, inasmuch as within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that Most Great Light. Methinks, but for the potency of that revelation, no being could ever exist.⁷

In these passages, Bahā'ullāh delineates the purpose of the revelation of God's attributes and their role in the process of creation. This clarifies and refines the concept as articulated by Ibn al-'Arabī and described through the Maiden in the *Naẓm al-Sulūk*. There we find many references to the divine attributes and their importance in the realms of creation. These are, of course, representations of the attributes of God. I find it intriguing that at a certain stage, the poet-lover claims to leave all attributes behind in his quest for a closer union with the beloved. When this is achieved they become a single identity, yet what identity remains for either without attributes? This refers to the station of *fanā'*, complete effacement; all that remains is God.

<p>هنا من صفات بيننا فاضمحلت إليّ ومنّي وارداً بمزيدتي تحجبت عنّي في شهودي و حجبتني⁸</p>	<p>فأفنى الهوى ما لم يكن ثمّ باقياً فألفيت ما ألفت عنّي صادراً وشاهدت نفسي بلصفات التي بها</p>
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Thus passion destroyed whatever remained
Here, the attributes between us withered away.
I found that whatever I find apart from me leads to me
and appeared from my abundance.
I gave witness to myself by those attributes
that veiled her from me and in my witness veiled myself.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 177.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

**Truly I was what I loved undoubtedly;
for she was, to herself as I myself and she was my benefactor. (159-161)**

On the one hand, the poet admits that he cannot rid himself of these attributes completely. He suggests that whatever he did to obliterate himself and destroy all that divides, in the end he could not. She gives him back to himself. His return to himself is the same as joining her because she is his true self, his soul, his spiritual essence. Yet at the same time he claims complete union and identity with the beloved. I would argue that Bahā'ullāh releases the seeker from these cycles of paradox and the dizzy circle of unity described in the *Naẓm al-Sulūk* with his use of the concepts of attributes and manifestation. The attributes and manifestations of God's names are the means to unity. They are the means by which God, through the Maiden, becomes present and accessible in our realm of existence. We may get no closer than the Messenger or Manifestation of God. They are the portals, they are the signs of God, they are His presence.

Bahā'ullāh's writings intertwine the concepts of revelation and manifestation. Revelation has two categories; the revelation of the word of God through His Prophet or Manifestation, and the revelation or manifestation of the names and attributes in the realm of creation. The creation of the world takes place through the agency of the word of God and His Manifestation. Bahā'ī thought follows closely both Islamic thought and Christian belief as expressed in

the opening passage of the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word..."

We find this link in his ode as well.

عن مغربها شمس الظهور تظہرت من مشرقها بدر الشهور تکرّت

From her western horizon the sun
of manifestation appeared; from her eastern horizon
the full moon of revelation returned. (6)

و سرّ ظهور لاح من ظهورها کلّ الوری و بالاصل قامت قیامتی

The mystery of revelation shown from her
radiated for all humanity; She rose
and my resurrection rose for her. (19)

Derivatives of the verb *zahara*, to appear or be manifest, occur frequently in the poem. The examples above are a few of them. I have translated them variously, most frequently pairing "revelation and manifestation." I have not translated it with a single term, for both contextual and stylistic reasons. In a number of cases two or more choices are interchangeable. Bahā'ullāh infrequently uses *nazala*, to send down or receive, as the technical term for revelation. In those cases it most often refers to the specific process of the Messenger of God receiving a revelation that is "sent down." We may conclude from this that Bahā'ullāh has enlarged the concept of the divine Messenger to advance a more sophisticated view of his station and function as prophet and messenger. In fact, he refers to the prophets and messengers using a large vocabulary of names and attributes; however, he

most often prefers the term "Manifestation of God."

If we analyze the lines of poetry from Ibn al-Fāriḍ with this concept in mind, we find ample evidence that his portrayal of the role and station of Muḥammad fits very well with Bahā'ullāh's concept of the Manifestation. The two poets differ only in regard to station of the Messengers and Prophets who preceded Muḥammad. According to Bahā'ullāh, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, all the Messengers of God, are equal in station and function. Their teachings differ only according to the needs of humanity during their dispensations. The differences in their appearance or the intensity of their radiance are due not to their ability to reflect God's light, but to the receptive capacity of mankind during the respective stages of its development. Shoghi Effendi, the great-grandson of Bahā'ullāh, termed this "progressive revelation." Each successive prophet reveals progressively more of God's knowledge as humanity evolves. Their collective missions are seen as the cause of the spiritual and cultural development of the human species.⁹ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, on the other hand, like most Muslims, believes that Muḥammad is the last and best of God's Messengers, despite the proclamation in the Qur'ān: "and His Apostles, making no distinction

⁹ This notion could be described as a type of spiritual and intellectual evolution, directed by the hand of God and effected by the process of divine revelation in successively more intense and copious outpourings of divine guidance. The parallels to the Darwinian concept of evolution are noteworthy. A thoroughly researched study of this topic would provide a valuable and welcome enrichment to the field of religious studies.

between any of His Apostles.”¹⁰ Furthermore, he seems to believe that Muḥammad’s title “seal of the prophets” means that after Muḥammad, the saints may equal the prophets in capacity for knowledge, though not function.¹¹ The intensity and perfection of Muḥammad’s revelation endowed his true followers with capacities far greater than those of previous dispensations. Ibn al-Fāriḍ extends this reasoning to suggest that the saints may achieve, through acquiring the “Muḥammadan eye” a proximity to God equal to that of the prophets of old. This may be more a function of the logic of the text than the effect of a claim, although some critics have attacked him for the grand claims advanced in this poem. The case of al-Ḥallāj, Sufism’s most noteworthy example of martyrdom, is worth noting here.¹² His insistent claim, in the station of *fanāʾ*, to have effaced himself in God’s presence and thus to become God’s “uncreated Truth” led to his trial and execution for heresy. Although many factors contributed to his unique case, he served both as warning and exemplar to the ecstatic mystics who came after him. Not surprisingly, harsh criticisms were leveled against Ibn al-Fāriḍ, but apparently only posthumously. Bahāʾullāh, in an epistle to one of the friends he met in Sulaymāniyyah known as *The Seven Valleys*, rejects categorically the

¹⁰ Qurʾān 2:285; Asad, *The Message of the Qurʾān*, p. 64. However, this point must be with 2: 153, the verse that states “some of the apostles we have endowed more highly than others...”

¹¹ Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 85-6.

¹² See Louis Massignon, *La Passion de Ḥusayn ibn Mansour Ḥallaj, Martyr Mystique de l’Islam*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Paris, 1975); English trans. H. Mason, *The Passion of al-Ḥallaj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, 4 vols. (Princeton, 1982).

claim that mystics can achieve union with God:

For God is, in His Essence, holy above ascent and descent, entrance and exit; He hath through all eternity been free of the attributes of human creatures, and ever will remain so. No man hath ever known Him; no soul hath ever found the pathway to His Being. Every mystic knower hath wandered far astray in the valley of the knowledge of Him; every saint hath lost his way in seeking to comprehend His Essence.¹³

This should not be read as a rejection or invalidation of the aspirations of the Sufis to the mystical experience of union with God. Rather, Bahā'ullāh attempts to clarify and moderate the claims of this literature. Ibn al-Fāriḍ rhapsodizes on the joy of union or mystical attainment and makes grand claims to unity. In the following lines the poet addresses his devotee:

ق طورك حيث النفس لم تك ظننت تقدمت شيئاً لا احترقت بجذوة سمواً ولكن فوق قدرك غبطتي هزت صحو الجمع من بين إخوتي بأحمد رؤيا مقلّة أحمديّة ترى حسناً في الكون من فيض طينتي ¹⁴	فطورك قد بلغت ط بلغت فو وحدك هذا عنده قف فعنه لو وقدري بحيث المرء يغبط دونه وكل الوري أبناء آدم غير أني فسمعي كليمي و قلبي منبأ وروحي لأرواح روح وكل ما
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So you were transported to your holy summit
And you attained beyond your reach
Where the soul could not imagine.
This is your limit; Halt and witness, lest
You approach something that will set you burning like a torch.
My power as a man is envied beyond compare
But my rank is beyond your ability and understanding.
All mankind are Adam's sons, but I have surpassed
The awareness of all my brotherhood.

¹³ Bahā'ullāh, *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, Marzieh Gail, trans. (Wilmette: Bahā'i Publishing Trust), 1978, pp. 22-3.

¹⁴ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. cit.*, p. 42, verses 308ff.

My ear is Moses' and my heart Muḥammad's
And with vision of a Muḥammadan eye.
And my spirit is the spirit of all spirits
and all that is seen as fair in the universe
is made from the excellence of my clay. (308-13)

For this he aroused the opposition of some of the orthodoxy.¹⁵ I think it is important not to take these claims too seriously. Such expressions are akin to *mubālagha*, or hyperbole, an attempt to express in words something inexpressible. This type of speech is a grand simile that states, "It is as if I..." It may help to remember that these lines are presented as instruction. He is pointing to a goal, reminding his student of the lofty station currently beyond his reach. On the other hand, Ibn al-Fāriḍ may also write with the same intent for which Al-Ḥallāj was killed. He wants to challenge the strict doctrines of the ruling orthodoxy, or he may be simply rhapsodizing. At the same time we should neither take the poet's statements too literally, reading into them precise doctrinal position, nor should we forget the subtle humor and evident playfulness in wording, thought, and tone that rescues this poem from its occasional drifts into esoteric theology and didactic instruction. For the mystical experience exceeds rational categories and seeks to challenge them. He perceives these as limits or veils that prevent the seeker from developing a closer relationship with God. Similarly, Bahā'ullāh

¹⁵ *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, A. J. Arberry, ed.: *Chester Beatty Monographs No. 4*, London: Emery Walker, 1952, p. 8.

warns against the veils of intellect and knowledge, and the transcendence of the divine spirit above all human conceptions and limitations of mind.

Such statements as we find in the lines of poetry above have long been regarded by the sober Muslim scholars, the jurists and theologians, as *shirk* or polytheism, and contrary to the Islamic concept of *tawhīd*, or unity of God. For their part, the Sufis cite numerous passages from the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* claiming to see in them the description of such states of nearness and the means to attain them. Bahā'ullāh re-interprets the whole project to mean that the mystical path leads one to the presence of God, but not God himself. The union with the divine beloved is union with His Manifestation or messenger. These figures do not represent God in His essence, rather they manifest, or perfectly reflect, the light of God. In his writings, the notion of attainment to the presence of God, or union with the Beloved, is tenable only if it means reaching to the presence of the Manifestation of God, uniting one's heart and spiritual being with God's vicegerent, and submitting to His will. Bahā'ullāh carefully avoids any possibility of equating the Manifestation of God with God in His unknowable essence. In Bahā'ī thought, incarnation is a logical impossibility. It is rejected as a form of *shirk*. But rather than condemning categorically such concepts, Bahā'ullāh re-interprets these notions as symbols, allusions, and attempts to express the ineffable dynamics governing the relationship of created

beings with their Creator. These relationships ultimately lead to God's chosen ones. God remains a transcendent, unknowable essence:

No tie of direct intercourse can possibly bind Him to His creatures. He standeth exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness. No sign can indicate His presence or His absence; inasmuch as by a word of His command all that are in heaven and on earth have come to exist, and by His wish, which is the Primal Will itself, all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being, the world of the visible.... The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to his saying: "His grace hath transcended all things; My grace hath encompassed them all" hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence. These sanctified Mirrors, these Day springs of ancient glory are one and all the Exponents of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose.¹⁶

Gems, mirrors, and daysprings are symbols for the prophets or manifestations.

They seem to occupy a realm of being between God and humanity. They are the link, the bridge, the bond uniting the human reality with the source of its creation. Without such a tie, all access is cut off; at the same time, the human being cannot transgress his limits, supercede the prophet, or arrogate that role and rank to himself.

In the writings of Bahā'ullāh, the Maid of Heaven is associated primarily with the process of revelation. In Ibn al-Fāriq's poem the Maiden performs

¹⁶ Bahā'ullāh, *The Kitāb-i Iqān*, Shoghi Effendi, trans. (Wilmette: Bahā' Publishing Trust), 1974, pp. 98-100.

similar functions of linking the human world with the realm of God.

فأنت بهذا المجد أجدر من أخي إجتراح مجدي عن رجاء وخيفة
و غير عجيب هز عطفك دونه بأهنا وأنهى لذة و مسرة¹⁷

You are far worthier of this great honor
than he who struggles zealously in hope and fear
No wonder that you laugh with great pleasure
considering the qualities attributed to him;
the people thought so many were forgettable,
that now are famed. (304-5)

The man who struggles in "hope and fear" may refer to the scholars of law and theology who strive¹⁸ with intellect and reason to resolve difficult issues of law or doctrine. In any case, the poem criticizes him whose piety arises from hope for reward or fear of punishment, instead of love for God. Sufism gained strength as a reaction against the hypocrisy of the Umayyad rulers. It gained further importance as an antidote to the strict formalism of the legal schools and their singular focus on purely outward acts of worship and obedience.¹⁹ It was also a needed counterweight to the narrowing definitions of doctrine with the triumph of the Ash'ari school over the Mu'tazili doctrines. *Kalām*, the Islamic theological science, reached the height of its development during the Abbasid period in the 9th and 10th centuries. These forces in the articulation and codification of Islamic

¹⁷ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. cit.*, p 41-42.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Fāriḍ uses the term *ijtihād* that also has the technical meaning of reasoning out the application of Islamic law. I infer a possible reference here to these scholars.

¹⁹ See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1975, p. 29ff.

belief and practice addressed the needs of an increasingly large, diverse, and technologically advanced civilization.²⁰ Yet they failed to address the needs of the inner life of the believers. To these emotional and spiritual needs, the mystics directed themselves. Yet the mystics, too, needed places to meet, exchange ideas, and refine their techniques for personal transformation. They developed their own institutions and societies. During times when governmental structures fell into decline and disarray, the Sufi brotherhoods became powerful forces for social and political organization. One of the most influential of these was the Naqshbandī Sufi order among whom Bahā'ullāh resided in Sulaymāniyyah. In the 12th and 13th centuries, Sufi thought and practice reached one of its high points. The great writer, thinker, and teacher, Muḥy al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī al-Andalūsī had the most dramatic impact of any Sufi master before or since. Even today, Muslims regard him as the "*shaykh al-akbar*," the greatest master. Born in Murcia, Andalusia, he lived from 1165-1240. He left Andalusia in 1193, spent seven years in Tunis, and then performed the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1202. He spent time in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. In 1223 he settled in Damascus and remained there until his death.²¹ A few comments must be offered. It is not

known if he ever met Ibn al-Fāriḍ, but they certainly must have known of each

²⁰ See W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: The University Press), 1973 and N. J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh: The University Press), 1964.

²¹ William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1989. p. ix. For a very well researched, though hagiographical, biography, see Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulfur*, Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge: 1993.

other. Their most important intersection occurred after their passing, when Sa'd al-Din Farghānī produced a commentary on the *Nāẓm al-Sulūk*. In that commentary he developed the term *waḥdat al-wujūd*, or “unity of being” that would focus much of the interest and controversy on Ibn al-ʿArabī’s teachings. Thus, the teachings of the great *shaykh* play a significant role in our understanding of Ibn al-Fāriq’s masterpiece and will also play a significant role in our understanding of Bahāʾullāh’s *qaṣīda*. Indeed, his teachings have echoes in many other Bahāʾī writings, as well.

در این طایفه سالک مراتب وحدت وجود شهود را طی نماید و بوحدهتی که مقدس از این دو مقام است واصل گردد احوال پی باین مقال برو نه بیان وجدال وهرکس دراین محفل منزل گزیده و یا ازین ریاض نیافتہ میدند که عرص میشود و سالک باید در جمیع این اسفار بقدر شعری ازشریعت که فیالحقیقه سرطریقت وثمره شجره حقیقت است انحراف نور زود در همه مراتب بذیل اطاعت اوامر متشبث باشد و بحبل اعراضی از مانعی متمسک تا از کانس شریعت مرزوق شود وبر اسرار حقیقت وافق گردد.²²

In this valley the wayfarer leaveth behind him the stages of the “oneness of Being and Manifestation” and reacheth a oneness that is sanctified above these two stations. Ecstasy alone can encompass this theme, not utterance nor argument and whosoever hath dwelt at this stage of the journey, or caught a breath from this garden land, knoweth wherof we speak.

In all these journeys the traveler must stray not the breadth of a hair from the “Law,” for this is indeed the secret of the “Path” and the fruit of the Tree of “Truth,” and in all these stages he must cling to the robe of obedience to the commandments, and hold fast to the cord of shunning all forbidden things, that he may be nourished from the cup of the Law and informed of the mysteries of Truth.²³

Bahāʾu'llāh referred to this as the “valley of true poverty and absolute

²² Bahāʾullāh, *Āṣṭr-i Qalam-i ʿAlāʾ*, p. 133.

²³ Marzieh Gail, *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, pp. 39-40.

nothingness.” As he describes this final stage of the mystical journey, the stations of *fanāʾ* and *baqāʾ* in which the self has been reduced to nothingness in the presence of God and attainment of the *maqṣud*, or desired one, he reminds his reader that at no stage should he stray from the clear boundaries of religion, of adherence to the law, as well as the requirements of the mystical path, yet comprehending the divine truth or reality of God that is exalted above human conception and beyond the reach of any of His servants. This specifically challenges the Sufis who claim in moments of ecstasy to have attained union with God. It also advances a precise critique of the concept of *wahdat al-wujūd* ascribed to Ibn al-ʿArabī, though more properly attributed to his students and successors. He does not refute the concept, but refines and limits it. He also subordinates it to the stage of *fanāʾ* and clarifies that it does not mean “pantheism.”²⁴ This maneuver enables him to protect it from the accusation of *shirk* by contextualizing it as an aspect of the mystical, visionary experience. It reflects a stage, or a degree of attainment within the station of the oneness that precedes *fanāʾ*. Bahāʾullāh’s use of the term *martaba* is significant. In several instances he uses this term instead of *maqām*. Gail translates the former term as “stage.” It conveys the sense that, rather than being a permanent station or attribute that the seeking mystic retains, it is a stage he passes through. Yet it

²⁴ See Chittick and others on Ibn al-ʿArabī’s thought. A full analysis and discussion of Bahāʾullāh’s views on this topic needs to be undertaken.

does not indicate a transitory state, *ḥāl*, the fleeting moments of perception or ecstasy that God grants the mystic from time to time in the course of his journey. The distinctions suggested by the choice of these terms point toward the understanding that the stages and stations are all a means to the end, to attainment of union followed by the stage of abiding in selfless, faithful servitude to God and service to His people.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and Bahāʾullāh all share the view that God's attributes are the source and locus of the existence of everything in creation. They lend the world of created being its life and its unity. This unity can only be properly perceived when the "servant draws nigh unto me in prayer until I become the eye wherewith he sees, the ear wherewith he hears...". This famous *ḥadīth qudsī*,²⁵ or divine tradition, figures significantly in *Nāẓm al-Sulūk* and Sufi thought more generally. Bahāʾullāh also refers to it in his other writings, though not directly in his *qaṣīda*. Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Bahāʾullāh use this tradition to show how the seeker may draw close to God and to verify that this kind of unity is a worthy goal. The type of prayer that leads to this attainment is "supererogatory," or those prayers recited in excess or what the law requires. The believer recites these not out of duty, but out of love, with the intention of seeking a closer relationship with God. God rewards this with an outpouring of

²⁵ A holy tradition of the highest order. In the text of this type of *ḥadīth*, God, not the Prophet or his companions, speaks.

His grace and grants the believer a kind of mystic vision or experience that transforms and purifies his perceptive faculties. Ibn al-Fāriq refers to this tradition in the verses quoted above, "My ear is Moses' ear...my heart informed by a Muhammadan eye." Bahā'u'llāh's states in *The Seven Valleys*:

Whensoever the light of Manifestation of the King of Oneness settleth upon the throne of the heart and soul, His shining becometh visible in every limb and member. At that time the mystery of the famed tradition gleameth out of the darkness: "A servant is drawn unto Me in prayer until I answer him; and when I have answered him, I become the ear wherewith he heareth...." For thus the Master of the house hath appeared within His home, and all the pillars of the dwelling are ashine with His light. And the action and effect of the light are from the Light-giver; so it is that all move through Him and arise by His will.²⁶

This describes the stage of *tawḥīd*, or unity. When it is achieved, an image of God appears in the heart of the servant and is reflected outward. This kind of unity still honors the distinction between God and His servants. God acts through His creation by the operation of His light and His will. This happens once the heart of the servant has become prepared through prayer, through turning to God. The believer must exert himself, merge his will with God's, and act in accordance with that will. On the same theme, he states in *The Hidden Words*:

O son of the throne! Thy hearing is My hearing, hear therewith. My sight is thy sight, do thou see therewith, that in thine inmost soul thou mayest testify unto My exalted sanctity, and I within Myself may bear witness to

²⁶ Bahā'u'llāh, *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

an exalted station for thee.²⁷

The believer then, acting in accord with the will of God, testifies. All the meanings of *shahāda* apply. He sees, bears witness to God, proclaims his faith, and sacrifices himself through acts of selfless service.

THE PRIMAL COVENANT

In the *Nāẓm al-Sulūk*, the theme of the primordial covenant between God and man occupies a central position. It is one of the primary thematic threads of the poem to which several important themes are attached.²⁸ Qurʾān 7:172 is the source for this concept. "And when thy Lord brought forth from the sons of Adam the seed of their loins, and called on them to bear witness for themselves, 'Am I not your Lord?' They said, 'Verily! We bear witness.' [Be warned!] Lest on the Day of Resurrection you say, 'Truly, we were ignorant of this.'"²⁹ All humanity represented as the seed of the sons of Adam are drawn forth and called to bear witness to the lordship of God. This is the pre-eternal covenant between God and man, that He will guide and sustain humanity and that we will recognize His lordship and obey His commands.

و منك شقائي بل بلائي منّة وفيك لباس البؤس أسبغ نعمة

²⁷ Bahāʾullāh, *The Hidden Words*, Shoghi Effendi, trans. (Wilmette: Bahāʾī Publishing Trust), p. 14.

²⁸ See Arberry, *Poem of the Way*, p. 75.

²⁹ Asad, *Message of the Qurʾān*, pp. 229-30.

أراني ما أوليته خير قنية قديم ولا بي فيك من شر فتية³⁰

From you my misery, even my dire distress is a bounty;
For your sake the robe of affliction is the greatest blessing.
My ancient allegiance to you made me see that
what I received from evil youths was a noble gift. (49-50)

The pledge of fidelity to the beloved as a relationship of obedience and guidance enables the mystic to recognize that love transforms all torments suffered in her path into bounties. This refers to the station of *tauba*, conversion or recognition, to which the seeker must return. In it he is granted vision and understanding and learns faithfulness and patience. He then realizes that anything suffered faithfully will benefit him. The next reference to the covenant occurs at the beginning of an impassioned oath where the lover swears his love to her by her most noble attributes.

و محكم عهد لم يحامر بيننا تخيل نسخ وهو خير ألية³¹
و أخذك ميثاق الولا حيث لم أبن بمظهر لبس النفس في فيء طينتي
و سابق عهد لم يحل مذ عهدته ولا حق عقد جل عن حل فترة

By a firm bond that no thought of abrogation
Can come between us; that is the best part.
By your taking the pledge of fidelity
Before I appeared robed in self
in the shade of my clay
And by the primordial covenant
Not changed since I swore it,
A firm tie too glorious to slip or slacken. (67-69)

³⁰ Ibn al-Fārid, *Op. Cit.*, p. 29, verses 49-50.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Both of these passages link the presence of the Beloved to the presence of God at the moment of creation. This equates easily with Bahā'ullāh's depiction of the Maid of Heaven as the source of creation. The terms used for covenant in the second passage, *'ahd* and *mīthāq*, are stronger than that used in the first passage, *walā'*. The verb *'ahada* has the root meaning of "to charge with," "make accountable for," as well as "covenant with." As a noun it has the similar meaning of "command," "compact," or "binding contract," and implies a relationship of obedience to an authority. The term *walā'* means allegiance, fidelity, loyalty, even friendship; essentially it is a contract based on love or kinship. Lastly, *mīthāq* means a firm bond, covenant, pledge or treaty, but with the connotation of mutual trust and faithfulness. Ibn al-Fāriḍ brings all these terms and their connotations into play.

<p>و حلُّ أواخي الحجب في عقد بَيْعَتِي³² بدت عند أخذِ العهد في أوليَّتِي ولا باكتساب واجتلاب جبلة ظهورُ وكانت نشوتي قبل نشأتِي</p>	<p>إلى كم أواخي السترَ ها قد هتكته منحتُ ولاها يوم قبل أن فنلتُ ولاها لا بسمع وناظر وهمتُ بها في عالم الأمر حيث لا</p>
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How long shall I clutch my veil?
 There! I have destroyed it.
 In lawful exchange I will cling
 To the covering of God's covenant.
 I was given her accord on a day before she appeared
 To forge the contract at my primeval origin.
 I gained her pledge of fidelity neither by hearing
 nor sight nor forfeiture nor natural acquisition

³² *Ibid.*, p. 34, verse 155-58.

I loved her madly in the realm of command
Before she even appeared she set me reeling.
Though I had not yet stepped into this world. (155-58)

The lover removes the veils that have separated him from his Beloved since his creation took corporeal form. He was able to gain this state of rapturous love and intoxication. Though he achieved this through experience and passion, yet it transpired at the moment of his creation. He regains it through his encounter with the beloved in the tavern and his efforts in the path of love to rekindle this relationship. This places his love on a level higher than that first experienced in the primordial state. Therefore, the degree of unity achieved is also greater because it is one of love and devotion. Love is earned, not only by obedience to God's command and receipt of His unbidden grace, but through acts of worship and self-sacrifice. Yet because he followed this path out of desire, the poet finds a veil still remains, perhaps the last barrier to be removed. He has returned to that state of uncreated union with God. He seeks to destroy all dividing attributes--defining, individuating characteristics.

فأفنى الهوى ما لم يكن ثمّ باقياً هنا من صفات بيننا فاضمحلت³³

Thus passion destroyed whatever remained
Here, the attributes between us withered away. (159)

Love is the agency by which the veils are obliterated. He gives up all hope for reward in this life and the next. He gives up wealth and poverty, and then

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 34, verse 159-161.

relinquishes even the merit of these deeds of detachment. She alone suffices as his reward.

The concept of the primordial covenant does not occupy the central position in Bahá'ulláh's ode that it does in *Naẓm al-Sulūk*. In the larger body of Bahá'ulláh's writings, however, the concept of covenant is fundamental and pervasive. Bahá'ulláh's use of this principle has been discussed in a number of publications.³⁴ The pre-eternal aspects of that covenant is perhaps best reflected in what is known as the "short obligatory prayer," that he ordained to be recited at noon by the believers among his followers. "I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee."³⁵ This statement bears directly on this theme, that all humanity, at the moment of our creation, received the capacity, purpose, and obligation to know and worship God. For Muslims, this truth is pre-eternal. Before we were created in corporeal form, we had already recognized and borne witness to God's lordship. All our lives, the whole of the mystic journey of the Sufis is the process of realizing this pledge and returning to that state of spiritual unity with God and submission to His will. Similarly, Bahá'ulláh states:

Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He,

³⁴ See Adib Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1992. See also, George Townsend, *The Covenant, An Analysis* (Manchester: Bahá'í Publishing Trust), 1950.

³⁵ *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, The Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá'* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust), 1991, p. 4. For the Arabic, see Bahá'ulláh, *Kitáb-i Aqdas* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Center), 1995, p. 40.

through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him--a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation....

and

...I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure? If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, while standing in the presence of God be asked, "Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self," and if such a man should reply...such a plea will, assuredly be rejected.³⁶

The second passage establishes the same link between the innate capacity to recognize God and being called to account in the Day of God. Bahā'ullāh refers to the pre-eternal relationship between God and Man in the following couplets from the "Ode of the Dove:"

ها هو حدّ فالحدّ اعظم خطئة

وصفت بنفس و نسبتها بنفسی

"You described yourself and joined partners
with me; Ha! Sinner!

Breaking this commandment is the greatest sin." (54)

وعن قطرتي بحر الوجود تسحبت

ومن ذرتي شمس المحيط تكوّرت

"From my atom, the primordial sun

³⁶ Bahā'ullāh, *Glennings*, pp. 65 and 143.

spun off; from my drop,
the sea of creation was drawn forth. (107)

من كاف أمري قد قضى لكلّ حيمها و عن لطف سرّي قد بدا كلّ بديعة

"From the *kāf*³⁷ of my command, judgment was passed
on all; while from the kindliness of my heart,
every wondrous thing appeared. (115)

In the second of the couplets quoted above, the references to this principle can be found in the verb "drawn forth," as the seed of the sons of Adam was taken from his loins. The third couplet also refers to the events of primordial creation. The "*kāf* of my command" refers to *kun*, or "Be thou..." (and it is), the command by which God calls all creation into being, particularly the individual soul. The term *amri* is glossed by Bahā'ullāh stating "the realm of command is intended." The judgment refers, in this context, to the verse of the Qur'ān quoted above, that because of our created capacity to recognize God, we may be judged for our failure to do so. The first verse may be only an oblique reference to the covenant. If we have recognized the lordship of God, we have also recognized His unity and, therefore, on any occasion in which we join partners with him, we have broken the most basic law and violated the most basic of all divine compacts by choosing to worship something or someone other than God.

³⁷ The Arabic letter for "k."

THE STORY OF MOSES AS MYSTICAL ALLEGORY

In order to regain the primordial state of unity, the seeker must choose the path of self-sacrifice. The Sufis describe these stages of the path following the example of Moses on Sinai. Ibn al-Fāriḍ refers repeatedly to these events throughout his ode. Following other Sufi mystics and writers, he recasts it as a symbolic description of key stages of a mystic's journey, the stages of *tawḥīd*, unity, *fanā'*, death of self, and *baqā'*, subsisting. These stages the seeker must traverse and endure to reach the presence of God. As both poets describe the progress of their relationship to the beloved, they employ the figure of Moses repeatedly, either by name or through references to the sacred mountain of Sinai. These references perform the same function in each poem and invite similar interpretations. Moses on Sinai, his encounter with God and its consequences as described in Judaic and Islamic scripture, are read as an allegory for the Sufi path to attainment. We note below a few references from each ode.

بَلَمَعَتْهَا طُورُ الْبَقَاءِ تَظْهَرَتْ لِعِزَّتِهَا نُورُ الْبِهَاءِ تَجَلَّتْ

By her brilliance the mountain of eternity
appeared; by her might
the light of glory became effulgent. (5)

This first reference to Sinai in Bahā'ullāh's ode establishes important links between his own revelation and the experience of Moses on Sinai. Bahā'ullāh states that from merely a bright flash , *lum'a*, or perhaps a smile or glance from

the Maid, the mountain of eternity, i.e. Sinai, appeared. The revelation of her might, 'izza,³⁸ revealed the effulgence, *tajalla*, of the light of *bahā'*, and this caused Moses to swoon. This suggests that what Moses witnessed on Sinai was the same light the Maiden revealed through her might to him and to Bahā'ullāh. Ibn al-Fāriḍ suggests a similar connection. This linkage through the Maiden between Moses and Bahā'ullāh will be elaborated in several passages of the poem and the notes that attend them. The lengthiest discussion of this is the note to verse 8.

بنور وجهها وجه الهدى قد اهتدى بنار طلوعها نفس الكليم تزكت

39

By the light of her face, the face of guidance
is guided; by the fire of her appearance,
the soul of Moses is purified. (7)

In Bahā'ullāh's note to this verse, he explains as an allegory, what Moses experienced on Sinai, and the mystic stages these events represent.

When Moses, whose merciful soul was made to dwell in the human temple, purified and sanctified his feet from the sandals of unfounded beliefs, he drew forth the hand of divine power from the bosom of his mighty cloak of honor. Then he arrived at the holy, beautiful and blessed valley of the heart, which is the throne of eternal splendor and the seat adorned with the might of lordship. When he reached the land of Sinai, that stretches out from the right of the sacred spot of light, he inhaled the fragrant breeze of the spirit from the eternal dayspring. He perceived the light of the eternal Presence from all directions and no directions. With the warm fervor of the fragrant breeze of divine love, he kindled a fire on the embers of the logs of singleness in the lamp of the divine essence in the

³⁸ The manuscript varies from the published text, which reads *gharra*, or radiance. See *Āsār-i Qalam-i 'Alā'*, p. 197.

³⁹ The original text of the note is found in Appendix 1.

niche of his heart, after parting the transitory veils from the lamp's glass. Quaffing the mead of the peerless Beauty and the pure wine of the everlasting Presence, he attained the valley of eternal cognizance, after erasing the stages of opposition. He discovered, because of fervent attraction and desire for encounter, the city of perpetual partaking.... O would that a hearer might be found so that a sprinkling from the depths of the ocean of fire, and from the midst of this reservoir of flame, could be mentioned.... How happy and blessed is the soul that casts the cage of his body into the fire of love, and the soul who becomes a familiar spirit so that he may attain this lofty grace of relief and partake of the high favor of God's majesty. All of this that has been mentioned, concerning the degrees of guidance and stages of purification of the soul, in regard to the rank of Moses, is according to our Prophet, upon Him be peace, (offered) for the purpose that these splendors may appear in the visible world. Otherwise, that Blessed One has always been guided by the guidance of God and always will be....

This lengthy note serves several functions. First, it explains to the reader the meaning of the couplet. Yet quickly it exceeds this purpose and elaborates the events concerning Moses on Sinai. It retells his story (referenced in Qur'an 7:143-46 and elsewhere) according to the inner process through which Moses perceives God's effulgence, converses with Him, and receives the fullness of His divine revelation. Bahā'ullāh specifically calls attention to the significant actions and stages in this process. These reflect the beliefs of many Sufis concerning the stages and states one must traverse in order to achieve a similar proximity to the presence of God or union with the beloved. Bahā'ullāh allegorizes these key elements to enable the reader to understand more fully the meaning or significance of the experience of Moses on Sinai. A remarkable aspect of this

narrative annotation by the poet can be observed in the diction and tone of the narrative voice. It seems as if the poet's enthusiasm and vision exceed the bounds of the poetry and the strictures of the prosody and overflow into this note. We will point out several other cases where the momentum and ecstasy of the poem spill over into the notes. In these cases, the notes offer more than simple explanations of obscure words or justifications of variations in meter or syntax.

The barest outline of the transformation of Moses into a prophet of God begins with his removing the "sandals of unfounded beliefs (or doubts)." He then "draws forth the hand of divine power from the bosom of his mighty cloak of honor." These refer to the Qur'anic verses that describe Moses' hand as snow-white when he draws it from his garment to show the people the power of God and the station of prophethood revealed in him. They also symbolize that his hand is no longer that of the murder, but has been transformed into the hand of God and thereby becomes purified of sin and defect. The cloak represents the mantle of prophethood, the cloak associated with Muḥammad and a symbol of divine authority. Thus purified and invested with authority, Moses is given the ability to perceive the divine fragrances and witness the signs of God in the peaks and valleys of Sinai. This perceptive ability enables him to achieve singularity, an aspect of God's oneness and unity. Moses' will is overtaken by

God's will and they become united. This type of unity, or singularity, is described as a fire that consumes materiality like a bush, without destroying its true life, symbolized by its verdure. Resistance and opposition give way to attraction when the beauty of God is perceived. He joins the "companions of the fire." This passage, however, refers obliquely to Abraham and his trial. This is not hellfire, but holy fire. This fire destroys the limitations and veils that separate the lover from his beloved, the believer from God. It is the fire of the love of God. The next reference to the sacred tree "neither of the east or of the west" recalls the famous verse, known as "the verse of light," Qur'an 24: 35, which describes the light of God. This is another favorite passage, rich in meaning for the Sufis. Bahā'ullāh also links the tree mentioned in this passage with the *sidra* tree, the tree that grows in the highest grades of heaven and marks the nearest point to God that any creature may reach, including the prophets and messengers. It was there that Muḥammad ascended in the *mi'rāj* and where he is said to have received the commandments for the daily Muslim prayers. In Bahā'ullāh's writings, the *sidra* tree is the symbol of prophethood whose presence is equated with the presence of God; it is achieved only by true believers. It is at this stage that Moses experiences *fanā'*, one of the highest goals in Sufi practice. This stage enables the believer or lover to die to himself and be resurrected in God. This is the ultimate degree of unity, but not the last stage on the path. It

should be followed by a return to consciousness and a state in which multiplicity is again perceived, but in which unity is also recognized. In this state, Ibn al-Fāriḍ returns to his disciples to instruct them on the path to unity and God-consciousness. Moses returns to his people with the commandments.

Bahā'ullāh's note describes Moses as now able to answer his accusers that yes, he had been a sinner, a murderer even, but now is purified and chosen by God as His servant to guide the people. Bahā'ullāh concludes that without Moses' call to prophethood, he would have died.

In the next reference to Moses in the "Ode of the Dove," the Maiden states:

وَعَنْنُورِ سِرِّي سِرَّ الْوُجُودِ كَنْمَلَةٍ وَمِنْ نَارِ حُبِّي نَارِ الْوُقُودِ كَقَبَسَةٍ
وَعَنْ فِطْرَتِي فِطْرَ أَلَاهِ تَدَيَّنْتَ وَمِنْ كَفْتِي كَفَّ السَّيِّئَاتِ تَضَمَّنْتَ

"In the light of my inner being, all created being is like an ant; in the fire of my love the flames of hell are but an ember.

"Only his nature, he who was confirmed in true faith, is like mine; with my palm the hand of Moses was held close on Sinai." (42-3)

Bahā'ullāh notes that this couplet refers to several verses of the Qur'ān, specifically mentioning verses 30:30, 28:32, and 27:12. Two of these relate the events on Mt. Sinai. The third discusses man's true nature as created by God. The Maiden is the creative agent of God and her nature is the pattern for the

creation of the prophet and his inner being. This couplet is followed two lines later with another reference to Moses.

وعن نظرتي موسى البقاء تصعقت ومن لعني طور الجبال تدكت

“On seeing me, immortal Moses fell stunned, prostrate;
from one glimpse of me the holiest
of mountains was crushed to dust.” (46)

This couplet refers to another verse of the Qurʾān [28:143] mentioned in a note.

Here again, the poem asserts that it is the Maiden whom Moses witnesses on Sinai. The Maiden represents the splendor and power of the presence of God. The next reference is the voice of the Maiden as she asserts her independence from all created things, no matter how lofty.

أبهى بهاء الطور عندي كحشوة وأنسى ضياء النور عندي كظلمة

“Most splendid is the splendor of Sinai,
but to me it is like fluff. Most brilliant is heaven’s
light; but to me it is utter darkness.” (100)

In both passages, the Maid proclaims her primacy and power over other symbols of divine revelation, specifically Mt. Sinai and Moses himself. More than this, she states that the splendor of Sinai and the radiance of heavenly light are in her eyes nothing worthy of her consideration. It recalls the maxim that the piety of a righteous man may be a sin to the truly holy and enlightened one. Similarly, the light of heaven to the Maid is only more darkness of the created

world; nothing compared to the uncreated splendor of the All-Merciful. In a later verse she states:

أرض الروح بالأمر بي قد مشى و عرش الطور قد كان موضع وطنتي

"He who walked the land of the Spirit,
by decree walked with me; the throne of Sinai
ever was my native land to tread." (111)

The Maiden is the companion of the prophets. She is the source of revelation and all that men consider holy. The site of revelation is her home.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ offers a similar point: the union he achieved is with the spirit of Muḥammad. His references to Sinai suggest that the poet has experienced a similar devastation of self in drawing close to God through the Maiden.

هَبِّي قَبْلَ يُفْنِي الْحُبُّ مَنِّي بَقِيَّةً أَرَاكِ بِهَا لِي نَظْرَةً الْمُتَلَفَّتِ
و مَنِّي عَلَى سَمْعِي بَلَنَ إِنِّ مَنَعْتَ أَنْ أَرَاكِ فَمِنْ قَبْلِي لِغَيْرِي لَذَّتِ
فَعَنْدِي لِسْكَرِي فَاقَةٌ لَا فَاقَةٌ لَهَا كَبْدِي لَوْلَا الْهَوَى لَمْ تُفْتَتِ
وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا بِي بِالْجِبَالِ وَكَانَ طُورَ سَيْنَا بِهَا قَبْلَ التَّجَلَّى لَدَكَّتِ⁴⁰

Before love destroys what little remains of me, grant that
I may see you turn one glancing gaze my way.
Or, if you will deny me seeing you, let me hear you say "Never"
as another delighted in this long before me.
From this stupor I need reviving in her.
If only passion had not shattered my heart.
Truly if the mountains, even Sinai, had borne all I have,
Even before God's effulgence there,
They would have been scattered in dust. (8-11)

⁴⁰ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. Cit.*, p. 27.

Significant differences may be found by contrasting the elements that each poet selects from the story of Moses. Bahā'ullāh does not mention the refusal of direct vision given in the verses above. His Maiden gives him several prohibitions, but he does not mention the one against seeing God. Ibn al-Fāriḍ creates an effective analogy here between his heart and Sinai. He contrasts God's refusal to show His countenance to Moses, with the revelation of His word and voice. He suggests that, like Moses, he was overwhelmed by the nearness of the divine Beloved, her splendor, and his own ardent love. I should note that I have translated *kabd* as heart, though it is literally liver, the locus of strong, physical emotions, which is appropriately paired with *hawā* or passion.⁴¹ This terminology is usually used to describe physical, not spiritual love. Here it conveys the intensity of the emotional experience of the poet. This also expresses an early stage in the progress of the lover.

Near the end of the poem he returns to the theme of Moses on Sinai. The poetic voice is greatly changed as the lover has gained closer and closer union with his God. The voice is more authoritative and prophetic.

في قدس الوادي وفيه خلعتُ خلعَ نعلي على الناي و جُدتُ بخلعتي
و أنستُ أنواري فكننتُ لها هدى و ناهيكَ من نفسٍ عليها مضيتُ
وأسستُ أطواري فناجيتُني بها وقضيتُ أطواري وذاتي كليمتي⁴²

⁴¹ In Greek medicine, the liver is regarded as the seat of passions. This is carried forward in Islamic medicine and used frequently as a symbol in Arabic and Persian literature.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

By me the valley was sanctified
And in the removal of my sandals, for the sake of the petitioner,
I was generous in my divestment.
I made known my lights, so I was their guidance;
And in prohibiting you from your self on her behalf
is a confirmation of the covenant.
So I founded my holy mountains
And I exalted myself by them
And I destroyed my holy mountains
And was a Moses, a converser with God, to myself. (754-56)

Sinai is made holy by Moses' presence there and his interaction with God, present through His voice and His splendor. This establishes Sinai as a holy place, a place of true worship. The actions of the prophet are gifts, symbolic gestures for his followers to learn from. The prophet guides and is guided by the presence of the spirit of God within him, his true soul. It is quite fitting that these passages should be among the last verses of the poem. The poetic voice conveys the notion of union with the divine voice, but more carefully and precisely. The voice is like a triple-exposure photograph in which we see Moses; the presence of God, and the poet joined. This is possible because of the effacement, or *fanā'*, of the individual in the presence of God, as the Sufis believed took place with Moses on Sinai. Even the epiphany in the Christian Gospels conveys this same image, where the figures of Moses, Elijah, and Christ merge. This is the great favor and union that the mystics seek. Enlightened and transformed, the mystic returns to consciousness to guide others, following the

example of the prophets and messengers. The connecting link between them is the poet's essence as interlocutor. During meditation, and by communing in prayer, the inner being of the believer is the channel and locus where this may occur, when the self, the individuality, the identity, and the physicality of the devotee is effaced by the glory and grace of God. All that remains, once this occurs, is the expression of God. This same end is sought, even today, in the oral recitations of this poem in Sufi gatherings, and observances at the shrine of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

The two poems share a similar thematic structure. They draw on the same Qur'ānic sources, as well as the same mystical teachings. For each poet, the Maiden mediates between them and God. She represents the divine presence in realms of revelation and creation. She is the spirit of the prophets or manifestations of God. The two poets differ concerning the degree of unity with God that the seeker may obtain. Ibn al-Fāriḍ describes a complete merging of identities between the lover, the Maiden and the Prophet. Bahā'ullāh maintains a separation of identities, allowing the closest relationship to form only between the Manifestations of God and God, their Lord. All others reach their goal through union with God's vicegerents.

Chapter Five

The Lovers' Wish

In this chapter we conclude our discussion of the thematic structures in both odes. As we reach the end of our argument, we will address the most significant similarities and differences found in these two poems regarding the relationship between the lover and his beloved, between the servant and his Lord. Each writer has a different notion of his role and function and has envisioned a somewhat different audience. Therefore, the terms of the relationship between the poet and the listener may differ, as well. Following this discussion we will offer more general conclusions, and suggest implications for future lines of research.

A. J. Arberry correctly identified the thematic importance to the *Naẓm al-Sulūk* of the Qur'ānic verse in which God addresses the seed of Adam, "Am I not your Lord?"¹ He observed that it provides one of the basic underlying structures of the narrative trajectory of the entire *qaṣīda*. This structure must be linked, however, to the symbolic constellation that includes both the story of Moses and the concept of the martyred lover. These structures: covenant, revelation, and martyrdom, provide the thematic underpinning of the poem. Three topics remain before us. The first will address the structure of the relationship between the lover and the beloved governed by the symbolic

¹ Qur'ān 7:172.

constellation of martyrdom. The second topic concerns the dominant issue in both poems, that of reunion with the beloved. The third governs the structure of the relationship between the text, the poet, and the audience.

LOVE AND SACRIFICE

We have noted the most important elements of the narrative structure. We pointed out the function and significance of suffering and sacrifice on the part of the lover to win the favor of his beloved. The ardent lover faces a dual challenge: to find a befitting means to express his love and to discover the way to attain her presence and draw as close as possible. He solves this challenge through sacrifice. On the one hand, his love is his gift. This he offers freely. Yet this love must be acceptable to the beloved. This is conditioned by its purity. Is his love truly and freely given to the beloved, or does he really love himself and seek his own gain from loving her? The lover must prove the truth of his love and the purity of his motive. He will accomplish this through suffering or martyrdom. Bahā'ullāh introduces the theme of sacrifice soon after he has described the beauty, splendor, and power of the Maid of Heaven.

قلت لها روحي فداك و ما بي لقاك أرحمي فلا تكشف عني فضيحتي

I said, "May my soul and all I have be your sacrifice,
that we may meet; have mercy!
uncover not my shame. (17)

He then elaborates some of the aspects of this sacrifice in his note to this verses:

That is, whatever gifts I possess for verbal expression or deeper meaning; whatever I know concerning matters of names and attributes; and whatever God bestowed on me regarding the seen and unseen realms, I sacrifice that I might meet you just once, or gaze on you for only a moment. I beg Thy forgiveness, O my God, if I ever laid claim to what is in Your hands. But I swear by Thy might, O my God, if I cannot be thus, I want to be near you, then. For other than this, nothing can ever benefit me and my heart will never rest. For if you were to give me everything that is in the heavens and on the earth, then I would ask you this, O my God, that it be sacrificed in your path. For no one has been sacrificed without you revealing to your servant some of the greatest signs of your love and most glorious tokens of your affection. So may you be content with my soul and its hopes, while truly Thou art powerful over all things.

Significantly, Bahāʾullāh offers to sacrifice, as his most cherished of possessions, his abilities of expression and his understanding of the realms of God. All this he would sacrifice to meet or gaze on the Maid of Heaven. He then identifies this as a sacrifice in the path of service to God. This path of service involves giving up his own knowledge to receive God's revelation, God's knowledge, and these are the greatest signs of God's love. Signs, *āyāt*, also mean scriptural verses.

The appetitive self presents the greatest obstacle on the path to union with the beloved. Ibn al-Fāriḍ describes at great length the barriers to union he must overcome. These are the veils of self. Desires for pleasure, for comfort, prevent the seeker from enduring the rigors of the mystical path. As we have quoted previously, the Maid of Heaven gives Ibn al-Fāriḍ the same advice.

و لم تفنّ ما لا تُجتلى فيك صورتي فلم تهونني ما لم تكن في فانيّا
فؤادك و ادفع عنك غيكَ بالتّي فدع عنك دعوى الحبّ و ادعُ لغيره
وها أنتَ حيّ إنّ تكن صادقاً متّ و جانب جناب الوصلِ هيهات لم يكن
من الحبّ فاختر ذاك أو خلّ خلتي² هو الحبّ إنّ لم تقض لم تقض مارباً

You have not truly loved me if you have not passed away in me;
You have not past away as long as my image does not appear in you,
So leave off your claim to love and proclaim your heart to another;
Put off your transgression with this.
As for nearness to the court of union, lo, there is nothing!
And lo! you are alive; but if you are sincere, then die!
This is love! If you don't die, you don't reach the goal of love;
So choose this or leave me be and lose my companionship.³ (99-102)

Lois Giffen enables us to appreciate the cultural context for the ideological construct that underlies these verses.⁴ A scriptural foundation for the notion that lovers who remain faithful and chaste die as martyrs first appears in the form of a *ḥadīth*, cited by Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Dāʿūd al-Iṣfahānī (868-910), in his *Kitāb al-Zahrā*.⁵ Oddly enough, he was one of the jurists to issue a *fatwā*, or legal opinion, that it would be lawful to execute al-Ḥallāj, Sufism's most famous martyr, on charges of heresy.⁶ Later writers would advance the idea that Ibn Dāʿūd was himself a martyr for earthly love. In the twining of their stories, an

² *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴ Lois Anita Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love Among the Arabs: The Development of the Genre* (New York: New York University Press), 1971, pp. 8-13. Giffen quotes the *ḥadīth* from the *Kitāb al-Zahrā* of Ibn Dāʿūd: "The Messenger of God—upon him be blessing and peace—said, He who loves and remains chaste and conceals his secret and dies, dies a martyr..."

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁶ See Massignon, *La Passion d'al-Ḥallāj* (Paris: Paul Beuthner), 1922, vol 1, pp. 161-183

important intersection occurs between the archetypical lover of God and the virtuous lover of a woman and their common fate. Love has its own laws of unity and its universal requirements. Erotic love is a reflection of divine love and divine love is best expressed by the erotic metaphor. Ibn al-Fārid fully appreciates this and expresses his unifying vision in these verses:

وما برحت تبدو و تخفى لعلّة	على حسب الأوقات في كلّ حقبة
و تظهر للعشاق في كلّ مظهر	من اللبس في أشكال حسن بديعة
ففي مرّة لبنى وأخرى بثينة	وأونة تدعى بعزة عزّت
و لسن سواها لا ولا كُنْ غيرها	وما إن لها في حسنهما من شريكة
كذاك بحكم الإتحاد بحسنها	كما لي بدت في غيرها و تزيت

She appears and conceals herself
 Perhaps in accordance with every age and time
 she appears to the lovers in every form.
 She attires herself in every exquisite shape
 So once it was Lubna, another time Buthaina, and again
 She was called by Azza and mighty she was.
 And they were none but her;
 they were faithful to none but her
 and yet in beauty, she had no peer.
 Therefore, by the law of unity, by their beauty,
 as she appeared to me
 in her other form she was clad.⁷ (250-54)

Ibn al-Fārid advances his hope to be regarded as a martyr for the love of his Mystic Maid in dozens of verses. Yet he informs his protege that this honor is not his to earn, but hers to grant. His aspiration unites both conceptions of love's martyrs: the mystic lover of the divine Spirit and the earthly lover, such as the

⁷ Ibn al-Fārid, *Op. Cit.*, p. 39.

chaste and devoted 'Uthri poets or Majnūn Layla.

بكلّ قبيلٍ كمّ قَتيلٍ بها قضى وكم الورى مثلي أُماتت صِباة إذا ما أُلّحت في هواها دمي ففي	أسى لم يفز يوماً إليها بنظرة ولو نظرت عطفاً إليه لأُحيت ذرى العزّ والعلياء قدّري أُلّحت ^a
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How many a victim was slain by grief for her in every tribe
Though he never won a single day to gaze on her.
How many a man like me has fervent longing killed,
Though had she glanced kindly on him he would have been revived.
But if she ordained the shedding of my blood for loving her
Then she raised my rank to the summits of honor and loftiness. (118-20)

He wants to join the ranks of her slain lovers, martyrs to her cause; yet he still
harbors the desire to be revived. The sacrifice has not been obtained yet.

Bahā'ullāh's Maid of Heaven offers a similar comment, though she passes
a negative judgement on his worthiness to be her lover.

فكمّ من حسين بمثلك قد أَرادني فكمّ من حبيب فوقك قد أُحِبّني	فكمّ من عليّ كشبهك من أُحِبّني فكمّ من صفي كفوك من أهل صفوتي
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"How many Ḥusayns like you
have labored for me; how many 'Alis
just like you have loved me!

"How many lovers loved me better than you;
how many my peers, of the choicest men,
have cried out like you!" (38-39)

In his book of laws, *The Kitāb-i Aqdas*, Bahā'ullāh urges his followers to "Observe
My commandments, for the love of My beauty." The lover does whatever the

^a *Ibid.*, p. 32.

beloved wishes, in order to please her and demonstrate his love. Evoking the "beauty" of God suggests pure love and detachment. Beauty cannot be questioned. It exists on its own merits. Simply encountering it and gazing upon it brings joy. It touches something deep within us. Beauty depends on recognition, *ʿirfān*, or innate knowledge, neither learned nor acquired, and the heart responds.

The self of the lover, his primary veil, must be rent for him to unite with his beloved. If his love is pure enough, and his suffering severe enough, he may achieve the status of a martyr to love. Bahāʾullāh introduces this element of tragedy in the verses below. This provides the drama and pathos on which to build the narrative trajectory; from these elements, then, the poem derives its emotional force.

وعرش العماء أرض عليها تمشيت
وفي كل نار قد حرقت لفرقتي
على قلبي وهذا من أول منيتي

وغايتي القصوى مواقع رجلها
وفي كل عين قد بكيت لوصلها
بسطت بكل البسط لإلقاء رجلها

I spread myself as a carpet
for her to cast her foot upon my heart;
this, from the beginning, was my goal.

I sought reunion everywhere;
I dotted the letters of nearness
on every grain of dust.

If only I were swift in reaching her light;

**I was cast far, far away
after being so near. (10-12)**

These verses demonstrate the essential relationship between pain, yearning, and love. The second verse above refers to one of the many wonderful stories about Majnūn Layla, the legendary poet lover who went mad for love of the beautiful Layla.⁹ Majnūn Layla is among the earliest figures in Islamic literature to attain the station of martyrdom for love. This legendary lover searched endlessly and everywhere to find his beloved Layla. He sacrificed his body and mind in the course of his search. He became known as the mad lover, *majnūn*, meaning crazy. Bahā'ullāh eloquently describes in *The Seven Valleys* that the path to reunion entails of pain and sacrifice:

Now is the traveler unaware of himself, and of aught besides himself. He seeth neither ignorance nor knowledge, neither doubt nor certitude; he knoweth not the morn of guidance from the night of error. He fleeth both from unbelief and and faith, and deadly poison is a balm to him.

Wherefore 'Aṭṭār saith:

For the infidel, error—for the faithful, faith;

For 'Aṭṭār's heart, an atom of Thy pain.

For the steed of this valley is pain; and if there be no pain this journey will never end. In this station the lover hath no thought save the Beloved, and seeketh no refuge save the Friend. At every moment he offereth a hundred lives in the path of the Loved One, at every step he throweth a thousand heads at the feet of the Beloved.¹⁰

⁹ See Khairallah, Asad E., *Love, Madness, and Poetry : an Interpretation of the Majnūn Legend*, Beirut: Texte und Studien, vol. 25, (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft; Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag), 1980.

¹⁰ Bahā'ullāh, *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, 3rd edition, Marzieh Gail, transl. (Willmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust), 1978, p. 8-9.

The lines above describe the station of love. This passages reminds us of the cliché, “no pain, no gain.” Caught up in the throes of spiritual passion, love consumes all his faculties of perception and cognition. His only wish is to find some means to please his beloved. His advancement from one level of sacrifice may lead him to the ultimate sacrifice, martyrdom.

ATTAINMENT

Both poets state clearly that it is not union they seek. This they have already been granted. Each has become separated from the object of their adoration; therefore they strive to be reunited. We discussed the structure of the story of Moses on Sinai when the Sufis read it as allegory. In that structure, death, like martyrdom, leads to resurrection and life in God or the beloved. *Fanāʾ*, swooning away or death, is followed by *baqāʾ*, abiding or eternal life. In this stage, the lover abides with his beloved in a state of unity that words cannot adequately describe. This does not stop Ibn al-Fāriḍ from composing nearly six hundred verses in the attempt. Bahāʾullāh, on the other hand, is advised by the Maid of Heaven to remain silent:

فأشهد جمال القدس فيك بلا كشفة
فأصبر لأنّ عيون الغيب قد تبكّت
عاجز عن دركها كلّ عقل منيرة

فأخرق حجاب القرب عنك بلا رمزة
فأسكن فإنّ قوّة العرش أضطرب
و معنى وراء العلم فيك حجبت

**"So be silent, lest the power of the heavenly throne
be shaken; forbear, because the eyes
of the unseen realm have wept.**

**"Meaning beyond any knowledge gained
lies concealed within you,
too radiant for minds to apprehend.**

**"Take delight and commune in secret
with the mystery of sanctity; disclose it not,
if you wish to be my trusted one.**

**"If you were to unveil the face
of all you've seen, all creation would be
destroyed in a moment's unguarded glance.**

**"Thus the command proceeds from the throne
of might; thus the judgement
issues from the essence of my power." (120-24)**

Two conditions govern this exhortation to silence. The first is historical.

Bahā'ullāh, in his note to a preceding verse, offers this assessment of his audience in Sulaymāniyyah:

It [the poem] was recited during a time of exile in distant regions of the Ottoman lands, yet no one among the learned and noble in these principalities raised any objection or opposition. Yet because of the fierceness of this people, I suspect that after they have interpreted it, they will raise objections, and according to their fancy wander blindly in doubt and error along the path of delusion.

Therefore, Bahā'ullāh was observing what he terms in other writings, *ḥikma*, or

wisdom. He was protecting himself from the opposition of the people and his poem from misinterpretation. A second condition governs his silence regarding his "hidden secret." In the poem he has achieved the station of *baqā'*, but has not yet returned. We remember in the story of Moses, after he is revived by God, he must return to the people and guide them. The time of Bahā'ullāh's return to Baghdad has not yet come; furthermore, and more significantly, his appearance as a Manifestation of God or Prophet, has not occurred. Therefore, any teachings he has to offer are indirect, veiled, and appear only as the wisdom of a devotee, or at most a saint.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ, on the other hand, claims to have reached the stage of *baqā'* and returned to serve humanity. Therefore, much of the poem is addressed to his devotee to enable him to follow in the path of the narrator. Obviously he does not advance the claim to prophethood, but he does claim to speak from an aspect of the station of Muḥammad, having effaced his identity through union with the Beloved, or the divine Spirit.

بانحمد رؤيا مقله احمديّة ترى حسناً في الكون من فيض طينتي ¹¹	فسمعي كلّيمي وقلبي مُنبّاً وروحي لأرواح روح وكلّ ما
---	--

My ear is Moses' and my heart Muḥammad's
 And with vision of a Muḥammadan eye.
 And my spirit is the spirit of all spirits
 and all that is seen as fair in the universe

¹¹ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

is made from the excellence of my clay. (308-9)

Ibn al-Fāriḍ addresses his devotee throughout the remainder of the poem.

Homerin offers the following comment:

The first 163 verses of the *al-Tāʾīyah al-Kubrā* could stand alone as one of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's love poems....Then, abruptly, Ibn al-Fāriḍ informs his audience that it is time to explain himself. The approximately six hundred verses that follow are a wide-ranging discourse on the Sufi path, as the *al-Tāʾīyah al-Kubrā* takes the form of a guide to the perplexed.¹²

This statement obscures the ecstatic elements that sustain the elevated tone of the poem for these 600 lines. While some of them become tediously didactic, the listener is rescued by frequent evocations of the poet's beloved. While the poem has been read as instruction and interpreted at great length, it retained its function of inducing ecstatic states in its hearers. This ability has preserved the poem's place as one of the greatest achievements of classical Arabic poetry.

Following Homerin's provocative questions regarding the poet's mystical orientation and his contemporaries view of him, I argue that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's true profession was that of poet. His primary concern throughout the poem is the concern of the artist. Therefore, art is privileged over doctrine. His occasionally outrageous claims are a function of the poem's thematic and literary structures, not so much an indication of doctrinal positions. The telling comments found in the writings of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's students and his contemporaries provide us with a

¹² Th. Emil Homerin *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, His Verse and His Shrine* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press), 1994, pp. 11-12.

new approach to his great poetic achievement. A modern, literary approach enables us to see the poem divested of the veils of seven centuries of Sufi commentaries, without denying the poem's mystical power, a power dependent not on the poet's saintly character, but rather on his poetic artistry.

POET, VOICE, AND AUDIENCE

We have postulated that Ibn al-Fāriḍ is a poet employing the language of mysticism and its symbolic structures to achieve an artistic vision and inspire that vision in his audience. By all accounts, he was the most successful poet to write in the Islamic mystical tradition. Bahā'ullāh on the other hand, employed the language and structures of the Islamic mystical tradition of poetry to convey his spiritual vision for the redemption of humanity and to advance his claims to be the one to fulfill the truest aspirations of that tradition. As such, he builds on the poetic achievement of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and honors it with the highest compliment, emulation. It is almost as if the invitation of his hosts to compose such a poem was merely the occasional, temporal circumstances to communicate a vision he had already experienced. What makes Bahā'ullāh's poem remarkable is that it emerges from a process that is still developing in the consciousness its narrator. Ibn al-Fāriḍ relates an experience that occurred in the past, upon which he reflects for the benefit of his companions. Bahā'ullāh

conveys an experience not completed, an interior unfoldment. It is the very expression of what Shoghi Effendi describes as the private communion Bahá'ulláh had been engaging in for more than a year on the mountain of Sar Galú. From this the poem derives its freshness and immediacy. It reaches a degree of authenticity that Ibn al-Fārid does not achieve. While the language of his ode evokes passage after passage of the *Naẓm al-Sulūk*, it avoids imitation. He guides the listener to his remarkable vision of the Maid of Heaven and seems to say to him, "If you want to meet the Mystic Maid, this is what she looks like; this is what you must do. Follow me." Yet this is accomplished without the least trace of didacticism. Even the notes and commentary evoke an experience. Only the translations and explanations of Arabic terms in Persian are utilitarian glosses. The other appended passages extend the effect of the poetry and heighten the ecstasy of the reader. Polemic is carefully avoided, with the possible exception of the following passage, perhaps less to be directed toward his companions in Sulaymāniyyah and more towards his enemies in Baghdad. Even here, it is more of a lament than it is polemical.

For this reason we have mentioned the interpretation of this verse, out of kindness for views of the enemies, and a solace to the eyes of the angered, lest they understand and interpret this poetry according to their selfish desires.... Among all these things we must seek, are the following: we must sacrifice our souls, which we did not achieve; we must put on the garment of steadfastness, and this we did not earn. Indeed, we were sitting in the midst of the ocean of the divine essence, waiting to draw a sip of water. We were resting in the shade of

the sun of eternity, and asking for a lamp. This is the condition of this servant, and the servants of God, and every one in this land. And if a fire should be kindled from the sacred tree, we would not be inflamed therewith, but we would try to extinguish it. So "Well is it for one who attires himself with the robe of justice in this battle." If you were endowed with this most great quality, of course, you would obtain the most glorious favor. This is that bond to the hidden void; it moves by Her movement; when it is still, everything in creation is stilled. Therefore, one must illumine and purify his breast from the masses of corrupt, vicious and soul-devouring imaginings, so that the wondrous face of justice may emerge from behind Mount Qāf. Then we may perceive the radiance of the portals of eternal delight and the raptures of divine ardor and apprehend the melodies of the dove of eternity and reach the hems of the robes of the radiant spirits and upon the dais of love take our rest. This is the ultimate favor, and its lowest station. In addition to all this, we must shun the opponents of truth in every matter and not permit the fellowship with such a one. For, by God, the breath of the malicious will devour the righteous, just as fire on dry wood and heat on solid ice. "Do not be among those who harden their hearts against the mention of God."

Even with this devastating critique of the spiritual condition of Iraq and Iran at that time, Bahā'ullāh uses it as an occasion to more powerfully communicate the grandeur of his vision. The reference to Mount Qāf, whose name is taken from the Arabic letter, is a legendary mountain associated with an ancient conception of the world. Its high ridges encircle the known world and form a barrier to the heavens. In the passage above, it suggests a barrier to the light of God's justice and an obstacle that blocks access to the heavenly realm.

The voices in the poem accord their listeners the highest respect. They present Bahā'ullāh's poetic and spiritual vision as a gift, laid in the lap of his hosts and companions. Because he presents the vision with little comment and

interpretation, the listener or reader is able to approach the material on his or her own terms. It elicits a higher degree of maturity and demonstrates greater respect for the audience than the boasts and bombast of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

في قدس الوادي وفيه خلعتُ خلعَ نعلي على النّادي و جُدتُ بخلعتي
و أنستُ أنواري فكنتُ لها هدى و ناهيكَ من نفسٍ عليها مضيئة
وأسستُ أطواري فنجيتُني بها وقضيتُ أطواري وذاتي كليمتي¹³

By me the valley was sanctified
And in the removal of my sandals, for the sake of the petitioner,
I was generous in my divestment.
I made known my lights, so I was their guidance;
And in prohibiting you from your self on her behalf
is a confirmation of the covenant.
So I founded my holy mountains
And I exalted myself by them
And I destroyed my holy mountains
And was a Moses, a converser with God, to myself. (754-56)

Yet we must understand the context for these statements. The poetic voice speaks in the station of *baqā'* and the station of *fanā'* simultaneously. He has lost consciousness in God's Beloved; the spirit of Muḥammad possesses him and speaks through him. He concludes his great ode on this sublime plane, yet with a return to balance and sobriety in the final lines.

و في عالم التذكّار للنفس علمها ألّ
فحي على جمعي القديم الذي به
ومن فضل ما أسارت شرب معاصري
مقدم تستهديه مني فتيتي
وجدت كهول الحي اطفال صذية
ومن كان قبلي فالفضائل فضلتني¹⁴

¹³ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Op. Cit.*, p. 64.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

In the inner world of reflection,
the soul's original knowledge
will guide him from me to my maid.

So live like one according to my ancient covenant
I found mature men
living like children of a maiden.

So by the grace of what I have left behind,
a sip of my dregs; and whoever preceeded me,
Those excellencies are by my excellence. (761-63)

Compare the passage above with the concluding verses of Bahā'ullāh's

ode:

فطوبى للواردين في شرع بديعتي	فطوبى للفائزين عن حسن وفائهم
فطوبى للواثقين عن جبل عطا فتى	فطوبى للعاشقين في سفك دمانهم
عن كل الجهات فع ظل ربوبيتي	فطوبى للمخلصين في ما سرعوا

Blessed are those who attained for the beauty of their faithfulness.
Blessed are those who embraced a wondrous law.

Blessed are the ardent lovers for shedding their blood.
Blessed are those who cling fast to the cord of my affection.

Blessed are the sincere as they hasten
from every direction to the shade of my lordship. (125-27)

These lines represent a new poetic voice. This change of diction gives a clue to
the unity Bahā'ullāh claims to have achieved in an earlier passage.¹⁵ More than

¹⁵ In verse 94 of the "Ode of the Mighty Dove" he states:
I attained faith in the Light because of the light
within me; I ascended to the realm
of the spirit in my inmost soul.

This verse states in essence that he attained unity with the spirit of God, or the Maid, within his own soul. It describes a kind of inner ascent, or *mi'rāj*, akin to Muḥammad's "night journey."

this they provide powerful evidence of the achievement of his particular state of unity with the divine spirit. The voice speaking in these passages is the voice that becomes very familiar to his companions. It is the voice of the Bahā'ullāh as the Manifestation of God. It could be argued, based on their content, that these lines continue in the voice of the Maid of Heaven, though everything in their diction and phrasing suggests otherwise.

Each poem concludes in an exalted poetic voice, expressing the epitome of its mystical vision of unity with the Maid of Heaven, the divine beloved. Both poems avoid suggesting a unity that could be interpreted as *shirk*, or polytheism. The unity achieved is an abstraction, a metaphor to suggest an inner experience, a mystical state ill-suited to expression by ordinary means in ordinary language. The poetic voice offers this vision to the listener with the hope that he or she can achieve a similar transcendental state. This state cannot be defined within the context of a rigorous and literal application of Islamic thought and practice, yet it is thoroughly Islamic, with one important exception. Bahā'ullāh hints at the claims to prophecy and apostleship he would announce some eight years later on the eve of his forced departure from Baghdad to Constantinople. This claim would lead ultimately to his imprisonment in the fortress and prison-city of Akka. Following the death of the prophet Muḥammad, it came to be believed that his title "Seal of the Prophets" meant the termination of the heretofore

endless process of divine revelation and the successive appearances of prophets and messengers since Adam. A thorough analysis and critique of the rise and development of this belief could not be attempted here. The result of this belief, held closely by the majority of Muslims since the establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate, consigned Bahā'ullāh to a life of imprisonment and exile and condemned his followers to most horrible tortures and death on charges of heresy and apostacy. Why, then, was he so loved and admired in Sulaymāniyyih? I argue that it was due to the dignity of his conduct, his charisma, the wonders of his spiritual powers best demonstrated to the people of that region by this poem, and the circumstances of its composition and recitation.

CONCLUSIONS

Two important findings have emerged from this work. The first is that the *Nazm al-Sulūk* is more than a versified manual or treatise on the Sufi path to enlightenment. Though we cannot ignore its religious overtones, nor dismiss the assessment of Ibn al-Fāriq's grandson and numerous commentaries, we can see in the content, tone, diction, and verbal virtuosity displayed in the *Nazm al-Sulūk*, a counterweight to the preponderance of doctrinally-based interpretation that has hindered the literary appreciation of the work of this great poet. Secondly, we have brought to light a major work of modern Arabic poetry in Bahā'ullāh's *Qaṣīdih-yi Varqā'īyyih* that enhances our understanding of the history and development of the modern renaissance in Arabic poetry that began in the 19th Century. This important contribution to the emergence of that literary and cultural movement is made available through a new critical edition and translation.

Clearly, some of these findings are preliminary, as additional materials will be found that will enhance our evaluations. Still, in the texts we have brought to light, fresh lines of inquiry have been initiated. With the establishment of the soon to be opened Center for the Study of the Texts at the Bahā'ī World Center in Haifa, Israel, new opportunities for research and analysis

will be offered to scholars. These archives, as well as those in Egypt, Turkey, and the Levant hold valuable resources awaiting discovery or re-evaluation. Several lines of research need to be pursued. A literary assessment of the vast corpus of works by Bahā'ullāh needs to be undertaken. It is our hope that more scholars will address themselves to these tasks that have, until now, rested primarily on the shoulders of Bahā'ī scholars, despite the seminal work of E. G. Browne. The quantity and quality of primary resources available to the researcher, coupled with the recent efforts of such outstanding scholars as J. R. I. Cole, Christopher Buck, Peter Smith, Diana Malouf, Jack MacLean, Moshe Sharon, Abbas Amanat and others, gives rise to the hope that this situation will soon be remedied. In conclusion, we offer the following comment by Bahā'ullāh, "The page is ended, but as for the subject, it cannot be exhausted and so it shall remain."

Appendix 1

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Appendix Two

The following transcription of the text of Bahā'ullāh's *Qaṣīdih-yi Varqā'iyyih* was prepared from a photocopy of a manuscript in the hand of Mullā Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn al-Muqarrabīn (1818-1903), dated July 20-24, 1882. Photocopies were graciously provided by the Archives of the Bahā'ī World Center in Haifa, Israel. Notes to the original text in Arabic and Persian are included as footnotes. Since they have been attributed to Bahā'ullāh and Zayn would have been utterly faithful to his master's wishes, we have not attempted any corrections. This text has been compared with two others. The second is also in the hand of Zayn al-Muqarrabīn and bears an addition to the colophon and mentions a proof-reader. Two dates are given, the first. The third version is based on an unknown recension. It was published in Teheran, 1963, prepared by a committee of scholars under the auspices of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of Iran. Circumstances of its preparation are yet to be determined. It appears to have been "cyclostyled." I surmise that this process is similar to a mimeograph, yet the surface is engraved by hand. Since its original text was prepared by hand, using a Persian calligraphy style, it contains certain ambiguities and some

errors. It also contains numerous variations, which I have noted using European numerals. These notes in English are my own, based on comparisons of variations with the second manuscript mentioned above and with the published text. All notes bearing numerals in the Arabic styled script are believed to be approved by Bahā'ullāh. But, any deficiencies or errors in the text that follows are my own and I assume all responsibility for them. My English translation of the prepared text follows in Appendix 2.

أَجْذَبْتَنِي بِوَارِقِ أَنْوَارِ طَلْعَةٍ لَفُرُوعِهَا كُلُّ الشَّمُوسِ تَخَفَّتْ
كَأَنَّ بُرُوقَ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ نَوْرِ حُسْنِهَا ظَهَرَتْ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ وَ عَزَّتْ²
لِيَهْجَتْهَا مِسْكُ الْعَمَاءِ تَهَيَّجَتْ لِرِفْعَتِهَا رُوحُ الْعَلَاءِ تَعَلَّتْ
بِنَفْخَتِهَا صُورُ الْقِيَامِ تَنْفَخَتْ بِنَفْحَتِهَا ظِلُّ الْغَمَامِ تَمَرَّتْ³
بِلُمْعَتِهَا طُورُ الْبَقَاءِ تَظْهَرَتْ لِعِزَّتِهَا نُورُ الْبِهَاءِ تَجَلَّتْ⁴
عَنْ مَغْرِبِهَا شَمْسُ الظُّهُورِ تَظْهَرَتْ⁵ مِنْ مَشْرِقِهَا بَدْرُ الشُّهُورِ تَكْرَتْ
و عَنْ شَعْرِهَا طَيْبُ الْوَصَالِ تَنْفَحَتْ وَ عَنْ طَرَفِهَا عَيْنُ الْجَمَالِ تَقَرَّتْ⁶

¹ لظهورها T.

² غرّت T.

³ إشاره بما قالَ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى يَوْمَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ فِي ظِلِّلٍ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ

⁴ إشاره بِمَرِّ الْجِبَالِ بِأَنْهَا تَمَرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ كَمَا قَالَ تَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسِبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَ هِيَ تَمَرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلَامَاتِ الْقِيَمَةِ وَ مَا يَحْدُثُ فِيهَا

⁵ لغرّتها T.

⁶ روشني

⁷ طلوع الشمس عن مغربها

⁸ يعني روشن شده

از انفاس طيبه شعر او طيب بهجت و سنا و مسك مرحمت و بهاء از شمال جنّة هويّة كه از يمين حديقه صمديّه مبسوط شده مرتوح (8a) و متهيج است كه شايد عظام رميم جوهريات ممكنات از نفحات دلکش آن وفوحات دلنشين آن از كاوب بديع بي زوال و خمر جديد بي مثال بزندگاني ابدی و حيات سرمدی مفتخر شود و بر مفخر وجود فخر نمايد و همچنين از منظر او چشم جمال حقيقي كه شمس سماء وجود ادنی آيه او ست از مشاهده آن باضياء و روشن و منور گشت فسبحان الله موجودها عما أنتم تذكرون

^{8a} There appears to be an error in the text here, though it can be justified as a form 1 passive, مفعول, chosen for the purposes of internal rhyme (سجع); Z² is obscured. T agrees with Z¹. Possible alternates include مرتوح or متروّح or مرتاح, مرتوح. I prefer the first alternate, "rested or refreshed. The dagger alif can be justified as a parallel to the

old orthography used for حیوة .

چن موسی رجل نفس رحمانیه را که مودّع در هیگل بشریه بود از نعلین
ظنونات عرضیه منزّه و مقدّس فرمود و ید قدرت الهیه را از جیب عظمت و رداء
مکرمات ظاهر ساخت بواجی مقدسه طیبّه مبارکه قلب که محلّ عرش تجلی صمدانیه
و کرسی تحکّی عزّ ربانیه است وارد شد و چون بان ارض طور که از یمین بقعه نور
مبسوط گشته واصل شد رائحه طیبّه روح را از مشرق لایزالی استنشاق
و استنشام نمود و انوار حضرت ازلی را از جمیع جهات من غیر جهات ادراک فرمود
از حرارت رائحه محبّت الهیه و قبسات جذوات نار احدیّت سراج هویت در مصباح
قلب او بعد از کشف حجابات زجاجه آنیه موقد و مشتعل شد و از صهبای وصال
طلعت بی مثال و خمر زلال حضرت لا یزال بواجی صحو ابدیه بعد از محو مقامات
ضدیه فائز گشت و از جذبّه شوق لقاء بمدینه نوق بقاء اطلاع یافت و دخل المدینه
حین غفلة من اهلها اذا انس بنار الله القدیم و اضاء بنور الله العظیم کما قال لاهله
امکثوا انّی انست ناراً و چون وجه هدایت الطاف لایدایه را از شجره لا شرقیه و لا
غربیه استنباط و استدراک نمود از وجه فانی غیریه بوجه باقی صمدیه مشرف و
مفتخر گشت و وجه هدایت منیع بدیع را از نار موقده که مکنون در آفنده غیبیه
بود یافت این است که فرمود او اجد علی النار هدی و همچنین ادراک نما مقصود
ایه مبارکه را که میفرماید الذي جعل لكم من الشجر الاخضر ناراً ای کاش مستمع
یافت میشد تا رشحی از قمعاق بحر نار و این طمطم نام زاکر شرار ذکر میشد ولیکن
همان به که این لؤلؤ در صدف بحر هویه مکنون باشد و در اوعیه سرّ مخزون ماند
تا هر نامحرّمی محروم گردد و هر محرّمی محرم کعبه جلال شود و بحر جمال در آید
پس چه مسعود است نفسی که قفس تن را بنار حبّ بگدازد و بنفس روح مؤانس آید
تا برحمت بلند راحت فائز گردد و بنعمت عالی عزّت مرزوق شود و کلّ آنچه مذکور
شد از مراتب هدایت و مقامات تزکیه نفس در رتبه موسی علی نبینا وعلیه
السلام مقصود ظهور این تجلیات است در عالم ظاهر و الا آن حضرت لم یزل مهتدی
بوده بهدایه الله و لا یزال خواهد بود بلکه شمس هدایت از اومستشرق شد و قمر
عنایت از او هویدا گشت و نار هویه از نار کینونت او موقد و ضیاء صمدیه از نور
جبین او منور رفع این شبهات را خود کلام آن حضرت مینماید در حینی که فرعون
سؤال از آن مقتول نمود جواب فرمود و فعلتها اذا و انا من الضالّین ففررت منکم لما
خفتکم فوهب لی ربّی حکماً و جعلنی من المرسلین صفحه تمام شد و الا مطلب لاینفد
است و باقی ماند.

لسهم شفرها^{۱۰} صدر الصدور تقبلت
و غایتی القصوی مواقع رجلها
وفي كل عين قد بکیت لوصولها
بسطت بكل البسط لإلقاء رجلها
طلبت حضور الوصل في كل وجهة
ولو كنت سارعا في وصل نورها

لوهق^{۱۱} جعدها رأس الوجود تمدت
وعرش العماء أرض عليها تمشت^{۱۰}
وفي كل نار قد حرقت لفرقتي^{۱۱}
على قلبي وهذا من أول منيتي^{۱۲}
رقت حروف القرب فوق كل تربة^{۱۳}
رُميت يرمي البعد من بعد قربتي

^{۱۰} سهم تیر را نامند و شفر بمعنی مژگان^{۱۱}

^{۱۱} "The order of notes in T. differs from the order in Z¹ and Z²."

^{۱۱} و هق من الوهاق بمعنی کمند، یعنی برای تیر مژگان محبوب اعلی صدور
منیره زاکیه مقابل شده و اقبال جسته که بر او وارد آید و از برای کمند گیسوی او
رأس وجود غیبی کلی الهی امتداد جسته که بآن کمند در آید محروم ماند صدري که
بآن تیر فائز نشود و معدوم شود رأسی که در آن کمند نیاید فسبحانه عما کنا فی
وصفه و تعالی عما أنتم یصفون^{۱۲}

تصفون Z² & T.^{۱۳}

^{۱۲} یعنی آنچه عیون مقدسه عالیّه که در عوالم غیب سرّاً مستور است و عیون
مشهوده که در ملک موجود است در هر مقام و هر زمان که گریست و گریان شد از
فرقت این بنده بود از مشاهده انوار جمال آن محبوب و این از ظاهر شعر مستفاد
میشود و باطن آن لا یعلمه إلّا الله و ما نعلم منه إلّا اقل من الحرف حرفاً و همچنین
در معنی مصرع دیگر درک نما تا ذوق و شوق و جذب و وله و عشق و حب در عالم وجود
تو موجود شود که شاید بسدره منتهی و مسجد اقصای خود که آن تسلیم حکم و امر
الله است مشرف و فائز شوی و إن مولیکم العلی قد کان علیکم بالحق شهیداً و بالعدل
علینا و کلاً

^{۱۳} بمعنی آرزو است

یعنی بر کل اراضی از اقصی مراتب آن از ارض فؤاد و فوق آن الی ما لا نهیه که
در حجب غیب مکنون است الی ادنی ارض وجود مبسوط شده و فرش گشته ام که
شاید آن رجل بر قلب که محل اسرار غیبیه است وارد شود و این از منتهی منلی
قلوب مقدسه الهیه است.

^{۱۴} بمعنی خاک آمده

وإن رُفعت أيداي في مدّ وصلها
وهمي لم يك إلّا لوثق عروة
قلت لها روحي فداك و ما بي لقاك
و منى¹⁷ بفطر الحبّ عنك بوصلة
و سرّ ظهور لاح من ظهورها كل²¹
و حزن حسين قد أحملت²³ لحزنه
لأنت رجا قلبي و محبوب سرّتي
و منى بفوز الوصل من بعد هجرة
و عن²⁴ حرقتي نار الوقود توقدت²⁵

بالسيف جابتني فذاك جزاء احبّتي²⁶
و قصده لم يك إلّا لقطع نسبتي
أرحمي فلا تكشف عنّي فضيحتي²⁷
إبقائه باقياً في زمان أزليّة²⁸
الورى و بالأصل قامت قيامتي
كور الوجود في كُون قدوتي²⁹
و مالك روحي ونوري ومهجتي
وهبني بروح الأنس من بعد كربتي
ومن زفرتي نور الشهود تَدوّت³⁰

²⁶ آنچه خلاف قوم باشد بعَلّت مراعات نظم است

²⁷ اي و ما حلّ بي من مراتب البيان و المعاني وما عرفت فيه من شؤونات
الاسماء و الصفات و ما ملكني الله في عوالم الغيب و الشهادات افدى لأنّ ألاقبك مرّة
واحدة و أشاهدك نظرة واحدة استغفرك يا إلهي حينئذٍ عمّا ادّعت بين يديك ولكن
فوعزّتك يا إلهي إن لم أكن كذلك أريد أن أكون بحَوْلِكَ كذلك لأنّ من دون ذلك لن
ينفعني ولن يسكن به قلبي ولو تعطيني كلّ من في السموات والأرض اذا أسئلك²⁸ يا
إلهي بالذي شهد في سبيلك ما لا شهد احد دونه بأن تنزل على عبدك من آيات حبّك
الكبرى وعلامات ودك الأبهى حتى ترضى نفسي فيما ترجوه و أنّك أنت على كلّ شيء
قدير.

²⁸ أسألك T.

²⁹ T. agrees with Z¹ ويمنى Z² reads

³⁰ اگر صفت باشد مطابق نیست و لكن كذاك جرى و حقّ لا ريب فيها

³¹ In T. the hemistich ends with القديمة

³² واو قسم.

³³ In T. the hemistich ends with ظهورها

³⁴ كور عالم سفلى چون متعلق بأرض است لهذا در أحمل تلای تانیث داخل شد.

³⁵ لحزنه T.

³⁶ من T.

³⁷ وقود بمعنى آتش زنه آمده چنانچه میفرماید: وقودها الناس والحجارة،
و لكن بمعنى شعله وشدّت هم آمده

بحر العماء من حرّ ظمأى يابسُ
 بكلّ تراب كلّ ثار^{٢٧} شهدته
 وعن دمع^{٢٨} بحر المحيط كقطرة
 ومن حزني بحر السرور تجمدت
 سنائي اغمى ضيائي اغشى
 عظامي ابري و جسمي ابلى^{٢٩}
 هواك هباني وحبك حكني
 و عن سرّ حزني كاد السماء تفتطرت^{٣٠}
 و عن حرق قلبي^{٣١} دمع عيني حاكياً
 أحن^{٣٢} بكلّ الليل من شمت^{٣٣} معذلي^{٣٤}

ونهر السنا لن يسقني بعض عطشتي
 ها أنّها عن دمّ عيني تحكّت
 ومن^{٢٩} حرقتي نار الخليل كجدوة
 و عن همّي عين الهموم تجرّت
 ونوري اطفى من غر^{٣٠} مشمتي^{٣١}
 و قلبي احرى من حرق^{٣٢} حرقتي
 وهجرك ذابني و وصلك منيتي^{٣٣}
 و من همّ قلبي أرض الفواد تشقّت^{٣٤}
 و من زفر^{٣٥} سرّي صفر وجهي تدلّت
 الح^{٣٦} بكلّ اليوم من فقد^{٣٧} نصرتي

^{٣٥} بمعنى تحقق أمده

^{٣٦} خون

دمعتي. ^{٢٨}T.

عن ^{٢٩}Z^٢

^{٣٠} غرور

^{٣١} شماتت كمنده اكثر از ذرات موجودات تا الله ما لارأت عين و لا سمعت
 أذن و لا احصت نفس و لا علمت أوهام مثل غيث هاطل از سماء غفلت عباد نازل قل
 يا أهل الأرض لاتتعرضن بالذي لم يكن في قلبه إلّا تجلّى من أنوار صبح العماء اتقوا
 الله و لاتتعرضون إن لن تحبون لن تبغضون اگر حبّ الله موجود شود ففقد دون أن
 را بانسي نيست نحمد الله بأن جعلنا غنياً عن حبّهم و ذكرهم و هو الله كان على كلّ
 شيء قديراً.

^{٣٢} بمعنى كهنه و خلق أمده

^{٣٣} T. obscured. Z^٢ حرّ.

^{٣٤} أرزو

^{٣٥} إشارة بآية مباركة تكاد السموات أن يتفطرن من فوقهن

^{٣٦} و تنشق الأرض

حرّ. ^{٣٧}T.

^{٣٨} شعلة

^{٣٩} ناله و حنين

وصلت الى غاية الذل^{٤٠} رتبة
حور القصور من حزن سرّي تقمصت
وردت بكلّ الحزن في كلّ قلبة
و نادتنني من ورائي و قالت ان أصمت^{٤١}
فكمّ من حسين بمثلك قد أرادني
فكمّ من حبيب فوقك قد أحبّني
فقد ضجّ^{٤٢} في كل الاوان ولن يفز
ومن مشرقى شمس الظهور كنجمة
وعن^{٤٣} نور سرّي سرّ الوجود كنملة
و عن فطرتي^{٤٤} فطر^{٤٥} ألاله تديّنت^{٤٦}
و قد جاء امر الامر من أمر ظاهر
و موج البحر قد كفّ من موج باطني

عن ذكرها كلّ اللسان تكلمت^{٤٧}
قميص السود في كلّ غرفة^{٤٨}
قبضت بكلّ القبض في كلّ بسطة
فخذ لسانك عن كلّ ما قد تحكّت^{٤٩}
فكمّ من عليّ كشبهك من أحبّتي
فكمّ من صفي كفوك من أهل صفوتي
بنور الوصل لحظاً إلى بنظرتي^{٥٠}
وعن مظهري نور البسيط كلمعة
ومن نار حبّي نار الوقود كقبسة^{٥١}
و من كفتي كف^{٥٢} السناء تضمّت^{٥٣}
وقد جاء عدل الحكم من عدل حكمتي
و روح القدس قد هاج من نور بهجتي

^{٤٠} شماتت

^{٤١} ملامت كننده

^{٤٢} إلحاح

^{٤٣} فقدان

^{٤٤} من الذلة

^{٤٥} كليل اللسان اي أثقل و ألتفها

^{٤٦} بعنى سكوت

^{٤٧} حكايت

^{٤٨} بمعنى فريلا و ناله و حنين ازحَبّ و حزن أمدّه

من T. ^{٤٩}

^{٥٠} إشارة بآية فقال أمكثوا إنّي أنست ناراً لعلّ أتيكم منها بقبس

^{٥١} آية فطرة اللّه التي فطر الناس عليها

^{٥٢} مخفف فطرة

^{٥٣} إشاره بآيه مباركّه أقم الدين حنيفاً

^{٥٤} آية بيضاء من غير سوء

^{٥٥} إشارة بآية فانضمم يدك في جيبك

وعن نظرتي^{٦٥} موسى البقاء تصعقت^{٦٦}
 عن نشر أمري روح النفوس تعشّرت
 وقد طاف نفس الأمر في حول بيتها
 وملك معالي العلم في الباء^{٦٧} سرّة
 كل الهدى من فجر أمري قد بدا
 و عن نغمتي غنّ الطيور كلحنة
 شرعت بسوء الظنّ عنك شريعة
 وجئت بأوصاف أتيت بنسبة
 وصفت بنفس و نسبته بنفسي
 رجوت بظنك وصلي هيهات لم يكن
 فشرّب بلاء الدهر عن كلّ كائنة
 وقطع الرجاء عن مسّ كلّ راحة
 سفك الدماء في مذهب العشق واجب

ومن لمعتي طور الجبال تدكّت^{٦٨}
 من نفخ روحي عظم^{٦٩} الرميم تهزّت^{٧٠}
 و روح البيت قد قام من نور طلعتي
 و باء الجهر بالسّرّ خرت لنقطتي^{٧١}
 و كل العلي قد أوفدت من وفدي^{٧٢} ٥
 ومن غنّتي لحن النحول كرنة
 شربت بحبّ الغير عن دون شرعتي
 و رمت بأسماء عن سواء محجّتي^{٧٣}
 ها هو حدّ فالحداً اعظم خطئة
 بذاك جرى شرط إن وفيت توفّت
 وسقى دماء القهر عن دمّ مهجتي^{٧٤}
 و قمع القضاء عن طمع كلّ حاجة
 و حرق الحشا^{٧٥} في الحبّ من أول بيعتي

^{٦٥} إشارة بنية فانظر إلى الجبل

^{٦٦} خرّ موسى صعباً

^{٦٨} دكّة الجبال

^{٦٩} يحيي العظام وهي رميم

^{٧٠} أي تحركت من السرور و عناية الروح

^{٧١} بالباء ظهر الوجود و بالنقطة تميّز العابد من المعبود؛ حيث كل ما في

القرآن في الحمد إلى آخره.

^{٧٢} معنى نقطة لا يعد و لا يحصى است و لا يحدّ و لا يفنى است زيرا طلعت

موعود و كلمه جامع و هيكل اللّه باين اسم عالي و رسم متعالى عرش اعظم را كه

محلّ نزول و جلوس كينونت غيبية است موسوم فرمودند و اين مخصوص است

بهمان هيكل و كفي بنفسه شهيداً

^{٧٣} بمعنى هبوط ونزول

^{٧٤} بمعنى طريقه و خصله آمده

^{٧٥} مهجه القلب و دم القلب و روح بمعنى هرسه آمده

مهجة T. ^{٧٦}

^{٧٧} دل

يقظ^{٦٨} الليالي من لذغ^{٦٩} كل ملذغ^{٧٠}
وعن سنّتي سمّ^{٧١} الردى^{٧٢} كشرية
خلّ دعوى الحبّ أوفاً رض بما جرى
و نلديتها سرّاً بأن يا حبيبتي
فها أنا حاضر بين يديّ قدرتك
فها أنا طالب بكلّ ما أنت تحبّ
صدري هذا راجي لإرماع سطوتك
نارك نوري وقهرك بغيتي^{٧٣}
فأنظر إلى دمع عيني كيف تجرّيت
رميت رماح الكلّ في كلّ يومه
قرأت كتاب الكفر في كلّ سطرة
طعنت بطعن الشرك فع كلّ آية
كانّ بلاء الدهر لنفسي قد نزل
حزنة يعقوب^{٧٤} و سجنة يوسف^{٧٥}

و شتم التوالى في كلّ يومه
و عن ملّتي قهر القضاء كشفقة^{٧٦}
كذاك جرى الأمر في فرض سنّتي
و غاية أماري و مقصود سرّتي
فها أنا أمل بما قد تعدّت^{٧٧}
فها أنا راكن^{٧٨} بما قد تقضت^{٧٩}
وجسمي هذا شايق لاسياف قهرة^{٨٠}
و بطشك راحتني وحكمك منيتي^{٨١}
فأشهد بسرّ قلبي كيف أضمحلت
قتلت بسيف الردّ في كلّ ليلة
وفزت بسبب^{٨٢} الكلّ في كلّ لحظة
رمحت برمح الطرد في كلّ وقته^{٨٣}
كانّ سيوف القهر حدّت لجيدتي^{٨٤}
و ضرة أيوب^{٨٥} و نار خليفة

^{٦٨} بيداري

^{٦٩} زننده گزنده

^{٧٠} عقارب قوم مقصود است

^{٧١} زهر

^{٧٢} بمعنى هلاك

^{٧٣} از شفقت و مهرباني

^{٧٤} آنچه شمرده شد از غضب و سطوت

^{٧٥} مایل

^{٧٦} يعني حكم كردي

^{٧٧} يعني آرزو

^{٧٨} آرزو

^{٧٩} بسبب T.

^{٨٠} گردن

^{٨١} آية وابيضت عيناه من الحزن

تأسف آدم و هجرة يونس^{٨٥}
و فرقة حواء^{٨٦} و حرقه مريم
من رشح حزني قد قضى لكل ما قضى
فأنظر بسيرى في البلاد بلا مونس
و عن فتح^{٨٧} عيني عين السماء تهمرت^{٨٨}
و من روح حزني روح البقاء تقطعت
حمر الوجود من دم قلبي تحمرت
مرّ البلاء في سبيل حبك حلوة
و عن عنقي رسم الحديد^{٨٩} تعينت^{٩٠}

وضجة داود و نوحه نوحه^{٩١}
و محنة شعيا و كرب زكريه^{٩٢}
و عن طفع همي قد بدا كل بليّة^{٩٣} ٧٥
فأشهد بأنسي في العراء^{٩٤} بوحشة
و من فجر^{٩٥} قلبي فجر الأرض تلتقت^{٩٦}
و عن نور همي عرش العلاء تهدت^{٩٧}
غصن الشهود عن دمع عيني تنبت^{٩٨}
و شهد البقاء من عند غيرك مرّة^{٩٩} ٨٠
من رجلي أثر الوثيق^{١٠٠} تبقت^{١٠١}

^{٨٢} آية و دخل معه السجن فتيان و قال ربّ السجن أحبّ إليّ مما يدعونني
إليه إلى آخر

^{٨٣} ربّ إنّني مسنّى الضرّ

^{٨٤} و ذو النون إذا ذهب مغاضباً فظنّ أنّ لن نقدر عليه إلى آخرها

^{٨٥} نوح و داود بسيار نوحه و ندبه نمودند حکایت نوح معروف است و لكن
أمر داود و ضجيج آن از زبور معلوم میشود که چقدر اذیت کشیدند و مبتلی شدند
^{٨٦} در مفارقت او از آدم يك اربعين يا بيشتتر چنانچه در احاديث قبل مذكور
است

^{٨٧} و نجيناه من الكرب العظيم

^{٨٨} بيايان را گویند

^{٨٩} إشارة بآيه مبارکه و فتحنا ابواب السماء

^{٩٠} بماء منهمر

^{٩١} وفجرنا الأرض عيونا

^{٩٢} فالتقي الماء على أمر قد قدر

^{٩٣} انعدمت

^{٩٤} إنبات و روئیدن

^{٩٥} تلخ

^{٩٦} کنایه از اغلال است

^{٩٧} یعنی معین و مشهود است

ما مضى يوماً إلّا وقد حرقت فيه
روحي قد راح وقلبي قد ذاب
بقيت بلا روح و قلب و مهجة
من علّو سرّي قد قضى عليّ ما جرى
كذاك احاطتني البلا عن كلّ شطرة
عرجت إلى غاية الوحد وحدة
وصفك في وصف عيني شهدت
إن كنت بالحدّ فالحدّ منك ظاهر
و عن كدرتي ظلم الليال تحققت
فلا بأس أن صرت مطروداً لأن
وأنست بالقدس من نور أنسه
و أمنت بالنور من نور باطني
أناديك يا روح الحياة أن ارتحل
فيا روح العماء من العرش أنزلي
أصاحي يا فؤادي إن اخرجني
فيا صبري أصبر في كلّ ما شهدته
بالروح نادتنني و قالت ان أصبر
دع عنك ما عرفت وبه قد
أبهى بهاء الطور عندي كحشوة
آيات وصفك حقّ ولكن لفتية
وإنّي لم يزل قد كنت في قدسة

^{٩٨} زنجير

^{٩٩} يعني باقي است

^{١٠٠} اي أهلكني

^{١٠١} قضايا

^{١٠٢} جعلنا اليوم بصرك حديداً

^{١٠٣} اي تظهرت

من تلويح نظم أو تصريح نثرة
وسرّي قد فار من شدّ شدّتي
و ابقاء نفسي كان من أعظم حيرتي
فيا ليت بالأصل ما علت فطرتي ^{٨٥}
بذاك ابادتني ^{١٠٠} القضاء ^{١٠١} في كلّ حين
وصلت إلى عين اللقاء في سريرتي
عن عينك في كلّ طرف حديدة ^{١٠٢}
ولو بالوصف فالوصف منك تبدّت ^{١٠٣}
وعن سرّتي نور النهار تصفّت ^{٩٠}
فزت بالنور العلي يوم بعثتي
وها جرت بالطاء في عهد غربتي
و عارجت بالروح في سرّ سرّتي
من نفس ما بقي فيها ^{١٠٤} ^{١٠٥} من بقية
فما لك قدر بمقدار ذلّتي ^{٩٥}
فما لك من عزّ في بلاد ذليلة
في رضا حبيبك من شدّ و رخوة
فقد عرفت بكلّ ما انت استدلت
عكفت فالشرك عندي كوحدة
واسنى ضياء النور عندي كظلمة ^{١٠٠}
أثار نعتك صدق ولكن لرعية ^{١٠٦}
وإنّي لن يحدّ قد كنت في نزهة

فيه T. ^{١٠٤}

^{١٠٥} فيه بهتر است اگر چه مخالف قوم بلشد بعلت نفس

رعيتي T. ^{١٠٦}

فَكَمْ مِنْ عَادِلٍ قَدْ كَانَ عِنْدِي ظَالِمًا
 فَكَمْ مِنْ بَاقِيٍّ قَدْ كَانَ عِنْدِي فَانِيًا
 فَكَمْ مِنْ عَابِدٍ قَدْ كَانَ عِنْدِي طَاغِيًا
 زَبِيرٌ^{١٠٨} السَّمَاءِ فِي كَوْنٍ نَفْسِي ثَابِتٌ
 وَمِنْ ذَرَّتِي شَمْسُ الْمَحِيطِ تَكْوَرُ
 كُلُّ الْغِنَا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْوَرَى ظَهَرَ
 كُلُّ الْعُقُولِ مِنْ جَذْبِ سَرِّي تَوَلَّهَتْ^{١٠٩}
 كُلُّ الْأَلْوَةِ مِنْ رَشْحِ أَمْرِي تَأَلَّهَتْ^{١١٠}
 أَرْضُ الرُّوحِ بِالْأَمْرِ بِي قَدْ مَشَى
 لِنُورِي نَجْمُ الظُّهُورِ تَجَلَّيْتُ
 جَوَامِعُ آيَاتٍ لَوَامِعُ نَزَلَةٍ
 جَوَاهِرُ أَفْكَارٍ سَوَاحِجُ فِكْرَةٍ
 مِنْ كَافِ أَمْرِي^{١١١} قَدْ قَضَى لِكُلِّ حَكْمِهَا
 أَعْرَضْتُ عَنْ وَجْهِهِ وَبِظَنِّكَ أَقْبَلْتُهَا
 مَا اسْتَقَمَّتْ بِنُورِ الْغَيْبِ فِيمَا صَنَعْتَهُ

فَكَمْ مِنْ عَالِمٍ قَدْ كَانَ عِنْدِي كَجَهْلَةٍ
 فَكَمْ مِنْ عَارِفٍ لَنْ يَعْرِفَ بِحَرْفَةٍ
 فَكَمْ مِنْ سَاجِدٍ لَنْ يَفْزَ وَقْتًا بِسُجْدَةٍ^{١٠٧}
 صَحْفٌ^{١٠٨} السَّنَا قَدْ أَنْزَلْتُ مِنْ صَحِيفَتِي
 وَعَنْ قَطَرَتِي بَحْرُ الْوُجُودِ تَسْبَحْتُ^{١٠٩}
 عِنْدِي كَفَنَةُ نَمْلِ أَوْ كَرْنَةُ نَحْلَةٍ
 كُلُّ النُّفُوسِ عَنْ غِنٍ رُوحِي تَحِيَّتُ^{١١٠}
 وَكُلُّ الرُّبُوبِ^{١١١} عَنْ طَفْحِ حَكْمِي تَرَبَّتْ^{١١٢}
 وَعَرْشُ الطُّورِ قَدْ كَانَ مَوْضِعَ وَطَنَتِي^{١١٣}
 لِرُوحِي شَمْسُ السَّرُورِ تَجَلَّتْ
 مَوَاقِعُ أَثَارِ مَطَالَعِ قُدْسَةٍ
 طَرَائِزُ أَنْوَارِ بَرَايِزِ حِكْمَةٍ
 وَ عَنْ لَطْفِ سَرِّي قَدْ بَدَأَ كُلُّ بَدِيعَةٍ
 وَأَجْرِيَتْ مَاءُ الزَّعْمِ فِي شَرِيعَةٍ وَهْمَةٍ
 فِي نَفْسِكَ وَكَذَا ضَيِّعْتُ صَنَعَتِي^{١١٤}

بِسُجْدَتِي T. 107

^{١٠٨} من الزبير كتاب را گویند

^{١٠٩} جمع صحیفه

^{١١٠} ای تحقیقت

^{١١١} من الوله و الشوق

^{١١٢} حیات

^{١١٣} الهه

^{١١٤} ارباب

وطائفي T. 115

^{١١٥} عالم امر مراد است

^{١١٦} یعنی آیه تجلی که از تجلیات انوار صبح عماء و تظاهرات إشراق شمس
 قدس و سناکه از شمس وجود و قمر مقصود و نقطه معبود مستشرق و مستظهر شد
 بر حقائق ممکنات و جواهر افنده مخلوقات و جمیع ذرات موجودات و مذکورات را
 از قطرات ماء وجود الهی و رشحات زلال سلسال صمدانی بحیات ازلی سرمدی
 مشرف و مطرز فرمود و بخلق باقیه و قملیص عالیه و أثواب دائمه ابدیه مخلق و

ملبس فرمود مع ذلك بچنين آيه كبرى و موهبه عظمى و أنوار لا يطفى و أعطاء لا
يفنى مستقيم نگشته ايم^{117a} و باین صنعت محكمه و مكرمت متقنه و عزت قديمه و
لطيفه سرمدیه قائم نشديم و از انفاس قدس روح القدس و أرياح طيب نور الانس
محبوب مانديم بحدی که اگر هزار داود وجود از نغمات زبور و ترنیاات سرور
بالحان طري بدیع بر عظام رميم عباد بخواهد هرگز مهتز نشود بحرکت نیاید زیرا
که استعداد نزول رحمت از سماء قدرت از میان بر خاست و کل بهوای نفس در
قفس تن مسجون گشته اند و مدهوش شده اند و در صقع غفلت چنان منصقع گشته
اند که هرگز بهوش نیایند و بمقام وصل و قرب که مقصود اصلی است نرسند زهی
حسرت و ندامت که بجوهر هدی مهتدی نشديم و بسازج قدم مقتدی نگشتيم نه
بسینای طور قربش مقبل شدیم و نه از مظاهر نفیش معرض تأسی بجذبات روح
مقدسش نگرديم و تقدی بانوار بهجتش ننمودیم از جمله تأسی إنفاق ارواح است
که بآن مفتخر نشديم و پوشیدن قمیص استقامت است که بآن فائز نگشتيم بلی در
قطب بحر هویه جالسیم و انتظار شربه ماء میکشیم و در ظلال شمس صمدیه
ساکنیم و طلب سراج مینمائیم این است شأن این بنده و عباد و کل من في البلاد
و اگر هم ناری از سدره مشتعل شود بآن موقد نشده در اطفای آن میکوشیم فهنياً
لمن تردى برداء الإنصاف في هذا المصاف اگر باین صفت كبرى متصف شوید البته
بعنائیت ابهی فائز میگردید این است آن خیط صفر مکنون که بحرکت آن متحرك
است كل من في الوجود و بسكون آن ساکن است كل من في بلاد المعبود پس باید
صدور را از ظنونات فاسده مجتثه خبیثه منیر و منزّه نمود تا وجه بدیع انصاف از
خلف جبل قاف سر بر آرد^{117b} و بعد غلبات ذوق صمدانیه و جذبات شوق ربانیه را
از دقات حمامه بقاء و کفات ارواح سناء ادراك نماییم و بر رفرف حب مستریح و
مستکن گردیم این است غایت قصوي و مقام او أدنی و دیگر آن که باید از
معرضین از حق در كل شؤن إعراض نماییم و در آنی مؤانست و مجالست را
جایز نداریم که قسم بخدا که انفس خبیثه انفس طیبه را میگدازد چنان که نار حطب
یابسه را و حرّ ثلج بارده را لا تكونن مع الذین قاسین قلوبهم عن ذکر الله باري
آنچه ذکر شد در تفسیر این بیت تلفظاً لا نظار المعرضین و ترحماً لأبصار المبغضین
که بهوای خود معنی نکنند و تفسیر ننمایند این اشعار در زمان مهاجرت در دیار
غربت در أراضی روم گفته شد و هیچکس از علماء و فضلاءي آن ممالك ایرادی
ننمودند و اعتراضی وارد نیاورند ولیکن از سبع این قوم چنان گمان میکنم که بعد
از تفسیر هم اعتراض نمایند و بخیال خود در سبیل وهم و خطا و ظنّ و عما سالک
شوند قل الله^{117c} قصد السبیل اما شاکرا و اما کفورا و اما مقبلا و اما نفورا ختم
اناء مسك که مفتوح شد هر نفي شمی ادراك مینماید و هر مزکومی محروم ماند و

تمسك بجبل الأمر في ظاهر صورة
فأهرق حجاب القرب عنك بلارمزة
فأسكن فإن قوّة العرش اضطرب
و معنى وراء العلم فيك حجبت
لذذ وأنس بسرّ القدس سرّة
لو تكشف الغطاء عن وجه ما شهدت
كذاك جرى الأمر عن عرش عزة
فطوبى للفائزين عن حسن وفائهم
فطوبى للعاشقين في سفك دمانهم
فطوبى للمخلصين في ما سرعوا

تعرف بوجه النور في باطن غيبتى^{١١٨}
فأشهد جمال القدس فيك بلا كشفة
فأصبر لأنّ عيون الغيب قد تبكّت ١٢٠
عاجز عن دركها كلّ عقل منيرة
فلا تفش عنها إن تكون أمينتي^{١١٩}
ليفنى الوجود في طرف قريبة
بذاك جرى الحكم من سرّ قدرتي^{١٢٠}
فطوبى للواردين في شرع بديعتي^{١٢١}
فطوبى للواثقين عن حبل عطو فتى
عن كلّ الجهات فع ظلّ ربوبيتي

اگر کلّ بمرض زکام مبتلى شوندد نقصي بر عطر بقا و وهني بر مسك خطا ولود^{١١٧د}
نياید فسبحانک اللهم يا إلهي أنا ديك حينئذ حين الذي نزلت عليّ من آثار حزنك
التي لو يطفح على الوجود لينعدم الغيب والشهود بحيث كاد أن يفارق الروح من
إضطرابها فو عزّتك وغيب صمديتك لو اتنفّس به لتحرق الأكباد بجوهريتها وتنفطر
السماء و ما فيها وتنهد الأرض و ما عليها فاه آه بذلك لن يطفح رائحه الوفاء عن
حديقة السناء ولن يهب طيب البقاء من مدينة البهاء و لن يفنّ ورقاء العماء على
أوراق الحمراء و لن يرنّ ديك السناء في ملكوة العليّ فوعزّة من عزّزته وجعلته
مظهر الوهيتك و منبع ربوبيتك لنسييت كلّ الأذكّار و كلّ ما علمتني من قبل من
بدائع علمك و جوامع آيات حكمتك بل كنت نسياً منسياً كأنّي ما كنت في أرض الملك
مشهوداً لعمر عليّ و حياة محمّد و روح صفي و رحمة راحم و جذبة محمود و ولهة
أحمد و سرّة محبوب و بهجة طاهر ما أحبّ أن أكون في الملك لحظة وكان الله من
ورائي شاهدي

١١٧ا T. نكشتيم

١١٧ب T. آورد

١١٧ج T. فلله

١١٧د T. ختاوارد

١١٨ T. غيبة

١١٩ T. أمينة

١٢٠ T. قدرة

١٢١ T. بديعة

تَمُّ
في يوم الكمال
يوم العلم من شهر الكلمات
من سنّة الألف من الواحد الثالث
من ظهور نقطة البيان روح
سواه فداء مطبقاً الثامن من شهر رمضان
سنّة ١٢٩٩

Appendix 3

**A provisional English translation of
Bahā'ullāh's
"Ode of the Mighty Dove"**

**by
Brian A. Miller**

He is the Lofty, the Most Glorious

A face flashing with light
drew me to her; all the suns
dimmed before her radiance.

It seemed the sun blazed
from her beauty; she manifested
in all the worlds and grew mighty.

Her splendor stirred up
the musk-laden cloud of Heaven;
her stature lifted the spirit of loftiness.

Her breath blew the trumpet
of Resurrection; with her breeze
shadowing clouds¹ spread over.²

By her brilliance the mountain of eternity
appeared; by her might
the light of glory³ became effulgent.

5

From her western horizon the sun
of manifestation appeared;⁴ from her eastern horizon
the full moon of revelation returned.

From her hair the scent of union wafted;
by her glance
the eye of beauty was brightened.⁵

¹ A reference to what He, blessed and exalted is He, said [in the Qur'an] "on the day when God comes shadowed (obscured) by clouds.

² A reference to the moving of the mountains, that they passed the way clouds pass by, as He said, "Behold the mountains, you think of them as solid and still, but they are moving, passing like clouds." All these are signs of the Resurrection and what will occur then.

³ روشني, luminous.

⁴ تَظَهَّرَتْ, the rising of the sun from her western horizon.

⁵ تَنَفَّرَتْ, that is, it shone. He is refreshed and energized by the sweet-smelling wafts from her

By the light of her face, the face of guidance
is guided; by the fire of her appearance,
the soul of Moses is purified.⁶

hair, the delight of her beauty and radiance, and the musk of mercy and glory, radiating from the right side of the Paradise of the Divine Essence that emanates from the right side of the eternal garden. So it is that the moldering bones of potential mystic gems may be honored with life everlasting, through the soul-stirring breezes and heartening fragrances of that wondrous eternal chalice and its novel and matchless wine and become the most honored of all creation. Thus from her appearance, the eye of true beauty is illumined, a beauty the least of whose signs is the sun of the heaven of being. Exalted be God, its creator, far above your remembrance of Him.

⁶ When Moses, whose merciful soul was made to dwell in the human temple, purified and sanctified his feet from the sandals of unfounded beliefs, he drew forth the hand of divine power from the bosom of his mighty cloak of honor. Then he arrived at the holy, beautiful and blessed valley of the heart, which is the throne of eternal splendor and the seat adorned with the might of lordship. When he reached the land of Sinai, that stretches out from the right of the sacred spot of light, he inhaled the fragrant breeze of the spirit from the eternal dayspring. He perceived the light of the eternal Presence from all directions and no directions. With the warm fervor of the fragrant breeze of divine love, he kindled a fire on the embers of the logs of singleness in the lamp of the divine essence in the niche of his heart, after parting the transitory veils from the lamp's glass. Quaffing the mead of the peerless Beauty and the pure wine of the everlasting Presence, he attained the valley of eternal cognizance, after erasing the stages of opposition. He discovered, because of fervent attraction and desire for encounter, the city of perpetual partaking. He (had) entered the city during a time of heedlessness among its people. Then he perceived the fire of God, the Ancient, and the Light of God, the August. When "He said to his family, 'Stay back! Verily, I perceive a fire.'" [Qur'an 20:10 and 28:29] And when he came to know the face of guidance, he discovered the perpetual bounties of a tree that "is neither of the east nor of the west." [Qur'an 24:35] Turning from the mortal face of bewilderment, he was honored with the face of the Ever-abiding and found the face of guidance, mighty and wondrous, in the blazing fire which was hidden in souls from the unseen realm. Of this he said, "Or I may find by the fire some guidance." [20:10] And thus may the meaning of the following blessed verse be understood, "He who made fire to blaze for you from the green tree." O would that a hearer might be found so that a sprinkling from the depths of the ocean of fire, and from the midst of this reservoir of fire, could be mentioned. But perhaps it is better still that this pearl in the shell of the sea of Gods essence be hidden and remain treasured in its secret receptacles, so that every estranged one may be debarred and every intimate become honored with the *karāma* of splendor and reach the sacred precincts of beauty. How happy and blessed is the soul that casts the cage of his body into the fire of love, and the soul who becomes a familiar spirit so that he may attain this lofty grace of rest/relief and partake of the high favor of God's majesty. All of this that has been mentioned, concerning the degrees of guidance and stages of purification of the soul, in regard to the rank of Moses is, according to our Prophet, upon Him be peace, is (offered) for the purpose that these splendors may appear in the visible world. Otherwise, that Blessed One has always guided by the guidance of God and always will be. For the sun of guidance dawned from Him and the moon of divine grace appeared from Him and the fire of the divine essence was kindled from the fire of his nature and the eternal radiance from the light of his brow. The very words that Holy one spoke when Pharaoh questioned him about that murder illumined the stature of these semblances. He answered, "I did it. I was one of the wrongdoers and I was led astray when I became fearful of you and so I fled. Then my Lord passed judgement upon me and made me one of the Messengers." The page is ended, but as for the subject, it cannot be exhausted and so it shall remain.

The heart of hearts accepted the arrows
of her lashes; all creation stretched its head
to the snare⁷ of her locks.⁸

Her footfalls are my final goal;
though she strolls the land of clouds
that shroud God's Throne.

10

In every eye I cried to join her;
in every fire
I burned with separation.⁹

I spread myself as a carpet
for her to cast her foot upon my heart;
this, from the beginning, was my goal.¹⁰

I sought reunion everywhere;
I dotted the letters of nearness
on every grain of dust.¹¹

⁷ سهم is a word for "arrow"; شفر means eyelashes; وهق and الوهاق means lasso or snare.

⁸ The meaning is this: pure, radiant breasts are receptive to the arrows of the lashes of the most high Beloved and seek to obtain whatever comes from her. The head of creation, completely unseen and divine, is stretched out in submission to the snare of her tresses. The breast that is not sanctified by that arrow remains bereft; utterly lost the head that doesn't fall into that snare. Then Praised be He whose description is far beyond us; for He is exalted beyond any name they may ascribe to Him.

⁹ This means that both sets of eyes, the holy, lofty and sanctified ones that are secretly veiled in the unseen realms, and those visible eyes that exist in the realm of this world, in every time and place have wept and are weeping as a result of this servant's separation from witnessing the lights of the beauty of the Beloved. This may be understood from the apparent meaning of the poem. The inner meaning of it, only God knows, for we apprehend less than a single letter. Similarly, may you comprehend the meaning of the second hemistich to the extent that the sensibility, fervor, attraction, distress, passion, and love come to exist in the realm of your being. Thus may you attain the Sadra tree, planted in the highest paradise, and its Aqsa Mosque, which is the command and cause of God and may you be honored therewith.

¹⁰ With the meaning of ardent desire, goal, wish.

It means that, "Across every land, over the most distant reaches, even from the land of hearts, and beyond them to that which has no end, and is concealed behind the veils of the unseen realm and even to the nethermost realms of being, I spread myself to become a carpet that perhaps her foot might reach my heart, the seat of unseen mysteries. This, in the end, is the destiny of sanctified and godly hearts.

¹¹ تربة means "became dust."

If only I were swift in reaching her light;
I was cast far, far away
after being so near.

And if I reached out my arms toward her,
she would answer me with a sword;
thus was my love requited.¹²

15

All I wanted was a tie to surely bind;
all she sought was a sword
to cut our sapling down.

I said, "May my soul and all I have be your sacrifice,
that we may meet; have mercy!
uncover not my shame."¹³

Deepest love for you awakened my desire
for union; a desire kept
from the beginning of time to eternity."¹⁴

The mystery of revelation shown from her
radiated for all humanity; She rose
and my resurrection rose for her.

I bore the misery of Husayn for her;
The orb of creation was molded

¹² أحبّتي , that which is contrary (to the grammatical usage of) the people is due to the need for maintaining the rhythm.

¹³ That is, whatever gifts I possess for verbal expression or deeper meaning, whatever I know concerning matters of names and attributes and whatever God bestowed on me regarding the seen and unseen realms, I sacrifice that I might meet you just once, or gaze on you for only a moment. I beg Thy forgiveness, O my God, if I ever laid claim to what is in Your hands. But I swear by Thy might, O my God, if I cannot be thus, I want to be near You then. For other than this, nothing can ever benefit me and my heart will never rest. For if You were to give me everything that is in the heavens and on the earth, then I would ask You this, O my God, that it be sacrificed in Your path. For no one has been sacrificed without You revealing to Your servant some of the greatest signs of Your love and most glorious tokens of Your affection. So may my soul be content with its hopes, while truly Thou art powerful over all things.

¹⁴ If it is an adjective, it is not in agreement; however, it was revealed like this and is the truth and there is no doubt about it.

after me in sorrow for him.¹⁵

You are the hope of my heart, the beloved
of my inmost being; you are the lord
of my soul, my light, my blood.

Bless me that I may attain reunion after exile;
grant me the pure spirit of fellowship,
though now I grieve.

From my torment, hellfire blazed out;¹⁶
from my groans the light
of creation began to glow.¹⁷

The heat of my thirst dried up the sea of heaven;
the river of splendor
will never moisten my lips.

With every grain of dust, I suffered
every act of vengeance;¹⁸ tell how
tears of blood rained from my eyes.

The ocean is but a drop
from the flood of my tears; the fire of Abraham
is but an ember from my fever's flame.

My sorrow froze the sea of delight;
at my distress the eye
of sorrows overflowed.

My splendor faded, my radiance dimmed;
my light went out because of pride
and the exultation of the malicious.¹⁹

¹⁵ The orb of the lesser world, because it is dependent on the earth, carries the feminine ending.

¹⁶ وقود comes to mean fuel, burning, as it is said [in the Qur'an], "whose fuel is men and stones." However, this also has the meaning of flame and intense (suffering).

¹⁷ The meaning of تحقق is "to be realized or proved true."

¹⁸ Blood vengeance.

¹⁹ غرور, pride or delusion. Those who exult in the misfortune of others are more numerous than atoms. By God! The like of what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind considered, nor imagination conceived has rained down from the heaven of heedlessness of the revealer's

My bones are worn thin, and my flesh
is tattered;²⁰ my heart is scorched
in the fire of my torment.

My passion scattered me like ashes, loving
you wore me raw; separation has lain waste to me,
but to join you still my goal shall be.²¹

30

Because of my grief, heaven was nearly rent
asunder;²² from the agony of my heart,
the ground of my being was shattered.²³

The burning of my heart and the crying of my eyes,
the moaning²⁴ of my soul and the pallor of my face
show how you have disdained me.

Every night I bewail²⁵ the blame²⁶
of the malicious;²⁷ every day I plead²⁸
to be delivered from this scornful grief.²⁹

I reached the nethermost depths
of disgrace;³⁰ while every tongue
grew weary of recounting it.³¹

servants. Say: O people of the earth! Do not oppose him in whose heart is naught but the effulgence of the lights of the morn of God's reign. Fear God and do not oppose that which you will never love and never hate. Whether love for God is found or lost, neither can do Him harm. We give praise to God for that He has made us independent of their love and their mention. For He is God and has ever been potent over all things.

²⁰ ابلى means "ragged and worn."

²¹ منيتي means "wish," "hope".

²² It is a reference to the blessed verse, "The heavens were nearly cleft asunder above them..."

²³ and the earth is torn apart.

²⁴ شعله here, flame [literally, puff].

²⁵ ناله و حنين , groaning and yearning.

²⁶ شملت , scorn, ridicule

²⁷ ملامت كنفده ,blaming.

²⁸ إلحاح , importunity.

²⁹ فقد , loss.

³⁰ الذل , abasement.

³¹ تكلفت , wearied tongue meaning "thickened and twisted."

Every castle's maids have draped themselves in black;
they mourned in every chamber
because of my deep despondency.

35

I perish by all the sorrow ;
in each heartbeat I am gripped
and lost in each release.

She called out to me
from behind "Silence!"³²
"Restrain your tongue from such talk."³³

"How many Ḥusayns like you
have labored for me; how many 'Alis
just like you have loved me!

"How many lovers loved me better than you;
how many my peers, of the choicest men,
have cried out like you.

"They wailed³⁴ incessantly,
yet never wavered, though
at their wits' end awaiting me.

40

"Compared to my dawning, the sun of revelation
is like a star; to my manifestation,
unbounded light is but a spark.

"In the light of my inner being, all created
being is like an ant; in the fire of my love
the flames of hell are but an ember."³⁵

³² صمت, meaning "be silent."

³³ حكايت, tale.

³⁴ هج, meaning "to cry out" or "moan" out of both love and sorrow.

³⁵ It is a reference to the verse [Q 20:10] "He said, 'Halt! I perceive a fire; perhaps I may bring you a brand from it.'"

**"Only his nature³⁶, he who was confirmed
in true faith,³⁷ is like mine; with my palm
the hand of Moses³⁸ was held close on Sinai. ³⁹**

**"The source of this Cause came from a clear command;
the equity of judgement
came from the justice of my wisdom.**

**"The waves of the sea were calmed
by the wave within me; the Holy Spirit
was roused by the light of my splendor.**

45

**"On seeing me, immortal Moses fell stunned, prostrate;⁴⁰
from one glimpse⁴¹ of me the holiest
of mountains was crushed to dust.⁴²**

**"With the spread of my Cause, the spirit of all
souls was massed; from the breath of my spirit,
moldering bones sprang to life.⁴³**

**"The spirit of the Cause circumambulated her house;
while the spirit of the house rose
with the light of my countenance.**

**"The lofty realm of knowledge enshrined
in the letter 'B' is still a mystery; ⁴⁴**

³⁶ From the verse [Q. 30:30], "The nature of God according to which man was created. "

³⁷ A reference to the sacred verse [again 30:30], "Be steadfast in faith, inclining away from evil."

³⁸ The verse [27:12], (a hand) "white without defect."

³⁹ A reference to the verse [28:32] "Hold thy hand close in thy bosom."

⁴⁰ A reference to the verse [28:143] "Moses collapsed in a swoon."

⁴¹ "Look to the mountain..." [same verse]

⁴² "The mountain crumbled in dust." [same verse]

⁴³ The bones came to life, though they were decayed They quivered from joy and the bounty of the spirit.

⁴⁴ All existence appeared through the letter "B" and with the dot, the distinction was made between the worshippers and the Adored One. As the *hadith* states, "All that is in the Qur'a;n is in the words ... الحمد لله, "Praise," etc. [be to God, the Lord of the worlds].

The 'T' of ink bows down in secret to my point.⁴⁵
"All true guidance began with my noble Cause;
all that is lofty
descended with my gift."⁴⁶

50

"Because of my holy melody, the droning of birds
becomes a song; because of my resonant voice,
the buzzing of bees is like a ringing bell.

"I established my law despite the evil
of your doubt; you quaffed another's love
disdainful of my decrees.

"You came with attributes; you came with kinship;
You bandied names about
against the way of my path."⁴⁷

"You described your self and joined partners
with me; Ha! Sinner!
Breaking this commandment is the greatest sin.

"You hoped in your fantasy to join me;
Ha! You will not! Unless you fulfill
all my conditions in yourself:

55

"Quaff fate's afflictions from every cup;
taste defeat's bloody streams
pouring from my heart."⁴⁸

"Sever your hopes of any touch
of relief; prevent the fulfillment
of every craving need.

⁴⁵ The meanings in the dot are countless, beyond reckoning, limitless, and imperishable. Therefore, the promised Beauty, the all-embracing word, and the divine temple are characterized by this lofty name and exalted inscription of the Supreme Throne, which is the site of revelation and seat of Unseen Being. This refers in particular to the same temple and is sufficient witness unto itself.

⁴⁶ وفدتي , meaning "descend or revealed."

⁴⁷ محبتي , meaning spiritual path and character.

⁴⁸ مهجة has three meanings: "the heart," "life's blood," and "soul."

"Blood shed in the sacred path of love
is obligatory; a heart⁴⁹ scorched
by love is the first sign of allegiance I exact.
"Keep wakeful every night⁵⁰
from the scorpion stings of the vicious;⁵¹
their ceaseless vilification will fill your days.

"According to my religion, deadly venom⁵²
is like sherbet; in my faith,
the sentence of death is sweet compassion.⁵³

60

"Cease your claim to love, or submit to this course;
this command proceeds
according to precepts of my religion."

I cried out to her secretly from afar,
"O my Love! The aim of all my affairs
and desire of my soul!

Lo! I am ready, captive in your hands
of might! O how I hope
for what you have decreed.⁵⁴

Here I am, seeking all of you,
your every wish;
How I long for what you have decreed.⁵⁵

This my breast is hoping for, the lances
of your assault; for this my body longs,
the swords of your conquest.

65

⁴⁹ حشا, (literally vitals), here "heart."

⁵⁰ wakefulness.

⁵¹ sting, biting; scorpion-like people are intended.

⁵² poison, death, destruction.

⁵³ out of compassion and kindness.

⁵⁴ that which is considered out of wrath and power.

⁵⁵ a longing for; تَقَضَّتْ , pass judgement upon.

**Your fire is my light, vanquished by your hand
is my aim;⁵⁶ your tyranny is my ease,
your verdict is my desire.⁵⁷**

**"So behold the tears of my eyes, how they stream;
gaze into the recesses of my heart,
how it withers and fades away."**

**She cast spears of indifference;
daily she struck with swords
and with rejection every night.**

**I read the book of unbelief, every line;
I endured everyone's silence
or curse each moment flung.**

**I was pierced with accusations
of idolatry every moment; every hour
I was stabbed with spears of expulsion.**

70

**It was as if all fate's afflictions poured down
for me alone; it was as if every sword
of wrath was drawn upon my neck.⁵⁸**

**The sorrows of Jacob⁵⁹, Joseph
in his prison cell,⁶⁰ Job's ordeal⁶¹
and the fire of the Friend of God⁶²;**

**Adam's remorse, Jonah's flight,⁶²
David's cry and Noah's lament;⁶³**

⁵⁶ means "wish."

⁵⁷ wish, desire.

⁵⁸ چيدني, neck..

⁵⁹ The verse, "His eyes became white from sorrow."

⁶⁰ The verses [12:33 and 12:36], "Two youths entered prison with him" and "He said, Prison is preferable to what (these women) are inviting me to..." etc.

⁶¹ [21: 83] "O Lord, affliction has beset me."

⁶² [Qur'an 21:87] "And Jonah, when he left in anger, he imagined that we did not have power over him..."

⁶³ Noah and David lamented and wept a great deal. The story of Noah is well known, but the

Eve's separation⁶⁴, Mary's agony,

Isaiah's tribulation and Zachariah's torment;⁶⁵

The deluge of my sorrow destined all that was decreed;
from the overflow of my distress, all afflictions began.

75

See how I wander the lands desolate and alone;
Witness that my only companion
in this wasteland is a wild beast.⁶⁶

When my eyes were opened⁶⁷, the eyes of heaven
rained down;⁶⁸ at the cleaving⁶⁹ of my heart,
springs burst from the ground and merged.⁷⁰

By the spirit of my sorrows, the spirit of eternity
was slain; in the glare of my grief,
the throne of the Most High collapsed.⁷¹

The red in all creation by my blood
was reddened; the branches of being
sprouted from the tears of my eyes.⁷²

Bitter affliction suffered in the your path
of love is sweet; the honey of eternity
without your presence is most bitter.⁷³

80

matter of David's outcry may be known from the Psalms how much persecution and affliction they suffered.

⁶⁴ It concerns her separation from Adam for 40 days or more, as is mentioned in former traditions. [This reference is not in manuscript Z²]

⁶⁵ We rescued him from great affliction.

⁶⁶ It is said to be a wasteland or desert.

⁶⁷ A reference to the sacred verse, "And we opened the gates of heaven"

⁶⁸ With water pouring down.

⁶⁹ We caused springs to issue from the earth.

⁷⁰ The waters joined as He had commanded.

⁷¹ تَهَدَّت , or was destroyed.

⁷² تَنْبَت , to cultivate.

⁷³ تلخ , most bitter.

Iron scars upon my neck⁷⁴ are plain
to see;⁷⁵ shackles
marks upon my legs remain.⁷⁶

Not a day has passed but I am
scorched by insinuating verse
and insolent⁷⁷ prose.

My spirit has departed and my heart
has melted; my soul has boiled out
from my sore misery.

I survived without spirit, without heart,
without life's blood; that I still remained
was my great bewilderment.

For the loftiness of my soul, judgement was rendered
against me; O would that my reality
had never risen out from within.

85

Thus affliction compassed me
from every side; their decrees
devastated me at every turn.⁷⁸

I ascended to the apex of oneness,
alone; I attained reunion,
a fountain within my soul.

I witnessed your attributes
in my own qualities,
with your sharp eye in every glance.⁷⁹

If I have limits, they are shown

⁷⁴ It is an allusion [or metonymy] to chains.

⁷⁵ It means that it is certain and obvious.

⁷⁶ chains; تَبَقَّتْ, meaning "it remains."

⁷⁷ literally, "blatant."

⁷⁸ That is, "it destroyed me;" قَضَايَا, decrees.

⁷⁹ Today we made your sight sharp.

from you; if I had qualities
they manifested from you.⁸⁰

Out of my murk, the darkness of night
came into being; out of my soul,
midday's light streamed.

90

No matter if I am driven out today;
I will triumph by the light on High
on the day of my resurrection.

I befriended Jerusalem with the light
of its fellowship; I departed
by way of Tehran during the time of my exile.

I attained faith in the Light because of the light
within me; I ascended to the realm
of the spirit in my inmost soul.

I call out to thee, "O spirit of Life, depart
from me! Let not the least
remnant of self remain."⁸¹

O spirit! From the cloud-shrouded throne
descend! Your merit of glory
is nothing in the measure of my meakness.

95

O my master, Arise!
O my heart be gone; you have no majesty,
despised in the lowlands.

O my patience! Endure contentedly
all that you have borne of hardship
for the good-pleasure of your beloved."

She called out to me in spirit, "Endure!
For I am well aware
of all you sought to prove.

⁸⁰ meaning تظهّرت , "appeared."

⁸¹ . نفس is better, even though it is contrary to common usage due to (the gender) of نفْس .

**"Abandon what you know and to what you cling;
for in my presence the worship of many
is the same as the worship of one.**

**"Most splendid is the splendor of Sinai,
but to me it is like fluff. Most brilliant is heaven's
light; but to me it is utter darkness.**

100

**"The tokens of your portrayal are true,
but suit a child; the sketches of your praise
are true, but rudimentary.**

**"Truly I have remained in sanctity;
indeed, I will ever be
boundless in purity.**

**"For how many a just one was to me
an oppressor; how many the scholar
in my eyes is ignorant.**

**"How many the immortal one
to me had passed away; how many a mystic
knower will never know a thing.**

**"How many a servant, to me was a despot;
how many a worshipper
never spent a moment in prostration.**

105

**"Heaven's psalms⁴² are confirmed
in my own being; pages⁴³ of splendor
were sent down from my page.**

**"From my atom, the primordial sun
spun off; from my drop,
the sea of creation was drawn forth."⁴⁴**

⁴² By psalm, **زبر** is meant [holy] book.

⁴³ **صف** is the plural of "page" or "scripture."

⁴⁴ that is "came into being, realized."

**"All the wealth of the family of man
seems to me like the snort of an ant
or the buzz of a bee.**

**"All minds are deranged by the lure
of my heart;⁸⁵ all souls are revived⁸⁶
by the sonority of my soul.**

**"All deities achieved divinity⁸⁷ from a sprinkling
of my Cause; all lords are nurtured
by the abundance of my judgment.⁸⁸**

110

**"He who walked the land of the Spirit,
by decree walked with me; the throne of Sinai
ever was my native land to tread.**

**"By my light, the star of revelation
shown forth; because of my spirit,
the sun of joy appeared.**

**"The many gathered verses are lamps
of revelation; repositied writings
are dawning points of sanctity;**

**"Gems of ideas, purities of thought;
brocades of light,
arabesques of wisdom;**

**"From the kappa of my command⁸⁹, judgement was passed
on all; while from the kindliness of my heart,
every wondrous thing appeared.**

115

"You turned away from my face and yet imagined

⁸⁵ from الوله , meaning "passion, rapure."

⁸⁶ from هياة , life.

⁸⁷ الله , from God, diety.

⁸⁸ from ارباب , lords.

⁸⁹ the realm of command is meant.

that you drew near; You poured out
the water of pretense in a religion of fancy.

"You failed to remain in the light
of the Unseen, despite what I wrought
within you; thus my skill was wasted."⁹⁰

⁹⁰ This means "The verse of Effulgence" [Qur'an 7:143?], which is one of the effulgences from the lights of the morn eternity and the manifestations of the dawn of the sun of sanctity and the radiance that is dawning from the sun of being, and the moon of the desired one and the point of adoration. She bestowed the honor and lofty rank of eternal life upon the realities of contingent beings, the gem-like spirits of created souls, and all the atoms of the universe, with drops of the water from the divine being and pure sprinklings of the eternal fountains. She adorned them with everlasting robes, the lofty garments, and eternal clothing. Despite this most mighty sign, such a grand bestowal, this unquenchable light, and priceless gift, we failed to remain steadfast. We did not stand firm by this mighty work, this sure bounty, ancient glory, and eternal grace. So we remained veiled from the sacred breaths of the Holy Spirit, the scented, radiant breezes of communion to such an extent that if a thousand Davids of existence were found singing the strains of the Psalms, songs of joy, and melodies fresh and new, over the moldering bones of the people, yet they would never be stirred or revived. For the capacity to receive the mercy from the heaven of power has been removed. All are imprisoned by selfish desire in the cage of the body and are unconscious. They are so dumbstruck by the thunder of heedlessness that they will never come to their senses, nor will they reach the station of union and nearness, which is the essential goal. How regrettable, that we were not guided by the essence of guidance; what a pity that we were not led to the lamp of eternity, nor did we approach the Sinai of her proximity, nor did we reject those who demonstrated their denial of her. Neither did we seek the raptures of her sanctified spirit, nor did we follow the lights of her joyfulness.

Among all these things we must seek, are the following—we must sacrifice our souls, which we did not achieve; we must put on the garment of steadfastness, and this we did not earn. Indeed, we were sitting in the midst of the ocean of the divine essence, waiting to draw a sip of water. We were resting in the shade of the sun of eternity, and asking for a lamp. This is the condition of this servant, and the servants of God, and every one in this land. And if a fire should be kindled from the sacred tree, we would not be inflamed therewith, but we would try to extinguish it. So "Well is it for one who attires himself with the robe of justice in this battle." If you were endowed with this most great quality, of course, you would obtain the most glorious favor. This is that bond to the hidden void; it moves by Her movement; when it is still, everything in creation is stilled. Therefore one must illumine and purify his breast from the masses of corrupt, vicious and soul-devouring imaginings, so that the wondrous face of justice may emerge from behind Mount Qaf. Then we may perceive the radiance of the portals of eternal delight and the raptures of divine ardor and apprehend the melodies of the dove of eternity and reach the hems of the robes of the radiant spirits and upon the dais of love take our rest. This is the ultimate favor, and its lowest station. In addition to all this, we must shun the opponents of truth in every matter and not permit the fellowship with such a one. For, by God, the breath of the malicious will devour the righteous, just as fire on dry wood and heat on chilled ice. "Do not be among those who harden their hearts against the mention of God."

For this reason we have mentioned the interpretation of this verse, out of kindness for views of the enemies, and a solace to the eyes of the angered, lest they understand and interpret this poetry according to their selfish desires. It was recited during a time of the exile in distant regions of the Ottoman lands, yet no one among the learned and noble in these principalities raised any objection or opposition. Yet because of the fierceness of this people, I suspect that after they have interpreted it, they will raise objections, and according to their fancy wander

**"Hold fast the cord of the Cause in its evident form;
be well acquainted with the face
of Light in a hidden inner realm.**

**"Rend asunder the veil of nearness without a glance;
gaze on the beauty of sanctity
unveiled within you.**

**"So be silent, lest the power of the heavenly throne
be shaken; forbear, because the eyes
of the unseen realm have wept.**

120

**"Meaning beyond any knowledge gained
lies concealed within you,
too radiant for minds to apprehend.**

**"Take delight and commune in secret
with the mystery of sanctity; disclose it not,
if you wish to be my trusted one.**

**"If you were to unveil the face
of all you've seen, all creation would be
destroyed in a moment's unguarded glance.**

blindly in doubt and error along the path of delusion. Say: God is the goal of the path. Either be of the thankful or of the ungrateful, either accepting or denying. The seal on a container of musk, when it is opened, the one with a sense of smell perceives it, while anyone with congestion remains deprived. And if everyone is so afflicted with rheum, still there is no defect in the everlasting perfume, nor is there weakness or error in the production of the musk. Then praised be Thou, O God, my God! I call on Thee at this moment, when Thou hast sent down upon me the traces of Thy sorrow, that were they to pour down upon creation, the seen and unseen worlds would be destroyed. For my soul was nearly lost, so great was its agitation. I swear by Thy might, and by the mystery of Thine eternity, were I to inhale it, hearts would be burned to their very core; the heavens and all that is in them would be cleft asunder and the earth and all that is upon it would be destroyed. Ah! Ah! for this reason, the fragrant breeze of fidelity will never blow from the garden of splendor; never will the scent of eternity waft from city of glory. Never will the dove of heavenly realm warble upon the crimson leaves, nor will the cock of grandeur crow in the heavenly realm. I swear by the might of one whom you have glorified, the one whom you have made a manifestation of Thy Godhead and the wellspring of Thy Lordship, I have forgotten every remembrance and all you have taught me previously of the wonder of Thy knowledge and all the collected signs of your wisdom. Nay, I am utterly forgotten, as if I were unknown in thy dominion. By the life of 'Alī, by the life of Muhammad, by the spirit of Šafā, and mercy of the Rāḥim, the rapture of Maḥmūd; by the passion of Aḥmad and the mystery of the beloved and her pure beauty, I do not wish to be in this world for one moment. And God stands near as my witness.

**"Thus the command proceeds from the throne
of might; thus the judgement
issues from the essence of my power."**

**Blessed are those who attained for the beauty of their faithfulness.
Blessed are those who embraced a wondrous law.**

125

**Blessed are the ardent lovers for shedding their blood.
Blessed are those who cling fast to the cord of my affection.**

**Blessed are the sincere as they hasten
from every direction to the shade of my lordship.**

Colophon

**It was completed
on the day of perfection
that was the day of 'Ilm in the month of Kalimāt
in the first year of the third *vāḥid*
since the manifestation of the Point of the Bayān,
May the spirit of all else be a sacrifice to Him
The eighth of Ramaḍān, 1299 A.H.**

Appendix Four

A Glossary of Some Arabic Literary, Religious, and Rhetorical Terms¹

adab: literature, belles-lettres; manners, polite behavior.

āya: sign; verse of the Qurʾān.

bayt: distich, couplet, verse of poetry.

ḥadith: tradition; an orally transmitted saying, deed, or significant silence on the part of the Prophet Muḥammad, often used to substantiate a point of law, correct behavior, or belief.

ḥāl: state or condition, usually temporary; adverbial clause.

ḥusn al-taʿlīl: ingenious assignment of cause.

iqāfa: noun construct formed by two or three terms joined in genitive modification with the first term modifying the second.

ihām: double entendre, the more remote meaning being intended.

jinās: joining or correspondence; a class of figures of speech used in poetry. Two terms exist in close proximity and are linked through derivation from the same root or consonantal shape. The pair creates a euphony of sound and either a harmony or dissonance of linked meanings. Numerous varieties and subclasses are described:

jinās al-ishtiḳāq: two words derived from the same root.

jinās al-muḍārīʿ: two words differ by only one letter.

jinās al-mudhayyal: one of the two words has an additional consonant.

jinās al-mukhālīf: two words with identical letters in different order

¹Sources: A. J. Arberry, *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (London: Cambridge University Press), 1965; Wahba, Majdi, *Dictionary of Literary Terms (English-French-Arabic)* (Beirut: Librarie Du Liban), 1974.

jinās al-mukhtaliḥ: two words differ in their vocalization (short vowels).

jinās al-murakkab: two components with the same sound, one formed by two words, the other being a single word.

jinās al-muṣaḥḥaf: the two words differ in their diacritical points, but have the same shape and vowel sounds.

jinās al-mushābih: two word that appear to be derived from the same root, but are not.

jinās al-mustufī al-tāmm: two words that are exactly the same but with different meaning.

madiḥ, or madḥ: the last section of the *qaṣīda*, in which the poet praises his or her benefactor.

maqām: station or stage of attainment by a mystic to an elevation of character, perception, degree of knowledge, or spiritual growth.

mathnawī: a poem, often lengthy, narrative in structure, composed of rhymed couplets.

mu‘allaqa: pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, or ode of such fine character as to be suspended from the shrine of the *ka‘ba*. Only seven or ten poems were so designated and preserved.

mubālagha: hyperbole, exaggeration.

mulā’ama: balance between pairs of phrases.

muqābala: a pair of contrasting ideas in a balanced compound.

muwāzana: internal rhyme.

nasib: the amatory prelude of a *qaṣīda*.

qāfiyya: end rhyme.

qaṣīda: ode, poem formed by distichs or couplets all having the same end-rhyme and meter, with defined rules of subject and structure.

radd al-ʿajz ʿalā al-ṣadr: the line ends with the same word or phrase with which it began.

shaykh: elder, founder or leader of a Sufi order.

shirk: joining partners with Gođ polytheism.

tadmīn: quoting from the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, or a line of poetry.

tajāhul al-ʿārif: feigned ignorance, rhetorical question.

talmīḥ: allusion, without quotation.

ṭarīqa: Sufi order or fellowship.

tarṣūʿ: internal rhyme in which the terms correspond in exact rhythm as well.

tashkhiṣ: personification.

ʿUdhri: A group of pre-Islamic love poets renowned for their chastity and faithfulness in love, even to death.

wazn: rhythm in poetry.