The Masnavi

RUMI

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مثنوی معنوی

Translated from the Persian with AI (Claude) and edited



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The Masnavi · Rumi

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INTRODUCTION

Jalal al-Din Rumi (AD 1207–1273), born in Balkh in present-day Afghanistan, spent most of his life in Konya in Anatolia as a scholar, preacher and Sufi master. In the last fifteen years of his life he dictated the *Masnavi* (*Masnavi-yi maʿnavi*, "the rhyming couplets of inner meaning") to his disciple Husam al-Din: some 25,000 couplets in six books, in a single meter, which Persian readers have long called "the Quran in Persian." It moves from story to story, breaking off a tale for a digression, a prayer or a burst of lyric, and returning to it pages later.

This selection gives about 1,300 couplets from the first four books, each tale whole, with Rumi's digressions inside it. Book I opens with the famous Song of the Reed, the lament of a reed flute cut from its reed bed, and the tale of the king and the handmaiden; then come the grocer's parrot, the merchant whose parrot sends a message to the parrots of India, the grammarian in the boat, and the contest of the Chinese and Greek painters. Book II gives the man who mistook a hair for the new moon, Moses and the shepherd, and the rider who saved a man from a snake; Book III the jackal that fell into a dyer's vat, the snake-catcher and the frozen dragon, the elephant in the dark, and the chickpea in the pot; Book IV the tanner who fainted in the perfumers' market, the Sufi who would not look at the garden, and the three fish.

Rumi's tales are often comic, sometimes coarse, and always pointed: the stories are, as he says, the husk, and the meaning is the kernel. The Persian here is R. A. Nicholson's critical edition; the translation renders each hemistich as a line of plain English verse.

Book I

The Song of the Reed and the King and the Handmaiden; the grocer's parrot; the merchant and the parrot of India; the grammarian and the boatman; the Chinese and Greek painters.

THE SONG OF THE REED

A reed flute cut from its reed bed laments its separation and longs to return.

1.1 Listen to the reed, how it tells its story,
how it complains of separations:
"Ever since they cut me from the reed bed,
men and women have wept at my cry.
I want a breast torn to shreds by parting,
so that I can tell the pain of longing.
Whoever is left far from his origin
seeks again the time of his union.
In every gathering I have lamented;
I have kept company with the unhappy and the happy.

1.6 Each became my friend out of his own surmise;
none sought out my secrets from within me.
My secret is not far from my lament,
but eye and ear do not have that light.
Body is not veiled from soul, nor soul from body,
yet no one is permitted to see the soul."
This cry of the flute is fire, not wind;
whoever does not have this fire, may he be nothing!
It is the fire of love that has fallen into the reed;
it is the ferment of love that has fallen into the wine.[1]

1.11 The reed is the companion of all who are cut off from a friend;
its notes have torn away our veils.
Who has seen a poison and an antidote like the reed?
Who has seen a confidant and a yearning lover like the reed?
The reed tells the tale of the path full of blood;
it tells the stories of Majnun's love.
No one is privy to this sense but the senseless;
the tongue has no customer but the ear.
In our grief the days have grown late;
the days have walked hand in hand with burnings.[2]

1.16 If the days are gone, tell them, "Go, there is nothing to fear,"
but you remain, you whom none equals in purity!
All but the fish have had their fill of its water;
whoever lacks his daily bread finds the day long.
No one raw can grasp the state of the ripe,
so the talk must be short—and so, farewell.
Break your chains and be free, my son!
How long will you be a slave to silver and gold?
If you pour the sea into a jug,
how much will it hold? One day's share.

1 *Nist bad* means both "is not wind" and "may he be nothing."
2 *Parda* means both a musical mode and a veil. Majnun ("the madman") is the legendary lover of Layla.

1.21 The jug of the greedy eye has never been filled;
until the oyster was content, it was not filled with pearls.
Whoever has had his garment torn by love
is cleansed of greed and of every fault.
Rejoice, Love, our sweet madness,
physician of all our ills,
remedy of our pride and our vanity,
you who are our Plato and our Galen!
Through love the earthly body rose to the heavens;
the mountain began to dance and grew nimble.[3]

1.26 Love was the soul of Sinai, lover:
Sinai was drunk, "and Moses fell down in a swoon."
If I were joined to the lips of my confidant,
like the reed I would say what must be said.
Whoever is parted from one who speaks his language
is left without a tongue, though he has a hundred songs.
When the rose is gone and the garden has faded,
you will hear the nightingale's story no more.
All is the Beloved, and the lover a veil;
the Beloved is living, and the lover a dead thing.[4]

1.31 When love has no care for him,
he is left like a bird without wings—alas for him!
How can I keep my senses, before or after,
when my Friend's light is not before and after me?
Love wants this word to come out:
how could a mirror not reveal?
Do you know why your mirror reveals nothing?
Because the rust has not been cleared from its face.
Listen, friends, to this story:
in truth it is the ready coin of our own state.

3 Plato and Galen stand for the greatest of philosophers and of physicians.
4 Quran 7:143: when God revealed Himself to the mountain, it crumbled and Moses fell senseless.

THE KING AND THE HANDMAIDEN

A king falls in love with a handmaiden on the road and buys her, but she falls ill.

1.36 There was once a king, in a time before ours;
he had the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of faith as well.
It happened one day that the king rode out
with his intimates to hunt.
On the highway the king saw a handmaiden,
and the king's soul became that handmaiden's slave.
As the bird of his soul fluttered in its cage,
he paid out money and bought the handmaiden.
When he had bought her and was enjoying her,
as fate would have it, the handmaiden fell ill.

1.41 A man had a donkey but no packsaddle;
he found a packsaddle, and a wolf carried off the donkey.
He had a jug, but no water came to hand;
when he found the water, the jug broke.
The king gathered physicians from left and right
and said, "The lives of us both are in your hands.
My own life is nothing; she is the soul of my soul.
I am in pain and wounded; she is my cure.
Whoever cures this soul of mine
carries off my treasure, my pearls and coral."

1.46 They all told him, “We will stake our lives;
we will pool our understanding and work together.
Each of us is the Messiah of a world;
for every pain there is a salve in our hands.”
In their arrogance they did not say “If God wills,”
so God showed them how helpless humans are.
By leaving out “if God wills” I mean a hardness of heart,
not just the words, which are only on the surface.
Many have never spoken the words “if God wills,”
yet their souls are one with the soul of those words.[5]

1.51 Whatever treatment and medicine they tried,
the illness grew and the need went unmet.
The handmaiden wasted to a hair from her sickness;
the king’s eyes, weeping blood, became a stream.
As fate would have it, oxymel produced bile;
almond oil increased the dryness.
Myrobalan bound her instead of loosening;
water fed the fire like naphtha.[6]

5 On saying “If God wills” (*in sha’ Allah*), see Quran 18:23–24.
6 In humoral medicine each of these remedies should have had the opposite effect.

THE PHYSICIANS FAIL

The physicians' cures fail; the king prays barefoot in the mosque and dreams of a holy man.

When the king saw the helplessness of those physicians,
he ran barefoot to the mosque.
He went into the mosque and up to the prayer niche;
the place of prostration was flooded with the king's tears.
When he came to himself from the deep flood of passing away,
he opened his lips sweetly in praise and thanks:
"You, the least of whose gifts is the kingdom of the world,
what can I say, since You know what is hidden?
You who are forever the refuge of our needs,
once again we have lost the way.[7]

But You have said, 'Though I know your secret,
still, make it plain at once outwardly.'"
When he raised a cry from the depths of his soul,
the sea of mercy began to surge.
In the midst of his weeping, sleep carried him off;
in his dream he saw an old man appear.
He said, "Good news, king! Your wishes are granted.
If a stranger comes to you tomorrow, he is from us.
When he comes, he is a skilled physician;
know him to be truthful, for he is trustworthy and true.

7 "Passing away" (*fana'*): the Sufi term for the extinction of the self.

1.65 In his treatment, see pure magic;
in his temperament, see the power of God."
When the appointed time came and it was day,
and the sun rose in the east and burned the stars away,
the king was waiting in his lookout gallery
to see what had been shown him in secret.
He saw a man of excellence and great worth,
a sun in the midst of shadow,
coming from afar like the new moon,
nonexistent yet existing, in the shape of an image.

1.70 An image in the soul seems like nothing,
yet see a whole world moving on an image:
their peace and their war rest on an image,
and from an image come their pride and their shame.
Those images that are the snares of the saints
are reflections of the moon-faced ones in God's garden.
The image the king had seen in his dream
was appearing in the face of his guest.[8]

1.74 In place of the chamberlains, the king himself went forward,
went forward to meet his guest from the unseen.
Both were swimmers who had learned the sea;
both souls were stitched together without sewing.
He said, "You were my beloved, not she;
but in this world one thing comes from another.
You are my Prophet, and I am like Omar:
I gird myself to serve you."[9]

8 "Saints" (*awliya'*) are literally "friends of God."
9 *Ashna* means both "swimming" and "acquaintance." Omar was a close companion of the Prophet and the second caliph.

ON REVERENCE

Rumi asks God for good manners and shows how irreverence cut off the heavenly table.

1.78 Let us ask God for the grace of good manners;
the ill-mannered is deprived of the Lord's kindness.
The ill-mannered does not harm himself alone;
he sets fire to every horizon.
A table came down from heaven
without trouble, without selling or buying.
Among the people of Moses, a few
said rudely, "Where are the garlic and lentils?"
The bread and the heavenly table were cut off;
we were left with the toil of sowing, with spade and sickle.[10]

1.83 Then, when Jesus interceded, God
sent a table, with bounty on platters.
Again the insolent abandoned good manners
and carried off scraps like beggars.
Jesus had pleaded with them: "This
will last, and will not run short on earth."
To be suspicious and greedy
at the table of a great one is unbelief.
Because of those beggar-faced ones, blinded by greed,
that door of mercy was shut on them.[11]

10 Quran 2:61, where the Israelites tire of the food sent from heaven and ask for garlic and lentils.
11 Quran 5:112–115, on the table sent down at the request of Jesus's disciples.

1.88 Clouds do not rise when alms are withheld,
and adultery brings plague on every region.
Whatever darkness and grief come upon you
come from recklessness and insolence too.
Whoever is reckless on the Friend's path
robs true men on the road, and is no man himself.
Through good manners this heaven was filled with light;
through good manners the angel became sinless and pure.
Insolence brought about the eclipse of the sun;
audacity turned Azazil away from the door.[12]

THE KING MEETS THE PHYSICIAN

The king welcomes the holy physician who appeared in his dream and kisses his hands.

1.93 He opened his arms and embraced him;
like love, he took him into his heart and soul.
He began to kiss his hand and brow
and to ask about his home and his journey.
Asking and asking, he drew him to the seat of honor
and said, "At last, through patience, I have found a treasure."
He said, "Gift of God, remover of hardship,
you are the meaning of 'Patience is the key to relief.'[13]

1.97 Seeing you is the answer to every question;
through you every difficulty is solved without argument.
You interpret all that is in our hearts;
you give a hand to all whose feet are stuck in mud.
Welcome, chosen one, well-pleasing one!
If you are absent, fate comes and space grows narrow.
You are the master of the people; whoever does not desire you
has perished—'No indeed! If he does not desist…'"[14]

12 Azazil is the name traditionally given to Iblis before his fall.
13 "Patience is the key to relief" is an Arabic proverb.
14 Lines 1.99–100 are in Arabic; the closing words are Quran 96:15.

AT THE SICKBED

The physician examines the girl and sees that the other doctors' remedies did harm.

1.101 When that gathering and generous feast were over,
he took him by the hand and led him into the women's quarters.
He told the story of the patient and her illness,
and then seated him beside her.
He looked at her complexion, her pulse and her urine,
and heard both her symptoms and their causes.
He said, "All the remedies they have given
did not build; they have destroyed.
They knew nothing of the inner state.
'I seek refuge with God from what they invent.'"[15]

1.106 He saw the pain, and what was hidden was revealed to him,
but he kept it hidden and did not tell the king.
Her pain did not come from black bile or yellow bile;
the scent of every firewood shows in its smoke.
He saw from her lamenting that she was sick at heart:
her body was well, but she was captive to her heart.
Being in love shows in the heart's lament;
there is no sickness like the sickness of the heart.
The lover's ailment is unlike all other ailments;
love is the astrolabe of God's mysteries.

15 The last line is in Arabic, in Quranic phrasing.

1.111 Whether love is from this side or from that,
in the end it is our guide to that other side.
Whatever I say to explain and describe love,
when I come to love itself, I am ashamed of it.
Though the tongue's commentary makes things clear,
love without a tongue is clearer still.
The pen was hurrying along as it wrote,
but when it came to love, the pen split itself.
Trying to explain it, reason lay down like a donkey in mud;
love itself told the meaning of love and lovers.

1.116 The sun has come as the proof of the sun:
if you need a proof, do not turn your face from it.
If the shadow gives some sign of it,
the Sun gives the light of the soul at every moment.
The shadow brings you sleep, like a bedtime tale;
when the Sun rises, "the moon is split."
Indeed, there is no stranger in the world like the Sun:
the Sun of the soul is everlasting; it has no yesterday.
Though the outward sun is unique,
one can still picture another like it.[16]

1.121 But the Sun of the soul, which lies beyond the ether,
has no equal in the mind or outside it.
Where is there room in the imagination for its essence,
that its like could enter the imagination?
When the talk came to the face of Shams al-Din,
the sun of the fourth heaven hid its head.
Now that his name has come, it is right
to give some hint of his bounty.
At this moment my soul has tugged at my skirt;
it has caught the scent of Joseph's shirt.[17]

16 *Shams* means "sun": Rumi plays on the name of his master, Shams al-Din of Tabriz. "The moon is split" is Quran 54:1.
17 The sun was placed in the fourth heaven. Jacob recognized the scent of Joseph's shirt from afar (Quran 12:93–94).

1.126 “For the sake of our years of companionship,
tell again one state of those sweet states,
so that earth and heaven may laugh,
and reason, spirit and eye grow a hundredfold.”
“Do not press me, for I have passed away;
my understanding is dulled, I cannot count out praise.
Whatever is said by one who is not sober,
whether he strains or boasts, is unfitting.
What can I say? Not one vein of mine is sober
to describe that Friend who has no equal.[18]

1.131 The tale of this parting and this heart’s blood
leave for now, until another time.”
It said, “Feed me, for I am hungry,
and hurry, for time is a cutting sword.
The Sufi is the son of the moment, my friend;
saying ‘tomorrow’ is not the rule of the Way.
Can it be that you are no true Sufi?
What is here turns to nothing when deferred.”
I told it, “The Friend’s secret is better veiled;
listen for it yourself within the story.[19]

1.136 It is better that the secret of the beloved ones
be told in the stories of others.”
It said, “Tell it openly, bare, without deceit;
don’t put me off, you busybody!
Lift the veil and say it bare, for I
do not sleep with my idol in a shirt.”
I said, “If he were to appear naked in plain sight,
neither you would remain, nor your embrace, nor your
waist.

18 Lines 1.128–129 are in Arabic.
19 Line 1.132 is in Arabic. “Son of the moment” (*ibn al-waqt*) is a Sufi phrase for one who lives wholly in the present.

1.140 Ask for what you long for, but ask in measure:
a blade of straw cannot bear a mountain.
The sun that lights this world,
if it came a little closer, would burn everything.
Do not seek turmoil, uproar and bloodshed;
say no more of Shams of Tabriz.
This has no end; speak of the beginning.
Go, finish telling this story."

THE PHYSICIAN QUESTIONS THE GIRL

Alone with the girl, the physician names towns while feeling her pulse, until Samarkand makes it leap.

1.144 He said, "King, clear the house;
send away kin and stranger alike.
Let no one be listening in the halls,
so that I can ask this handmaiden some things."
The house was left empty, not a soul in it
but the physician and that same patient.
Very gently he said, "Where is your town?
For the treatment of each town's people is different.
And in that town, who are your relations?
To whom are you related and bound?"

1.149 He put his hand on her pulse and, one by one,
asked about the cruelties of fate.
When a thorn darts into someone's foot,
he rests his foot on his knee
and searches for its tip with a needle's point,
and if he cannot find it, he wets it with his lips.
A thorn in the foot is this hard to find;
what then of a thorn in the heart? Give me an answer.
If every lout could see the thorn in the heart,
how would sorrows ever get the better of anyone?

1.154 Someone puts a thorn under a donkey's tail;
the donkey doesn't know how to get rid of it, and starts bucking.
It bucks, and the thorn sticks in harder;
it takes someone with sense to pull out a thorn.
To get rid of the thorn, in burning and pain,
the donkey kicked out and wounded itself in a hundred places.
That thorn-pulling physician was a master;
he laid his hand here and there, testing.
As if just making conversation, he kept asking
the handmaiden about her friends.

1.159 She told the physician stories openly
of her home, her masters and her townsfolk.
He kept his ear on the stories she told
and his attention on her pulse and its beating,
to see at whose name the pulse would leap:
that one would be the goal of her soul in this world.
He counted off the friends from her town;
after that he named another town.
He said, "When you left your own town,
in which town did you stay longest?"

1.164 She named a town and moved on from that one too;
the color of her face and her pulse did not change.
Masters and towns, one by one,
she told of, and of lodging, bread and salt.
Town by town and house by house she told her story;
her vein did not stir, nor did her face turn pale.
Her pulse kept steady, undisturbed,
until he asked about Samarkand, sweet as sugar.
Her pulse leapt, her face went red and pale,
for she had been parted from a goldsmith of Samarkand.

1.169 When the physician learned this secret from the patient,
he found the root of that pain and affliction.
He said, "Which is his street, as one goes through the town?"
She said, "At the bridgehead, in Ghatfar Street."
He said, "I knew at once what your pain is;
I will work wonders to set you free.
Be glad, carefree and secure, for I
will do for you what rain does for the meadow.
I will do the grieving for you; don't you grieve;
I care for you more than a hundred fathers.

1.174 Mind now, tell this secret to no one,
even if the king questions you closely.
When your heart becomes the tomb of your secret,
your wish will be granted all the sooner."
The Prophet said that whoever hides his secret
will soon be joined with what he wishes.
When seeds are hidden in the earth,
their secret becomes the green of the garden.

1.178 If gold and silver were not hidden,
how would they grow and ripen in the mine?
That physician's promises and kindnesses
freed the patient from fear.
There are true promises, welcome to the heart;
there are false promises, which bring on anguish.
The promise of the generous is ready cash;
the promise of the unworthy turns to anguish of soul.

THE CAUSE REVEALED

The physician tells the king the cause and advises summoning the goldsmith from Samarkand.

1.182 After that he rose and set off to see the king,
and told the king a little of the matter.
He said, "The plan is this: that man
we must bring here to cure this pain.
Summon the goldsmith from that distant town;
lure him with gold and robes of honor."

THE GOLDSMITH OF SAMARKAND

Lured by gold, the goldsmith comes and is given the girl, then wastes away from a potion.

1.185 The king sent a couple of messengers that way,
shrewd, capable men, and wholly trustworthy.
The two messengers came as far as Samarkand
for the sake of that dashing, vain goldsmith:
"Gracious master, perfect in your craft,
your fame is spread through every city.
Look, King So-and-so, needing a goldsmith,
has chosen you, because you are the finest.
Here, take this robe of honor, and gold and silver;
when you come, you will be his intimate and companion."

The man saw the riches and the many robes;
dazzled, he cut himself off from his city and his children.
Happily the man set out on the road,
unaware that the king meant to take his life.
He mounted an Arab horse and galloped off in joy,
mistaking his own blood-money for a robe of honor.
You who set out on the journey a hundred times willing,
walking on your own feet toward an evil fate!
In his imagination were a kingdom, honor and high rank;
Azrael said, "Go on—yes, you will get them!"[20]

When the stranger arrived from his journey,
the physician brought him before the king.
They led him to the King of Kings with every courtesy,
so that he would burn over that candle of Taraz.
The king saw him and showed him great honor,
and placed the treasury of gold in his hands.
Then the physician said to him, "Great sultan,
give the handmaiden to this master,
so that the handmaiden may be happy in union with him,
and the water of union may put out that fire."[21]

The king gave him that moon-faced girl
and joined the two who longed for each other's company.
For six months they took their pleasure,
until the girl was fully restored to health.
After that the physician prepared a potion for him;
he drank it and began to waste away before the girl.
When sickness had left nothing of his good looks,
the girl's soul was no longer caught in misery over him.
As he grew ugly, sickly and sallow-faced,
little by little he grew cold in her heart.

20 Azrael is the angel of death.
21 Taraz, a town in Central Asia, was proverbial for its beautiful people; the "candle" is the handmaiden.

1.205 Loves that are for the sake of a color
are not love: in the end they are a disgrace.
If only it had been simply a disgrace and nothing more,
so that such a cruel sentence had not fallen on him!
Blood ran from his eyes like a stream;
his own face had become the enemy of his life.
The peacock's feathers are its enemy;
how many kings their own splendor has slain!
He said, "I am that musk deer from whose navel
the hunter spilled my pure blood.[22]

1.210 Ah, I am that fox of the desert whom, from ambush,
they beheaded for its pelt.
Ah, I am that elephant whose blood the keeper's blow
spilled for the sake of its ivory.
He who has killed me for something less than I am
does not know that my blood will not sleep.
Today it falls on me, and tomorrow on him;
when was blood like mine ever spilled for nothing?

1.214 Though a wall may cast a long shadow,
that shadow turns back toward it again.
This world is the mountain, and our deeds are the shout;
the echoes of the shouts come back to us."
He said this and at once went under the earth;
the handmaiden was cleansed of pain and of love.
For love of the dead does not last,
since the dead do not come back to us.

22 Musk was believed to come from the navel of a kind of deer, which was hunted for it.

1.218 Love of the living, in the spirit and in the eye,
is every moment fresher than a bud.
Choose the love of that Living One who abides,
who pours you the wine that gives your soul more life.
Choose the love of the One through love of whom all the prophets
found their power and their glory.
Do not say, "We are not admitted to that King";
with the generous, nothing is difficult.

WHY THE GOLDSMITH DIED

Rumi explains that the goldsmith was killed by God's command, as Khidr killed the boy.

1.222 The killing of this man by the physician's hand
was done neither out of hope nor out of fear.
He did not kill him to please the king,
not until God's command and inspiration had come.
That boy whose throat Khidr cut—
the common people cannot grasp its secret.
He who receives revelation and answer from God,
whatever he commands is exactly right.
He who gives life may rightly kill;
he is a deputy, and his hand is the hand of God.[23]

23 Quran 18:65–82: Khidr, the mysterious guide of Moses, kills a boy and later reveals that he acted on God's command.

1.227 Like Ishmael, lay your head before him;
gladly, smiling, give up your soul beneath his sword,
so that your soul may go on smiling forever,
like the pure soul of Ahmad with the One.
Lovers drink the cup of joy only
when the fair ones kill them with their own hands.
The king did not shed that blood out of lust;
let go of your suspicion and your quarrel.
You supposed he had done something foul,
but how could refining leave dross in what is pure?[24]

1.232 This discipline and this harshness are for this:
that the furnace may draw the impurity out of the silver.
The testing of good and bad is for this:
that the gold may boil and bring its scum to the top.
If his act had not been God's inspiration,
he would have been a ravening dog, not a king.
He was pure of lust and greed and passion;
he did good, but a good that looked like evil.
If Khidr broke the boat at sea,
there is a hundredfold wholeness in Khidr's breaking.[25]

1.237 The mind of Moses, for all his light and skill,
was veiled from it—so do not try to fly without wings.
That is a red rose: do not call it blood.
He is drunk with reason: do not call him mad.
If shedding a Muslim's blood had been his desire,
may I be an unbeliever if I so much as spoke his name!
The Throne of God trembles when the wicked are praised,
and the God-fearing grow suspicious at such praise.
He was a king, and a king fully aware;
he was one of the elect, the elect of God.[26]

24 In Muslim tradition Ishmael is the son Abraham was ready to sacrifice (Quran 37:102). Ahmad is a name of the Prophet Muhammad.
25 Quran 18:71, 79: Khidr holes a boat to save it from a king who was seizing every sound ship.
26 Alludes to a saying attributed to the Prophet that God's Throne trembles when a wicked man is praised.

1.242 Someone killed by such a king
is drawn toward good fortune and the highest rank.
Had he not seen the man's good in his harshness,
how could that absolute kindness have sought to be harsh?
A child trembles at the cupper's lancet,
while the loving mother is glad in that pain.
He takes half a life and gives a hundred lives;
he gives what never entered your imagination.
You judge by yourself, but
you have fallen far, far off: look well.

THE GROCER AND THE PARROT

A grocer's parrot spills rose oil, is struck bald, and mocks a bald dervish.

1.247 There was a grocer who had a parrot,
a sweet-voiced, green, talking parrot.
It sat on the counter and kept watch over the shop,
and had a clever word for every customer.
When it spoke to people it talked like a human,
and it was skilled in the songs of parrots too.
Once it jumped off the counter and flew to one side,
and knocked over the bottles of rose oil.
Its master came in from the house
and sat down at the shop, carefree, the way masters do.

1.252 He saw the shop covered in oil and his clothes all greasy;
he hit the parrot on the head, and the blow left it bald.
For several days it stopped talking;
the grocer sighed with regret.
He tore at his beard and kept saying, "Alas!
The sun of my good fortune has gone behind a cloud.
If only my hand had been broken at the moment
I struck that sweet-tongued bird on the head!"
He gave presents to every dervish
in hope of getting his bird's speech back.

1.257 After three days and three nights, bewildered and
miserable,
he was sitting at the shop in despair,
showing the bird every kind of marvel
in hope that it might start to talk.
A dervish in a coarse cloak passed by, bareheaded,
his hairless head like the back of a bowl or basin.
At once the parrot started talking;
it shouted at the dervish, "Hey, you!
How did you, baldy, end up among the bald?
Did you spill oil from a bottle too?"[27]

1.262 People laughed at its reasoning,
for it took the man in the dervish cloak to be like itself.
Do not judge the work of the pure by yourself,
even though *shir* and *shir* look alike in writing.
This is why the whole world has gone astray:
hardly anyone has recognized God's Abdal.
They claimed equality with the prophets;
they thought the friends of God were like themselves.
"Look," they said, "we are human, and they are human;
we and they are both bound by sleep and food."[28]

27 The dervish is a *jawlaqi*, a wanderer in a rough woolen sackcloth; such dervishes often shaved their heads.
28 *Shir* means both "lion" and "milk," written identically in Persian. The Abdal ("substitutes") are, in Sufi tradition, a rank of saints, the "friends of God."

1.267 In their blindness they did not understand
that between them lies a difference without end.
Two kinds of bee fed from the same place,
but one produced a sting and the other honey.
Two kinds of deer ate grass and drank water;
from one came dung, from the other pure musk.
Two reeds drank from the same stream;
one is hollow, the other is sugarcane.
See hundreds of thousands of such look-alikes,
and see that the distance between them is a seventy-year journey.

1.272 This one eats, and filth comes out of him;
that one eats, and it all becomes the light of God.
This one eats and gives birth to nothing but avarice and envy;
that one eats and gives birth to nothing but love of the One.
This is pure soil, and that is salty and barren;
this is a pure angel, and that a demon and a beast.
If the two look alike in form, that may well be:
bitter water and sweet water are both clear.
Who but a man of taste can tell? Seek him out:
he knows sweet water from brackish.

1.277 He compares sorcery with miracle
and thinks both are founded on trickery.
The sorcerers of Moses, in defiance,
took up staffs like his staff.
Between this staff and that staff lies a deep difference;
between this work and that work, an astonishing distance.
"God's curse" follows close behind this work;
"God's mercy" attends that work in keeping faith.
Unbelievers, mere mimics in their quarreling,
have a blight lodged in the breast of their nature.[29]

29 Pharaoh's sorcerers threw down staffs that seemed to become snakes, and Moses' staff swallowed them (Quran 7:113–122; 20:65–70).

1.282 Whatever a man does, the ape does too:
it does whatever it sees the man do, moment by moment.
It supposes, "I did just what he did";
how could that defiant face know the difference?
This one acts by command, and that one to defy:
throw dust on the heads of the defiant!
The hypocrite comes to prayer beside the sincere
to defy, not in humble need.
In prayer and fasting, pilgrimage and alms,
the believers play against the hypocrite, to win or be checkmated.

1.287 In the end the win goes to the believers,
and checkmate falls on the hypocrite in the hereafter.
Though both are engaged in the same game,
together they are like the man of Merv and the man of Rayy.
Each goes to his own station;
each goes in keeping with his own name.
Call him a believer, and his soul rejoices;
call him a hypocrite, and he fills with fire.
The one's name is loved because of his essence;
the other's name is hated because of his blights.[30]

1.292 M and U and M and N are no honor in themselves;
the word "believer" serves only to identify.
If you call him a hypocrite, this lowly name
stings inside him like a scorpion.
If this name is not derived from hell,
why does it carry the taste of hell?
The ugliness of that bad name is not in its letters;
the bitterness of seawater is not from the vessel.
The letters are the vessel, the meaning in them like water;
the sea of meaning is "with Him is the Mother of the Book."[31]

30 Merv and Rayy were distant cities of medieval Iran: two companions on one road who belong to different homes.
31 M-U-M-N are the Arabic letters of *mu'min*, "believer." Quran 13:39.

1.297 In the world there is a bitter sea and a sweet sea,
and between them a barrier: "they do not overstep."
Know that both flow from a single source;
pass beyond them both and go to their source.
Counterfeit gold and good gold, in the assay,
you will never tell apart by guesswork without a
touchstone.
Anyone in whose soul God has placed a touchstone
will tell certainty from doubt.
If a speck of straw darts into a living mouth,
the mouth has no rest until it has put it out.[32]

1.302 Among thousands of morsels, one tiny speck—
when it gets in, the living sense detects it.
The worldly sense is the ladder of this world;
the spiritual sense is the ladder of heaven.
Seek the health of this sense from the physician;
ask the health of that sense from the Beloved.
The health of this sense comes from a body in good repair;
the health of that sense, from the body's ruin.
The way of the soul lays the body in ruins,
and after that ruin, makes it flourish.

1.307 He tore down the house for the treasure of gold,
and with that same treasure builds it better than before.
He cut off the water and cleaned out the channel,
then let fresh drinking water run in the channel.
He cut open the skin and drew out the arrowhead;
after that, new skin grew over it.
He razed the fortress and took it from the unbelievers,
then built it up again with a hundred towers and ramparts.
Who can describe how the One beyond "how" works?
Even what I have said is forced on me by necessity.

32 Quran 55:19–20.

1.312 Sometimes it appears like this, sometimes the opposite;
the work of religion is nothing but bewilderment.
Not bewildered in a way that turns its back on Him,
but bewildered like this: drowned and drunk with the
Friend.
One has his face turned toward the Friend;
the other's face is only his own face.
Look at each one's face and keep watch;
perhaps through service you will learn to know faces.

1.316 Since there are many devils with the face of Adam,
you should not give your hand to every hand.
For the fowler makes a whistling call,
that bird-catcher, to deceive the bird;
the bird hears the call of its own kind,
comes down from the air, and finds the net and the knife.
A base man steals the words of dervishes
to recite them as a spell over some simple soul.

1.320 The work of true men is light and warmth;
the work of base men is trickery and shamelessness.
They make lions of wool to beg with;
they give Musaylima the title Ahmad.
But Musaylima was left with the title "the Liar,"
while Muhammad was left with "those who have
understanding."
That wine of God has a seal of pure musk;
the seal of other wine is stench and torment.[33]

33 Musaylima was a seventh-century Arabian who claimed prophethood; Muslim tradition calls him "the Liar." The sealed wine is from Quran 83:25–26.

THE MERCHANT AND THE PARROT

A merchant leaving for India asks his caged parrot what present it wants; it sends a message.

1.1547 There was a merchant who had a parrot,
a beautiful parrot shut up in a cage.
When the merchant got ready for a journey
and prepared to set out for India,
out of generosity he said to every servant and maid,
"What shall I bring you? Tell me, quickly."
Each one asked him for something they wanted;
that good man promised them all.
He said to the parrot, "What present would you like
me to bring you from the land of India?"

1.1552 The parrot said, "When you see the parrots there,
tell them how things are with me:
'Such-and-such a parrot, who longs for you,
is in our prison by heaven's decree.
He sends you greetings and asks for justice,
and asks you for a remedy and guidance on the way.
He says: Is it right that I, in my longing,
should give up my life and die here in separation?
Is it fair that I should be in hard bonds
while you are now on the grass, now in the trees?

1.1557 Is this how friends keep faith—
I in this prison and you in the rose garden?
Remember, noble ones, this wretched bird
with one morning cup out in the meadow.
Remembering friends brings a friend good fortune,
especially when one is Layla and the other Majnun.
You who keep company with your graceful idol,
I am drinking cups full of my own blood.
Drink one cup of wine in memory of me
if you want to give me justice,[34]

1.1562 or, in memory of this fallen one who sifts the dust,
when you have drunk, pour a draught on the earth.'"
How strange! Where is that pledge, that oath?
Where are the promises of those lips like sugar?
If your servant's separation comes from bad service,
when you do bad to the bad, what difference is there?
Ah, the harm you do in anger and in war
is more delightful than the Sufi concert and the sound of
the harp.
Ah, your cruelty is better than good fortune,
and your vengeance dearer than life.

1.1567 If this is your fire, what must your light be like?
If this is mourning, what must your wedding feast be like?
For the sweetness your tyranny holds,
and for its subtlety, no one can fathom you.
I moan, and fear he may believe me
and, out of kindness, make that tyranny less.
In earnest I love his harshness and his kindness;
how strange that I love these two opposites!

34 The Persian puns on *morgh-e zar* "wretched bird" and *morghzar* "meadow."

1.1571 By God, if I escape this thorn into the garden,
I will moan like a nightingale for that very reason.
What a strange nightingale, that opens its mouth
to swallow the thorn along with the rose garden!
What nightingale is this? This is a fiery sea monster;
through love, every unpleasant thing is pleasant to it.
It is a lover of the Whole, and it is itself the Whole;
it is in love with itself and seeks its own love.

THE WINGS OF THE BIRDS OF DIVINE REASON

Rumi digresses on the soul's parrot, whose single cry stirs the seven heavens.

1.1575 The story of the soul's parrot is like this.
Where is someone who shares the secrets of the birds?
Where is a bird, weak and innocent,
with Solomon and his army inside it?
When it weeps bitterly, without thanks or complaint,
a tumult breaks out in the seven heavens.
Every moment a hundred letters, a hundred messengers
come to it from God;
for each "O Lord" from it, sixty "Here I am"s from God.[35]

1.1579 Its slip is better in God's sight than obedience;
beside its unbelief, all faiths are threadbare.
Every moment it has an ascension of its own;
He sets a hundred special crowns upon its crown.
Its form is on the earth, its soul in the placeless,
a placelessness beyond the imagining of travelers on the
way—
not a placelessness that your understanding can grasp,
in which some new fancy is born to you every moment.[36]

35 Solomon was taught the speech of birds (Quran 27:16). "Here I am" (*labbayk*) is the response of pilgrims to God's call.
36 "Ascension" (*mi'raj*) recalls the Prophet's night journey through the heavens.

1.1583 No: place and placelessness are under its command,
as the four rivers are under the command of one in
Paradise.
Cut short the explanation of this and turn your face away;
say nothing—"and God knows best what is right."
Let us turn back from this, friends,
to the bird and the merchant and India.
The merchant accepted this message:
that he would carry its greetings to its kind.[37]

THE MERCHANT DELIVERS THE MESSAGE

In India the merchant delivers the message, and one of the wild parrots drops dead.

1.1587 When he reached the farthest end of India,
he saw a few parrots out in the wilds.
He reined in his mount and called out,
and delivered that greeting, the message in his trust.
One of those parrots shook all over,
fell, and died; its breath broke off.
The merchant was sorry he had told the news.
He said, "I've gone and killed a living creature.

1.1591 Perhaps this one was kin to that little parrot;
perhaps they were two bodies and one spirit.
Why did I do this? Why did I give the message?
I've burned the poor thing with my raw words."
The tongue is like flint, and like fire too,
and what leaps from the tongue is like fire.
Don't strike flint and steel together idly,
now to tell tales, now to boast,

37 The four rivers of Paradise flow with water, milk, wine and honey (Quran 47:15). The closing Arabic phrase is a conventional formula.

1.1595 for it is dark, and there are cotton fields on every side:
what becomes of a spark among the cotton?
Unjust are the people who have sewn their eyes shut
and burned a whole world with such words.
A single word can lay a world in ruins
and turn dead foxes into lions.
Souls in their origin have the breath of Jesus:
one breath is a wound, the next a salve.[38]

1.1599 If the veil were lifted from souls,
the words of every soul would be like the Messiah's.
If you want to speak words like sugar,
hold back from greed and don't eat this sweet.
Patience is what the wise crave;
sweets are what children long for.
Whoever brings patience rises to heaven;
whoever eats sweets falls further behind.

POISON AND HONEY

The man of heart may eat poison unharmed; the seeker must keep silent and listen.

1.1603 The master of the heart takes no harm from it,
even if he eats deadly poison in plain sight,
for he has gained his health and is free of the diet,
while the poor seeker is still in the grip of fever.
The Prophet said, "Bold seeker,
take care: do not contend with anyone who is sought."
There is a Nimrod in you: do not walk into the fire.
If you mean to go in, first become Abraham.[39]

38 In Islamic tradition Jesus's breath gave life: he breathed into clay birds and raised the dead (Quran 3:49).
39 In tradition King Nimrod threw Abraham into a fire, which God made cool and safe for him (Quran 21:68–69).

1.1607 Since you are no swimmer and no seafarer,
don't throw yourself in out of self-will.
He brings pearls up from the bottom of the sea;
out of losses he brings up profit.
If a perfect man takes up dust, it turns to gold;
if an imperfect one carries off gold, it turns to ash.
Since that true man is accepted by God,
his hand in all he does is the hand of God.

1.1611 The imperfect man's hand is the hand of Satan and the devil,
for it is caught in the snare of duty and deceit.
Ignorance comes before the perfect and becomes knowledge;
knowledge that enters the imperfect becomes ignorance.
Whatever a sick man takes becomes sickness;
if a perfect man takes up unbelief, it becomes true religion.
You who have contended on foot with a horseman,
you will not get away with your head. Now stand your ground.

THE MAGICIANS AND MOSES

Pharaoh's sorcerers let Moses throw first, and that courtesy wins them faith.

1.1615 The sorcerers in the days of accursed Pharaoh,
when they contended with Moses in malice,
still gave Moses precedence;
the sorcerers treated him with honor,
for they told him, "The command is yours:
if you wish, throw that staff of yours first."
He said, "No, you first, sorcerers:
throw your tricks into the ring."
This much respect bought them their faith
and cut away their hands and feet from contending.[40]

1.1620 When the sorcerers recognized his truth,
they forfeited hands and feet for that offense.
Morsels and subtle sayings are lawful for the perfect;
you are not perfect: don't eat, stay mute.
Since you are an ear and he is a tongue, not your kind,
God has commanded ears, "Be silent."
A child, when it is first born and nursing,
stays silent for a while, all ears.
For a while it must keep its lips sewn
from speech, until it learns to speak.[41]

40 The contest of Moses and Pharaoh's sorcerers, who then believed and were punished by Pharaoh with the cutting off of hands and feet: Quran 7:115–124; 20:65–71.
41 Quran 7:204: "When the Quran is recited, listen to it and be silent."

1.1625 And if it has no ear and keeps on babbling,
it makes itself the dumbest thing in the world.
One born deaf, who never had hearing from the start,
is mute: how could he burst into speech?
For speech needs hearing first:
come to speaking by the road of hearing.
"Enter houses by their doors,
and seek your ends through their means."
The speech that does not depend on the road of hearing
is none but the speech of the Creator, who wants nothing.[42]

1.1630 He originates and follows no teacher;
all things rest on Him, and He rests on no authority.
All the rest, in crafts and in speech alike,
follow a teacher and need a model.
If you are no stranger to these words,
take a patched cloak and tears into some ruin,
for Adam escaped that rebuke through tears:
moist tears are the breath of the repentant.
Adam came down to earth to weep,
to be weeping, lamenting, and grieving.

1.1635 Adam left Paradise, above the seven heavens,
and went to the lowest place by the door to beg pardon.
If you are from Adam's back, from his loins,
keep seeking, as he sought.
Make your sweets of the heart's fire and the eyes' water:
the garden opens by cloud and by sun.
What do you know of the taste of tears?
You are in love with bread, like the starving.
If you empty this sack of bread,
you will fill it with jewels of majesty.

42 The first line quotes Quran 2:189; the second continues it as a maxim.

1.1640 Wean the child of the soul from Satan's milk,
and after that make it a partner of the angels.
As long as you are dark, weary, and dull,
know that you are milk-brother to the accursed devil.
The morsel that adds light and perfection
is one gained by lawful earning.
Oil that comes and puts out our lamp,
call it water, since it puts out a lamp.
Knowledge and wisdom are born of a lawful morsel;
love and tenderness come from a lawful morsel.

1.1645 When you see envy and snares come from a morsel,
and ignorance and heedlessness born of it, know it is unlawful.
Do you ever sow wheat and reap barley?
Have you seen a horse give birth to a donkey's foal?
The morsel is the seed, and its fruit is thoughts;
the morsel is the sea, and its pearls are thoughts.
Born of a lawful morsel in the mouth
are the wish to serve and the resolve to go to the other world.

THE MERCHANT'S REPORT

Back home, the merchant tells his parrot what happened; Rumi reflects on words that cannot be recalled.

1.1649 The merchant finished his trading
and came back home, well pleased.
He brought every servant a present;
to every maidservant he gave a keepsake.
The parrot said, "Where is your servant's present?
Tell me what you said and what you saw."
He said, "No. I regret it myself,
chewing my hands and biting my fingers.
Why did I carry a raw message so rashly,
out of ignorance and folly?"

1.1654 It said, “Master, why the regret?
What is it that calls for this anger and grief?”
He said, “I told those complaints of yours
to a flock of parrots like you.
One of those parrots caught the scent of your pain:
its gall burst, it trembled, and it died.
I was sorry. Why did I say it?
But once I had said it, what use was regret?”
A word that leaps suddenly from the tongue,
know it is like an arrow leaping from the bow.

1.1659 That arrow does not turn back on its way, my son.
A flood must be dammed at its source.
Once it is past the source, it takes over a world;
if it lays the world in ruins, it is no wonder.
Acts give birth to effects in the unseen,
and those offspring are not under creatures’ control.
All of them, without partner, are God’s creation,
those offspring, though they are ascribed to us.
Zayd shoots an arrow at Amr;
his arrow seizes Amr like a leopard.[43]

1.1664 For a year the pain kept breeding:
God creates the pains, not the man.
If Zayd the archer died of fear that moment,
the pains would go on breeding there until the appointed hour.
Since he died of those offspring of pain,
call Zayd the archer the killer for that reason.
Ascribe those pains to him,
though they are all the work of the Maker.
So too with sowing, breath, snares, and intercourse:
their offspring lie in God’s power.

43 Zayd and Amr are the stock names of Arabic grammar books, like “John” and “Bill.”

1.1669 The saints have power from God
to bring a loosed arrow back from its course.
The doors of the offspring are shut off from their cause
when the saint repents, by the Lord's hand.
He makes the said unsaid by opening a door,
so that neither the spit nor the kebab is burned.
From all the hearts that heard that word
he wipes the speech out and makes it vanish.
If you want proof and evidence, sir,
recite again: "Whatever verse... or cause to be forgotten."[44]

1.1674 Recite the verse "They made you forget My remembrance,"
and know their power to instill forgetting.
Since they have power to make remember and forget,
they hold sway over all the hearts of creatures.
When he has blocked the road of insight with forgetting,
no one can act, though he has the skill.
"You took the people of the heights as a laughingstock":
read on in the Quran as far as "they made you forget."
The lord of the village is king of bodies;
the master of the heart is king of your hearts.[45]

1.1679 Action, beyond any doubt, is an offshoot of sight;
so a person is nothing but the pupil of the eye.
I cannot tell this in full, because
a check comes from the masters of the center.
Since the forgetting and remembering of people
rest with him, and he answers their cries,
hundreds of thousands of goods and evils that excellent one
empties from their hearts every night.[46]

44 The quotation is from Quran 2:106: "Whatever verse We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better or like it."
45 Quran 23:110: "But you took them as a laughingstock, until they made you forget My remembrance."
46 A pun: *mardom* means "people," and *mardomak* ("little person") means the pupil of the eye.

1.1683 By day he fills the hearts with them again;
he fills those shells with pearls.
All those thoughts from before
are known again by souls through guidance.
Your craft and your learning come back to you,
so that the door of means may open to you.
The goldsmith's craft did not go to the blacksmith;
the good-natured man's nature did not go to the surly one.

1.1687 Crafts and characters, like baggage,
return to their owners on the Day of Resurrection.
Crafts and characters, after sleep,
come hurrying back to their owners too.
Crafts and thoughts, at the hour of dawn,
go back to where that good and bad belonged,
as carrier pigeons from other cities
bring their gains home to their own city.

THE PARROT DIES IN ITS CAGE

The parrot falls dead in its cage, and the merchant pours out a long lament.

1.1691 When the bird heard what that parrot had done,
it shook hard, fell, and went cold.
When the merchant saw it lying there like that,
he sprang up and dashed his cap to the ground.
When he saw it in this color and this state,
the merchant leapt up and tore his collar.
He said, "My lovely parrot, sweet of sighing,
what happened to you? Why have you become like this?
Alas, my sweet-voiced bird!
Alas, my companion and my confidant!

1.1696 Alas, my sweet-singing bird,
wine of my spirit, my garden and my sweet basil!
If Solomon had had a bird like this,
why would he ever have busied himself with those other birds?
Alas, the bird I found so cheap:
how soon I turned my face from its face!
Tongue, you do me great harm:
since you are the one who speaks, what can I say to you?
Tongue, you are both the fire and the harvest stack:
how long will you set this fire to this stack?

1.1701 In secret the soul cries out against you,
though it does whatever you tell it.
Tongue, you are an endless treasure;
tongue, you are also a pain without cure.
You are the whistle and the decoy for birds,
and the companion in the loneliness of parting.
How long will you spare me, you merciless one,
you who have strung your bow in hatred of me?
Look, you have made my bird fly away:
stop grazing in the pasture of cruelty.

1.1706 Either answer me or give me justice,
or remind me of the means of joy.
Alas, my dawn that burned away the dark!
Alas, my light that kindled the day!
Alas, my bird of graceful flight,
who flew from my end to my beginning!
The ignorant are in love with suffering forever:
get up and recite from "No, I swear" as far as "in toil."
With your face before me I was free of toil;
in your stream I was clear of foam."[47]

47 Quran 90:1–4, beginning "No, I swear by this city" and ending "We have created man in toil."

1.1711 These “alases” come from seeing an image
and being cut off from what is present here and now.
It was God’s jealousy, and there is no remedy against God:
where is the heart not torn to a hundred pieces by love of
God?
Jealousy is this: that He is other than all,
He who is beyond all description and clamor.
Alas, if only my tears were a sea,
to scatter before the lovely heart-stealer!
My parrot, my clever bird,
interpreter of my thoughts and secrets,[48]

1.1716 whatever was to come to me someday, given or withheld,
it told me from the start so that I would remember.
A parrot whose voice comes from revelation,
whose beginning was before the beginning of existence:
that parrot is hidden within you;
you have seen its reflection on this and that.
It takes away your joy, and you are happy with it;
you accept wrong from it as if it were justice.
You who were burning the soul for the body’s sake,
you burned the soul and lit up the body.

1.1721 I am burned. Does anyone want tinder,
to light some straw from me?
Since tinder takes fire,
take tinder, for it draws the flame.
Alas, alas, alas,
that such a moon has hidden under the cloud!
How can I breathe a word when the heart’s fire has flared
and the lion of separation is raging and out for blood?
One who is fierce and drunk even when sober,
what will he be like when he takes the cup in hand?

48 A pun: *ghayrat*, “jealousy,” and *ghayr*, “other.”

1.1726 A drunken lion beyond all description
is too big for the whole wide meadow.
I think about rhymes, and my Beloved
tells me, "Think of nothing but seeing me.
Sit at ease, my rhyme-thinker:
in my presence you are the rhyme of good fortune.
What are letters, that you should think about them?
What are letters? The thorn fence around the vineyards.
I will throw letter, sound, and speech into confusion,
so that without all three I may speak with you.

1.1731 That breath I kept hidden from Adam
I will speak with you, you who are the secret of the world:
the breath I did not tell to Abraham,
and the grief that Gabriel does not know,
the breath of which the Messiah breathed no word,
which God, out of jealousy, did not utter even without *mā*."
What is *mā* in language? Affirmation and negation.
I am not affirmation; I am selfless, I am negation.
I found somebody-hood in being nobody,
so I wove somebody-hood into being nobody.[49]

1.1736 All kings are slaves to their own slaves;
all people are dying for those who die for them.
All kings bow low to those who bow low to them;
all people are drunk on those who are drunk on them.
The fowler becomes the prey of the birds
so that he can suddenly make them his prey.
The heart-stealers' hearts are captive to those who have lost
their hearts;
all beloveds are the prey of lovers.
Whoever you see as a lover, know that he is beloved,
for relatively he is both this and that.

49 *Mā* is Persian for "we, us"; in Arabic it can be the negative "not," hence "affirmation and negation."

1.1741 If the thirsty seek water in the world,
water too seeks the thirsty in the world.
Since He is the lover, keep silent;
since He pulls your ear, be all ear.
Dam the flood when it begins to rush,
or it will bring disgrace and ruin.
Why should I care if there is ruin?
Under the ruin lies a royal treasure.
One drowned in God wants to be drowned deeper,
the soul tossed up and down like a wave of the sea.

1.1746 Is the bottom of the sea sweeter, or the top?
Is His arrow more delightful, or the shield?
My heart, you are torn apart by doubt
if you can tell joy from affliction.
If your desire tastes of sugar,
is not having no desire the heart-stealer's desire?
Each of His stars is the blood-price of a hundred new
moons;
shedding the world's blood is lawful for Him.
We have found the price and the blood-price,
and rushed off to stake our lives.

1.1751 Ah, the life of lovers lies in dying!
You will not win a heart except by losing your heart.
I sought his heart with a hundred coy airs and graces;
he made excuses to me out of weariness.
I said, "But this reason and this soul are drowned in you."
He said, "Go on, go away. Don't try this spell on me.
Don't I know what you've been thinking?
You who see double, how have you seen the Friend?

1.1755 Dull soul, you have looked on me with contempt
because you bought me so cheap.
Whoever buys cheap gives away cheap:
a child will give a pearl for a round of bread."
I am drowned in a love in which are drowned
the loves of the first and the last.
I have told it in summary and have not set it out in full,
or else both understanding and tongue would burn.

1.1759 When I say "lip," I mean the lip of the sea;
when I say "No," I mean "except."
Out of sweetness I sit sour-faced;
out of fullness of speech I keep silent,
so that our sweetness, from both worlds,
may stay hidden behind the veil of a sour face,
so that these words may not enter every ear.
I tell just one of a hundred secrets "from Our presence."[50]

50 *Lab* means both "lip" and "shore." "No... except" recalls the profession of faith, "There is no god except God." "From Our presence" echoes Quran 18:65, on knowledge given directly by God.

ON DIVINE JEALOUSY

Rumi reflects on God's jealousy and complains of the Beloved's cruelty, which he loves.

1.1763 All the world is jealous because God
outstrips this world in jealousy.
He is like the soul, and the world like the body;
the body takes its good and bad from the soul.
Whoever has the very Essence as the niche of his prayer,
know that for him to turn back toward mere faith is a disgrace.
Whoever has become the king's keeper of the robes
is only losing if he goes trading on the king's behalf.
Whoever becomes the sultan's companion,
for him, waiting at the door is shame and loss.[51]

1.1768 When he has been granted the king's hand to kiss,
if he chooses to kiss his foot instead, it is a sin.
Though laying one's head at the feet is service,
beside that other service it is a fault and a slip.
The king is jealous of anyone who,
having seen his face, would settle for his scent.
God's jealousy is like the wheat;
people's jealousy is the chaff on the threshing floor.
Know that the root of all jealousies is in God;
the jealousy of creatures is, beyond doubt, a branch of God's.

51 A pun: *'ayn* means "essence" or "eye," *shin* means "disgrace," and both are also letters of the alphabet.

1.1773 Let me leave this explanation and make my complaint
of the cruelty of that fickle, ten-hearted beauty.
I lament because laments please him;
of both worlds, lament and grief are what he wants.
How should I not lament bitterly at his wiles,
since I am not in the circle of his drunken ones?
How should I not lament like night without his day,
without union with his day-kindling face?
His unkindness is sweet to my soul;
my soul is a ransom for my heart-wounding Friend.

1.1778 I am in love with my own pain and grief
for the pleasure of my peerless King.
I make the dust of grief collyrium for my eyes,
so that the two seas of my eyes may fill with pearls.
The tears that people shed for his sake
are pearls, though people take them for tears.
I am complaining of the Soul of the soul,
yet I am not complaining—I am only telling a tale.
My heart keeps saying, "I am hurt by him,"
and I have been laughing out of feeble hypocrisy.

1.1783 Be true, you pride of the truthful;
you are the seat of honor, and I the threshold of your door.
But where, in reality, are threshold and seat of honor?
Where are "we" and "I" in that place where our Friend is?
You whose soul is freed from "we" and "I,"
you subtle essence of the spirit in man and woman,
when man and woman become one, you are that One;
when the ones are erased, there you are.
You devised this "I" and "we"
so that you could play the backgammon of service with
yourself,

1.1788 so that all the "I"s and "you"s might become one soul
and at last be drowned in the Beloved.
All this is so—yet come, you Command "Be!",
you who are beyond "come" and beyond speech.
The body can see you only in a bodily way;
it imagines you grieving and laughing.
The heart that is bound to grief and laughter—
do not say it is worthy of that seeing.
Whoever is bound to grief and laughter
lives by these two borrowed things.[52]

1.1793 In the green garden of love, which has no end,
there are many fruits besides grief and joy.
Being a lover is higher than both these states;
without spring, without autumn, it is green and fresh.
Pay the alms of your lovely face, you lovely one;
tell the story of the soul that is torn to shreds,
for with the coquetry of one glancing, telltale beauty
a fresh brand has been set upon my heart.
I declared it lawful for him to shed my blood;
I kept saying, "It is lawful," and he kept running away.

1.1798 Since you flee from the laments of earthly creatures,
why pour grief on the hearts of the grief-stricken?
You whom every dawn that shone from the east
found welling up like the fountain of the east,
how could you make excuses to this madman of yours,
you whose sugar lips are beyond price?
You who are the new soul of this old world,
hear the cry of a body without soul or heart.[53]

52 "Be!" is God's creative command in the Quran (e.g. 36:82).
53 A pun: *bahāna* "excuse" and *bahā na* "no price," i.e. priceless.

1.1802 For God's sake, leave the story of the rose;
tell of the nightingale parted from the rose.
Our ferment does not come from grief and joy;
our awareness is not bound to imagination and fancy.
It is another state, a rare one;
do not deny it, for God is mighty indeed.
Do not judge by the state of human beings;
do not make your dwelling in cruelty and kindness.

1.1806 Cruelty and kindness, pain and joy, are transient;
transient things die, and God is their heir.
Dawn has come, you refuge and support of the dawn;
beg pardon for me from my lord Husam al-Din.
You are the one who pleads for Universal Intellect and the soul;
you are the soul of the soul and the luster of coral.
The light of dawn has shone, and by your light we are
at the morning drink with your wine of Mansur.[54]

1.1810 Since your gift keeps me like this,
how could wine be what brings me joy?
Wine in its fermenting begs for our ferment;
the heavens in their turning beg for our awareness.
Wine was made drunk by us, not we by it;
the body came into being through us, not we through it.
We are like bees, and bodies are like wax;
we have built the body cell by cell, like wax.

54 Husam al-Din was Rumi's disciple, to whom the poem is addressed. "Mansur" means "victorious" and also recalls the mystic Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj.

BACK TO THE MERCHANT

Returning to the merchant, Rumi likens his scattered cries to a drowning man clutching at grass.

1.1814 This talk is very long—tell of the merchant,
what became of that good man.
The merchant, in fire and pain and longing,
kept saying a hundred scattered things like these:
now contradiction, now pride, now pleading,
now passion for the real, now for the figurative.
A drowning man struggles for his life,
clutching at every blade of grass

1.1818 in case one of them might save him in his peril;
he flails his hands and feet in fear for his life.
The Friend loves this distraction;
vain striving is better than sleeping.
He who is King is not idle;
lamenting would be strange from him, for he is not sick.
That is why the Merciful said, my son,
"Every day He is about some work," my son.[55]

1.1822 On this path keep scraping and scratching;
do not rest for a moment until your last breath,
so that your last breath may be a breath
in which grace is your confidant.
Whatever the soul strives for, in man and woman,
the ears and eyes of the King of souls are at the window.

55 Quran 55:29.

THE DEAD PARROT FLIES

Thrown from the cage, the dead parrot flies off and explains its trick.

1.1825 Then he threw it out of the cage;
the little parrot flew up to a high branch.
The dead parrot took flight
the way the eastern sun swoops like a raider.
The merchant was bewildered at what the bird had done;
suddenly, unawares, he saw the bird's secrets.
He lifted his face and said, "Nightingale,
give us a share of the account of your state.
What did he do there, that you learned from him?
You devised a trick and burned us."

1.1830 The parrot said, "He counseled me by what he did:
'Let go of your sweet voice and your fondness for company,
for your voice is what put you in chains.'
He made himself dead for the sake of this counsel,
as if to say, 'You who sing for high and low,
become dead like me, so that you may find release.'"
Be a grain, and little birds will peck you up;
be a bud, and children will pluck you.
Hide the grain and become wholly a snare;
hide the bud and become the grass on the roof.

1.1835 Whoever puts his beauty up for auction
has a hundred evil fates heading his way.
Schemes and angers and envies
pour on his head like water from waterskins.
Enemies tear him apart out of jealousy,
and friends, too, waste his days.
One who was heedless of sowing and of spring—
what does he know of the worth of this time?
You must flee for refuge to the grace of God,
who has poured thousands of graces on souls,

1.1840 so that you find a refuge—and then, what a refuge!
Water and fire become your army.
Did not the sea befriend Noah and Moses
and turn in fury on their enemies?
Was not fire a fortress for Abraham,
until it made smoke rise from Nimrod's heart?
Did not the mountain call John to itself
and drive off his pursuers with blows of stone?
It said, "John, come, take refuge in me,
so that I may be your shelter from the sharp sword."[56]

THE PARROT'S FAREWELL

The parrot says farewell, and the merchant resolves to follow its path.

1.1845 The wise parrot gave him a counsel or two,
and then said to him, "Peace be with you—we part."
The merchant said, "Go in God's safekeeping;
you have shown me a new path now."
The merchant said to himself, "This counsel is for me;
I will take his path, for this path is bright.
How could my soul be less than a parrot?
A soul should be like this, with a blessed step."

56 Legend says a mountain hid John the Baptist from his pursuers.

THE HARM OF PRAISE

Flattery and fame are a cage for the soul and breed pride.

1.1849 The body is like a cage; the body has become a thorn to the soul
through the deceits of those within and those without.
This one tells him, "I'll be your confidant,"
and that one says, "No, I am your partner."
This one tells him, "There is none like you in existence
for beauty, merit, kindness, and generosity."
That one tells him, "Both worlds are yours;
all our souls are hangers-on of your soul."
When he sees people drunk on him,
he loses hold of himself out of pride.

1.1854 He does not know that thousands like him
the devil has thrown into the stream.
The world's kindness and flattery is a tasty morsel;
eat less of it, for it is a morsel full of fire.
Its fire is hidden and its taste is plain;
its smoke appears at the end.
Do not say, "Why would I swallow that praise?
He speaks from greed—I see through it."
If your praiser satirizes you in public,
your heart will burn for days from that burning,

1.1859 even though you know he said it from disappointment,
because the hope he had of you came to nothing.
That effect stays with you inside;
you go through the same with praise.
That effect, too, lingers for days
and becomes a source of pride and self-deception.
But it does not show, because praise is sweet;
the other shows its harm because the cup was bitter.
It is like a decoction or a pill you take:
for a long while you are in upset and pain.

1.1864 But if you eat sweetmeats, their pleasure lasts a moment;
their effect does not last like the other's.
Though it seems not to last, it lasts in hiding;
know each thing by its opposite.
When the effect of sugar lingers,
after a while it brings a boil that wants the lancet.
Pharaoh became Pharaoh through a surfeit of praise.
"Be humble of self, be lowly; do not seek to rule."
As far as you can, be a servant, not a sultan;
be the ball that takes the blows, not the polo stick.[57]

1.1869 Otherwise, when your charm and this beauty are gone,
those companions will grow weary of you.
That crowd who flattered you with deceit,
when they see you, will call you a devil.
When they see you at the door, they will all say,
"A dead man has lifted his head out of his grave!"
Like a beardless youth whom men hail as a god
so that by this flattery they can disgrace him:
once his beard comes in, to his shame,
even the devil is too proud to seek him out.

1.1874 The devil goes after human beings to do them harm;
he will not come to you, for you are worse than a devil.
While you were human, the devil ran after you
and gave you his wine to taste.
Once you were settled firm in devilish ways,
the devil runs away from you, you wretch.
Those who clung to your skirt,
once you became like this, all ran away.

57 The Arabic line is a proverbial saying.

"WHAT GOD WILLS COMES TO BE"

A prayer that God, without whose grace we are nothing, keep our drop of knowledge safe.

1.1878 We have said all this, yet in our striving,
without God's grace we are nothing, nothing at all.
Without the grace of God and of God's chosen ones,
even an angel's page is black.
O God, whose bounty grants all needs,
beside You it is not fitting to remember anyone.
You have granted us this much guidance,
and with it You have covered many of our faults.
The drop of knowledge You granted before—
join it to Your own seas.

1.1883 A drop of knowledge is in my soul;
save it from desire and from the body's dust,
before these earths swallow it up,
before these winds scatter it.
Though even when they scatter it, You are able
to take it back from them and buy it back.
A drop that has gone into the air or spilled—
when did it ever escape the treasury of Your power?
If it enters nonexistence, or a hundred nonexistences,
when You call it, it will come running headlong.

1.1888 Hundreds of thousands of opposites destroy their
opposites,
and Your decree draws them out again.
From nonexistence into existence, every moment,
Lord, there is caravan after caravan.
Especially every night, all thoughts and minds
pass into nothing, drowned in the deep sea;
then at dawn those divine ones
lift their heads from the sea like fish.
In autumn those hundreds of thousands of branches and
leaves
go fleeing in rout into the sea of death.

1.1893 The crow, dressed in black like a mourner,
laments in the garden over the greenery.
Then comes the command from the Lord of the village
to nonexistence: "Give back what you have eaten.
Give back what you ate, black death,
of plants and herbs, leaves and grass."
Brother, come to your senses for a moment:
moment by moment there is autumn and spring in you.
See the garden of the heart green and fresh and new,
full of rosebuds and cypress and jasmine.

1.1898 The branches are hidden by the mass of leaves;
desert and palace are hidden by the mass of roses.
These words that come from the Universal Intellect
are the scent of that rose garden, cypress, and hyacinth.
Have you ever smelled roses where there were no roses?
Have you seen wine foaming where there was no wine?
Scent is your guide and leader;
it leads you to paradise and to Kawthar.
Scent is a remedy for the eye, giving it light;
Jacob's eyes were opened by a scent.[58]

58 Kawthar is a river or pool of paradise (Quran 108:1); Jacob's blindness was cured by the scent of Joseph's shirt (Quran 12:93–96).

1.1903 A foul smell darkens the eyes;
the scent of Joseph helps the eyes.
You who are not Joseph, be Jacob;
be like him, weeping and in turmoil.
Hear this counsel from the Sage of Ghazna,
so that you may find new life in your old body:
"To be coy you need a face like a rose;
if you don't have one, don't go around being difficult.
An unlovely face with coyness is ugly;
a blind eye with pain is hard to bear."[59]

1.1908 Do not show off your coyness and beauty before Joseph;
offer nothing but Jacob's need and sighs.
The meaning of the parrot's dying was need:
make yourself dead in need and poverty,
so that the breath of Jesus may bring you to life
and make you lovely and blessed as he is.
When does a stone grow green from spring?
Become earth, so that flowers of every color may grow.
For years you have been a heart-scraping stone;
for once, as an experiment, be earth for a while.

59 The Sage of Ghazna is the poet Sanai (d. c. 1131).

THE GRAMMARIAN AND THE BOATMAN

A conceited grammarian mocks a boatman, then cannot swim when the boat starts sinking.

1.2835 A grammarian got into a boat;
that conceited man turned to the boatman
and said, "Have you ever studied grammar?" He said, "No."
He said, "Then half your life has gone to waste."
The boatman was heartbroken and stung,
but at that moment he kept silent and did not reply.
The wind drove the boat into a whirlpool;
the boatman called out loudly to the grammarian,
"Tell me, do you know how to swim?"
He said, "No, you fair-spoken, handsome man."

1.2840 He said, "Then all your life is wasted, grammarian,
for the boat is sinking in these whirlpools.
Know that here you need self-effacement, not syntax;
if you are effaced, ride the water without danger."
The sea lifts the dead onto its surface,
but if one is alive, how can he escape the sea?
When you have died to human qualities,
the sea of secrets will set you on the crown of its head.
You who have been calling people donkeys,
now you are stuck like a donkey on this ice.[60]

60 A pun: *maḥw* "self-effacement" and *naḥw* "grammar, syntax" differ by one letter.

1.2845 If you are the most learned scholar of your age in the world,
look now at the passing away of this world and this age!
We have stitched the grammarian into the story
to teach you the grammar of self-effacement.
The law of law, the grammar of grammar, the morphology
of morphology—
you will find them in becoming less, my wondrous friend.
That jug of water is our knowledge,
and that caliph is the Tigris of God's knowledge.[61]

1.2849 We carry jugs full of water to the Tigris;
if we do not know ourselves for donkeys, we are donkeys
indeed.
The Bedouin, at least, was excused,
for he knew nothing of the Tigris or the river.
Had he known of the Tigris as we do,
he would not have carried that jug from place to place.
Indeed, had he been aware of the Tigris,
he would have smashed that jug against a stone.

THE CHINESE AND THE GREEK PAINTERS

Chinese painters cover a wall with pictures; the Greeks polish theirs to a mirror and win.

1.3467 The Chinese said, "We are the better painters";
the Greeks said, "Ours is the skill and the splendor."
The sultan said, "I want to test you in this,
to see which of you lives up to your claim."
The Chinese and the Greeks came to debate;
the Greeks fell silent and held back from the debate.
The Chinese said, "Assign one room to us
alone, and let one be yours."
There were two rooms facing each other, door to door;
the Chinese took one, the Greeks the other.[62]

61 This recalls the earlier story of a Bedouin who carried a jug of rainwater across the desert as a gift for the caliph in Baghdad, a city on the Tigris.
62 *Rumi* here means "Greek" in the sense of Byzantine (from Rum, "Rome").

1.3472 The Chinese asked the king for a hundred colors;
the king opened his treasury for them to take.
Every morning, from the treasury, colors
were given the Chinese as a ration from his bounty.
The Greeks said, "No tint and no color
suits this work—only removing the rust."
They shut the door and kept polishing
until they were plain and pure as the sky.
From two hundred colors there is a way to colorlessness;
color is like a cloud, and colorlessness is a moon.

1.3477 Whatever light and glow you see in the cloud,
know it comes from the stars, the moon, and the sun.
When the Chinese had finished their work,
they beat drums for joy.
The king came in and saw the pictures there;
at the sight they stole his reason away.
After that he came over to the Greeks;
the Greeks lifted the curtain that hung between.
The reflection of those pictures and those works
fell upon these polished walls.

1.3482 Whatever he had seen there looked better here;
it snatched the eye from its socket.
The Greeks are the Sufis, father:
without rote learning, without books, without
accomplishments,
but they have polished their breasts,
clean of greed and avarice, stinginess and hatred.
The purity of that mirror is, without doubt, the heart,
which can receive numberless images.
That formless, boundless form of the Unseen
Moses holds in his bosom from the mirror of the heart.[63]

63 Moses drew his hand from his bosom and it shone white (Quran 20:22, 27:12).

1.3487 Though that form cannot be contained in the heavens,
nor in the Throne and the Footstool, nor down to the Fish,
since those are limited and counted—
know that the mirror of the heart has no limit.
Here reason falls silent or leads astray,
for the heart is with Him, or rather the heart is He.
The reflection of every image shines forever
only from the heart, both with number and without.
Forever, each new image that comes upon it
shows within it without any flaw.[64]

1.3492 The people of polishing are free of scent and color;
every moment they see beauty without delay.
They have left behind the form and husk of knowledge;
they have raised the banner of the eye of certainty.
Thought is gone, and they have found light;
they have found the depths and the sea of knowing.
Death, which all these people dread,
this company laughs at.[65]

1.3496 No one can conquer their hearts;
harm comes to the shell, not to the pearl.
Though they have left grammar and law behind,
they have taken up self-effacement and poverty.
Ever since the images of the eight paradises shone,
they have found the tablet of their hearts receptive.
A hundred signs from the Throne and the Footstool and the void—
what signs? Rather, the very vision of God.[66]

64 The Throne and the Footstool are God's in the Quran (2:255); the Fish was believed to hold up the earth.
65 "The eye of certainty" is a Quranic phrase (102:7).
66 Puns again: *naḥw* "grammar" and *maḥw* "self-effacement," *fiqh* "law" and *faqr* "poverty."

Book II

The hair taken for the new moon; the stolen snake; Moses and the shepherd; the rider and the man who had swallowed a snake.

THE HAIR TAKEN FOR THE NEW MOON

In Omar's time a man claims to see the new moon; it is only a hair of his eyebrow.

2.112 In Omar's time, the month of fasting came round.
A group of people ran up to the top of a hill
to watch for the new moon that would begin the fast.
One of them said, "Omar, there's the new moon!"
When Omar could not see the moon in the sky,
he said, "This moon has risen from your imagination.
Otherwise, since I see the heavens better than you,
how is it that I can't see the pure crescent?
Wet your hand," he said, "and rub it on your eyebrow,
then look up toward the new moon."[1]

1 The sighting of the new crescent marks the start of Ramadan, the month of fasting.

2.117 When he wet his eyebrow, he did not see the moon.
"My king," he said, "there's no moon; it has vanished."
"Yes," said Omar, "a hair of your eyebrow had become a bow
and shot an arrow of supposition at you."
Since one crooked hair waylaid him,
so that he boasted that he had seen the moon,
and since one crooked hair can veil the sky,
what happens when all your parts are crooked?
Straighten your parts by way of the straight ones;
you who walk straight, do not turn your head from that threshold.[2]

2.122 A scale is what sets a scale right,
and a scale is what makes a scale weigh short.
Whoever is weighed in with the crooked
falls short, and his reason is dazed.
Go, be "hard against the unbelievers";
throw dust on making up to outsiders.
Be like a sword over the heads of outsiders;
come, don't play the fox, be a lion,
so that your friends, out of jealousy, do not break with you,
for those thorns are the enemies of this rose.[3]

2.127 Set fire to the wolves as you would to rue seed,
for those wolves are the enemies of Joseph.
Iblis calls you "Dear child"—beware!
He wants to trick you with his breath, the accursed devil.
He played this same trick on your father;
this black-faced one checkmated Adam.
This crow is quick at the chessboard;
don't watch the game with half-sleeping eyes,[4]

2 Rumi rhymes *kamān* "bow" with *gumān* "supposition."
3 Quran 48:29, describing the Prophet's companions as "hard against the unbelievers, merciful among themselves."
4 Wild rue (*sipand*) is thrown on fire against the evil eye. Joseph's brothers claimed a wolf had eaten him (Quran 12:17).

2.131 for he knows many traps with the queen
that stick in your throat like a straw.
His straw stays in your throat for years.
What is that straw? Love of status and wealth.
Wealth is a straw, you fickle one, when it is
lodged in your throat, blocking the water of life.
If some cunning enemy takes your wealth,
one highwayman has carried off another.

THE STOLEN SNAKE

A thief steals a snake and is killed by it, and the snake-catcher thanks God.

2.135 A petty thief stole a snake from a snake-catcher
and, being a fool, counted it a prize.
The snake-catcher escaped the snake's bite;
the snake killed the thief, miserably.
The snake-catcher saw him and recognized him.
He said, "My snake has drained the life from him.

2.138 In my prayers I begged Him with all my soul
that I might find him and take my snake back.
Thank God that prayer was turned down;
I thought it a loss, and it turned out a gain."
Many prayers mean loss and ruin,
and in His generosity holy God does not hear them.

MOSES AND THE SHEPHERD

Moses hears a shepherd offering to comb God's hair and rebukes him for blasphemy.

Moses saw a shepherd along the road
who was saying, "O God, You who choose,
where are You, so I can be Your servant,
sew Your sandals and comb Your hair,
wash Your clothes and kill Your lice,
bring You milk, great one,
kiss Your little hand, rub Your little feet,
and when it's time for sleep, sweep Your little bed?
Let all my goats be sacrificed for You;
every hey and ho I shout is in memory of You."

The shepherd went on babbling in this way.
Moses said, "Who are you talking to, fellow?"
He said, "To the One who created us,
through whom this earth and sky came to be."
Moses said, "Hey, you've gone badly astray!
You've become an unbeliever before you were even a Muslim.
What drivel is this, what unbelief and raving?
Stuff some cotton in your mouth!
The stench of your unbelief has made the world stink;
your unbelief has turned the silk of faith to rags.

Sandals and foot wrappings suit you;
how could such things befit a Sun?
If you don't shut your throat against such talk,
a fire will come and burn the people up.
If no fire has come, then what is this smoke,
this blackened soul, this rejected spirit?
If you know that God is the Judge,
how can you put your faith in drivel and insolence?
The friendship of a fool is itself enmity;
God most high has no need of service like this.

2.1735 Who are you saying this to—one of your uncles?
Body and need among the attributes of the Lord of Majesty?
Milk is drunk by one who is growing and developing;
sandals are worn by one who depends on feet.
And if this talk is meant for His servant,
the one of whom God said, 'He is Me, and I am he'—
the one of whom He said, 'I was sick and you did not visit Me':
'I was the one who fell ill, not he alone'—
the one who has become 'through Me he hears, through Me he sees'—
even for that servant this talk is nonsense.[5]

2.1740 Speaking without courtesy to God's elect
kills the heart and blackens the page.
If you call a man "Fatima"—
though men and women are all one kind—
he will be out for your blood as far as he can,
however good-natured, gentle and calm he is.
"Fatima" is praise when said of women;
say it to a man and it is a spear wound.
Hands and feet, said of us, are praise;
said of God's purity, they are a defilement.[6]

5 Both sayings are from hadith in which God speaks: "I was sick and you did not visit Me" (Muslim) and "I become his hearing with which he hears and his sight with which he sees" (Bukhari).
6 Fatima was the Prophet's daughter; her name stands for honored womanhood.

2.1745 ‘He does not beget, nor was He begotten’ is what befits Him;
He is the Creator of begetter and begotten.
Whatever is body has birth as its attribute;
whatever is born belongs to this side of the stream,
for it comes from generation and decay, and is lowly;
it has come into being and surely needs One who brought it into being.”
He said, “Moses, you have sewn my mouth shut,
and with remorse you have burned my soul.”
He tore his clothes, heaved a sigh, and in a fever
set off into the desert and was gone.[7]

GOD REBUKES MOSES

God reproaches Moses: He looks at the heart, not the words, and lovers’ religion is God.

2.1750 A revelation came to Moses from God:
“You have parted My servant from Me.
Did you come to bring about union,
or did you come to cut apart?
As far as you can, do not set foot in separation:
‘Of all things, the most hateful to Me is divorce.’
To everyone I have given a way of acting,
to everyone an idiom of his own.
In him it is praise, in you it is blame;
for him it is honey, for you it is poison.[8]

7 Quran 112:3.
8 Hadith: “Of permitted things, the most hateful to God is divorce” (Abu Dawud), here put in God’s mouth.

2.1755 I am beyond everyone's purity and impurity,
beyond everyone's sluggishness and zeal.
I did not command in order to gain something,
but to be generous to My servants.
For Indians, the idiom of India is praise;
for the people of Sind, the idiom of Sind is praise.
I am not made pure by their glorifying Me;
it is they who become pure and scatter pearls.
I do not look at the tongue and the words;
I look at the inward part and the state.[9]

2.1760 I watch the heart, to see if it is humble,
even if the words come out without humility,
for the heart is the substance, the speaking an accident;
so the accident is secondary, and the substance is the aim.
How long these words, these implied meanings and
metaphors?
I want burning, burning: make friends with that burning.
Kindle a fire of love in your soul
and burn thought and expression away, from end to end.[10]

2.1764 Moses, those who know the proprieties are one kind;
those whose souls and spirits burn are another.
For lovers there is burning at every breath;
a ruined village pays no tax or tithe.
If he says something wrong, don't call him a wrongdoer;
and if he is soaked in blood, don't wash the martyrs.
For martyrs, blood is better than water;
this error is better than a hundred right answers.[11]

9 Sind is the region of the lower Indus.
10 Terms from philosophy: a substance exists in itself, while an accident exists only in a substance.
11 In Islamic law, martyrs killed in battle are buried unwashed, in their blood-stained clothes.

2.1768 Inside the Kaaba there is no rule about facing the qibla;
what does it matter if the diver has no shoes?
Don't look to the drunk to lead the way;
why tell those who have torn their clothes to mend them?
The religion of love is apart from all faiths;
for lovers, God is their religion and their creed.
If a ruby bears no seal, it doesn't matter;
love is not grieved in the sea of grief."[12]

MOSES GOES AFTER THE SHEPHERD

Moses runs after the shepherd to give him leave, but the shepherd has gone beyond words.

2.1772 After that, God concealed in Moses' inner being
secrets that cannot be told.
Words were poured onto Moses' heart;
seeing and speaking were blended together.
How many times he lost himself and came back to himself!
How many times he flew from eternity past to eternity to come!
To explain beyond this would be foolish,
for its explanation lies beyond awareness.
If I spoke it, it would uproot minds;
if I wrote it, it would break many pens.

12 The qibla is the direction of prayer, toward the Kaaba in Mecca; inside the Kaaba one may face any way.

2.1777 When Moses heard this rebuke from God,
he ran into the desert after the shepherd.
He followed the bewildered man's footprints,
scattering dust across the desert's edge.
The footsteps of a distraught man
stand out from the steps of others:
one step like the rook, straight from top to bottom,
one step like the elephant, moving on the slant,
now like a wave raising its banner,
now like a fish gliding on its belly,[13]

2.1782 now writing out his state in the dust,
like a geomancer casting figures in the sand.
At last he caught up with him and saw him.
He said, "Good news: permission has come!
Don't look for any proprieties or order;
say whatever your aching heart desires.
Your unbelief is faith, and your faith the light of the soul;
you are safe, and through you a whole world is safe.
You who are exempt by 'God does what He wills,'
go, loosen your tongue without fear."[14]

2.1787 He said, "Moses, I've gone beyond that;
now I am steeped in my heart's blood.
I have passed beyond the Lote Tree of the Boundary;
I have gone a hundred thousand years' journey beyond it.
You lashed with your whip; my horse shied,
leapt in an arc and passed beyond the heavens.
May the divine be intimate with our humanity;
blessings on your hand and your arm!
My state now is beyond telling;
what I am saying is not my state."[15]

13 In Persian chess the rook moves straight and the "elephant" (the bishop's ancestor) moves diagonally.
14 Quran 3:40.
15 The Lote Tree of the Boundary (Quran 53:14) marks the furthest limit of heaven, reached by the Prophet on his Ascension.

2.1792 You see an image in a mirror:
that image is yours, not the mirror's.
The breath the flute player breathes into the flute
suits the flute, not the man.
Take care: whether you offer praise or thanks,
know it is as inept as that shepherd's.
Your praise may be better compared with his,
but compared with God, it too falls short.
How often you will say, when the veil is lifted,
"This is not what people thought it was!"

2.1797 That your remembrance of God is accepted is a mercy,
a dispensation, like the prayer of a woman with chronic bleeding.
Her prayer is stained with blood;
your remembrance is stained with likening and "how."
Blood is unclean, and a little water washes it away,
but the inward has impurities
that, except by the water of the Maker's grace,
will not lessen within even a man of deeds.
If only in your prostration you would turn your face around
and know the meaning of "Glory to my Lord,"[16]

2.1802 saying, "My prostration, like my existence, is unworthy;
repay this evil with good."
This earth bears the mark of God's forbearance:
it takes away filth and bears roses,
it covers our foulness,
and in return buds spring up from it.
So when the unbeliever saw that in giving and generosity
he was lesser and poorer than the earth,
that from his being no rose or fruit had grown,
that he had sought nothing but the corruption of all that is pure,

16 A woman with bleeding outside her menstrual period (*mustaḥāḍa*) is allowed to pray despite the impurity. "Glory to my Lord, the Most High" is said in prostration during ritual prayer.

2.1807 he said, "I have gone backward on my journey.
Alas! 'If only I were dust!'
If only I had not chosen to travel out of earthiness,
but like the earth had gathered seed!
Since I traveled, the road has tested me;
what gift have I brought back from this journey?"
That is why all his longing is toward the earth: he
sees no profit ahead on the journey.
His turning back is greed and craving;
his turning toward the road is sincerity and need.[17]

2.1812 Every plant that inclines upward
is in increase, life and growth;
when it turns its head toward the ground,
it is in decline, dryness, defect and loss.
When your spirit inclines upward,
you are growing, and there is where you return.
But if you hang upside down, head toward the earth,
you are something that sets, and God "does not love things
that set."[18]

17 Quran 78:40, the unbeliever's words on the Day of Judgment.
18 Quran 6:76: Abraham, watching a star set, says "I do not love things that set."

THE RIDER AND THE SLEEPER

A rider beats a sleeper into vomiting up a snake, and the man thanks him.

2.1878 A wise man came riding along on a horse;
a snake was going into the mouth of a sleeping man.
The rider saw it and hurried
to drive the snake off, but had no chance.
Since his reason gave him plenty of help,
he dealt the sleeper some hard blows with his mace.
The heavy blows of the mace drove him,
fleeing from the rider, to the foot of a tree.
Lots of rotten apples had fallen there.
He said, "Eat these, you pain-racked wretch!"

2.1883 He fed the man so many apples
that they were falling back out of his mouth.
The man cried out, "My lord, why on earth
have you attacked me? What did I ever do to you?
If you are out for my life by nature,
strike with your sword and shed my blood in one go.
Cursed the hour I showed myself to you!
Happy is the one who never saw your face!
No crime, no sin, nothing more, nothing less—
even heretics wouldn't allow such cruelty.

2.1888 Blood spurts from my mouth with my words.
O God, You pay him back for it in the end!"
Every moment he uttered a new curse,
and the other kept hitting him: "Run across this plain!"
The blows of the mace, the rider swift as wind—
he ran, and fell again on his face.
He was stuffed, drowsy and limp;
his feet and face were covered with a hundred thousand wounds.
Till nightfall the rider dragged him on and let him go,
until bile set him vomiting.

2.1893 Up came everything he had eaten, good and bad,
and the snake shot out of him with it.
When he saw the snake come out of him,
he bowed down before that doer of good.
The terror of that black, ugly, huge snake—
when he saw it, all those pains left him.
He said, "You must be the Gabriel of mercy,
or else God, for you are my benefactor!
Blessed the hour you saw me!
I was dead; you gave me new life.

2.1898 You sought me out like a mother;
I ran away from you like a donkey.
A donkey runs from its master because it is a donkey;
its owner goes after it out of goodness of nature,
seeking it not for profit or loss,
but so that no wolf or wild beast tears it apart.
Happy the one who sees your face,
or stumbles all at once into your street!
You whom the pure spirit has praised,
what drivel and nonsense I said to you!

2.1903 My lord, king of kings, commander,
it wasn't I who spoke, it was my ignorance: don't hold it against me.
If I had known a whiff of this matter,
how could I have talked such nonsense?
I would have praised you plenty, kind sir,
if you had told me just one hint of the situation.
But you said nothing and kept harrying me;
silently you kept pounding my head.
My head went dizzy, my wits leapt out of it—
especially this head, which has less brain than most.

2.1908 Forgive me, you of fair face and fair deeds;
overlook what I said in my madness."
He said, "If I had told you a hint of it,
your gall would have turned to water then and there.
If I had described the snake to you,
fear would have finished you off.
The Prophet said, 'If I were to describe truly
the enemy that lives in your souls,
it would burst the galls even of the bold;
a man would neither go his way nor care about any task;[19]

2.1913 his heart would have no strength left for supplication,
his body no strength for fasting and prayer;
he would become nothing, like a mouse before a cat,
and lose his footing, like a lamb before a wolf.
No strategy would remain in him, no way forward.
So, without telling you, I nurture you.
Like Abu Bakr Rababi, I keep quiet;
like David, I put my hand to iron,
so that at my hand the impossible becomes real at once,
and a bird stripped of its feathers gets wings.[20]

2.1918 Since "the hand of God is over their hands,"
the One has called our hand His own hand.
So surely my hand reaches far,
beyond the seventh heaven.
My hand has shown its skill upon the sky:
reciter, recite "the moon was split."
Even this description is for the weakness of minds;
how is it right to explain power to the weak?
You will know for yourself when you lift your head from
sleep.
That is the end: "God knows best what is right.'"[21]

19 The gall (*zahra*) was thought to be the seat of courage.
20 Abu Bakr Rababi was proverbial for his silence. God made iron soft for David (Quran 34:10).
21 Quran 48:10; 54:1, the splitting of the moon, a miracle associated with the Prophet.

2.1923 You had no strength to eat,
nor any way or wish to vomit.
I kept hearing your abuse and kept pushing on,
murmuring under my breath, 'Lord, make it easy.'
I had no leave to tell you the cause,
and abandoning you was not in my power.
Every moment, out of inner pain, I kept saying,
'Guide my people, for they do not know.'"
The man freed from his torment kept bowing down:
"You are my good fortune, my luck and my treasure![22]

2.1928 Noble sir, may you get your reward from God;
this weakling has no strength to thank you.
God will thank you, my guide;
I don't have the lips, the jaw or the voice."
Such is the enmity of the wise:
their poison is the soul's delight.
The friendship of a fool is pain and going astray;
listen to this story as an example.

22 "Lord, make it easy" is a common prayer; "Guide my people, for they do not know" is attributed to the Prophet when he was wounded at Uhud.

Book III

The jackal in the dyer's vat; the snake-catcher and the frozen dragon; the elephant in the dark; the chickpea in the pot.

THE JACKAL IN THE DYER'S VAT

A jackal falls into a dyer's vat and comes out claiming to be a peacock.

3.721 A jackal once went into a dyer's vat
and stayed in that vat for an hour.
Then he came out with his hide all colored,
saying, "I've become the peacock of highest heaven!"
His dyed fur had taken on a lovely sheen,
and the sun was shining on those colors.
He saw himself green and red, rose and yellow,
and went to show himself off to the jackals.

3.725 They all said, "Little jackal, what's going on?
You've got some twisted kind of glee in your head.
In your glee you keep your distance from us:
where did you get this arrogance?"
One jackal went up to him: "Hey, you,
is this a trick, or have you really become one of the happy-hearted?
You played a trick so you could jump up into the pulpit
and make these people envious with your boasting.

3.729 You tried hard and felt no warmth,
so out of trickery you've come up with shamelessness."
Warmth belongs to the saints and the prophets;
shamelessness is the refuge of every cheat,
who draw people's attention to themselves:
"We're happy," they say, while inside they are utterly
miserable.

THE BRAGGART AND THE MUTTON FAT

A braggart greases his mustache with mutton fat to look well fed, until a cat exposes him.

3.732 A man of no account found the skin of a sheep's fat tail,
and every morning he greased his mustache with it.
He would go among the well-to-do as if to say, "I
have eaten a rich meal at a banquet."
He would put his hand to his mustache as a signal,
a code meaning, "Look at my mustache:
this is the witness to the truth of what I say,
this is the sign of eating rich and sweet things."
His belly would answer, without a sound,
"May God destroy the scheming of liars!"

3.737 "Your boasting has put us on the fire:
may that greasy mustache of yours be plucked out!
Beggar, if it weren't for your ugly boasting,
some generous person would have taken pity on us;
and if you had shown your defect and played less crooked,
some physician would have made a remedy for it."
God has said: don't twitch your ears and tail crookedly;
"the truthful will profit from their truthfulness."
Don't sleep crooked in the cave, you dreamer;
show what you have, and "stand upright."[1]

1 Quran 5:119; 11:112. The cave recalls the Sleepers of the Cave (Quran 18).

3.742 And if you won't tell your defect, at least keep quiet;
don't kill yourself with show and fraud.
If you have found some real coin, don't open your mouth:
there are touchstones on the road.
And the touchstones, too, have tests ahead of them,
tests in their own condition.
God has said that from birth to the appointed time
"they are tried twice every year."
It's test upon test, father;
careful—don't rate yourself by a lesser test.[2]

BALAAM SON OF BEOR

Tests follow tests, as Balaam and Iblis found; the braggart's belly prays to be exposed.

3.747 Balaam son of Beor and Iblis the accursed
were disgraced by the final test.
That man, with his claims, angles for good fortune,
while his stomach curses his mustache:
"Expose what he is hiding!
He's burned us up—God, disgrace him!"
Every part of his body is his enemy,
for he boasts of spring while they are in winter.
Boasting turns back the gifts of the generous
and tears the branch of mercy out by the root.[3]

2 Quran 9:126.
3 Balaam son of Beor, a seer who in Islamic tradition lost his gifts through pride; Iblis refused to bow to Adam.

3.752 Bring the truth forward, or keep quiet,
and then see mercy, and drink it in.
That belly had become the enemy of his mustache
and had secretly raised its hands in prayer:
"God, expose the boasting of this lowlife,
so that the mercy of the generous may stir toward us."
The belly's prayer was answered:
the burning of its need raised its banner outside.
God has said, "Even if you are a sinner and an idol
worshipper,
when you call on Me, I will answer."[4]

3.757 Hold fast to prayer and keep crying out;
in the end it will rescue you from the hands of the ghoul.
When the belly had surrendered itself to the Presence,
a cat came and carried off that piece of fat.
They ran after the cat; it got away.
The man's child went pale for fear of a scolding.
The little boy came into the gathering
and wrecked the boaster's dignity.
He said, "That fat you used every morning
to grease your lips and your mustache—

3.762 a cat came and suddenly snatched it.
I ran and ran, but it did no good."
Those present burst out laughing in surprise,
and their pity began to stir again.
They invited him and kept him well fed;
they sowed the seed of mercy in his soil.
Once he had tasted from the generous what honesty brings,
he became, without arrogance, a servant of honesty.

4 Compare Quran 40:60: "Call on Me, and I will answer you."

THE JACKAL CLAIMS TO BE A PEACOCK

The colored jackal demands homage, but cannot strut or cry like a peacock.

3.766 The many-colored jackal came up quietly
and said into his critic's ear,
"Just look at me and my colors!
No idol worshipper has an idol like me.
I've become like a rose garden, lovely, in a hundred colors:
bow down to me; don't turn your head away.
See the splendor and glory, the luster and sheen and color:
call me the Pride of the World and the Pillar of the Faith![5]

3.770 I've become the showplace of divine grace,
the tablet on which divine majesty is set forth.
Jackals, mind you, don't call me a jackal:
how could a jackal have so much beauty?"
The jackals gathered there
like moths around a candle.
"Then what shall we call you? Tell us, you gem."
He said, "A male peacock, like Jupiter."

3.774 So they said to him, "The peacocks of the spirit
strut and display in the rose garden:
do you display like that?" "No," he said.
"I haven't crossed the desert—how could I strike up an 'I am'?"
"Do you make the cry of peacocks?" "No," he said.
"Then you're no peacock, Master Bu'l-Ala."
The peacock's robe of honor comes from heaven;
how will you reach it through dye and claims?[6]

5 "Pride of the World" and "Pillar of the Faith" parody the grand titles given to rulers and religious dignitaries.

6 *Mani*, "egotism," also suggests Mina, a station of the pilgrimage reached after crossing the desert. Bu'l-Ala ("Father of Loftiness") is a mocking title.

PHARAOH AND THE JACKAL

Pharaoh, Rumi says, was a jackal in a vat of wealth who claimed to be divine.

3.778 Like Pharaoh, who had his beard studded with jewels
and out of sheer donkeyishness flew higher than Jesus,
he too was born of the line of a she-jackal
and fell into a vat of wealth and rank.
Everyone who saw his rank and wealth bowed down,
and he swallowed the homage of those dupes whole.
That beggar in a ragged cloak got tipsy
on people's prostrations and their awe.

3.782 Wealth is a snake full of poisons,
and people's acclaim and prostration is a dragon.
Hey, Pharaoh, don't put on airs:
you're a jackal—don't play the peacock.
If you show yourself among the peacocks,
you can't display, and you'll be disgraced.
Moses and Aaron were like peacocks;
they struck your head and face with their displaying feathers.

3.786 Your ugliness and your disgrace came out,
and you fell headlong from your height.
When you met the touchstone, you turned black like a counterfeit coin;
the image of a lion vanished and a dog appeared.
You mangy dog, ugly with greed and frenzy,
don't put on the lion's skin.
Your lion's roar will be put to the test:
the image of a lion, and then the manners of dogs!

"YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR SPEECH"

Hypocrites are known by their speech, as a cracked jug by its ring.

3.790 In the course of revelation God told the Prophet
an easier sign by which to know the hypocrites:
even if the hypocrite is stout, handsome and imposing,
you will recognize him by the tone of his speech.
When you buy earthenware jugs,
buyer, you put them to a test:
you tap the jug with your hand—why?
So that you can tell the cracked one by its ring.[7]

3.794 The sound of the cracked one is different;
the sound is a herald walking ahead of it.
The sound comes out to define it,
as a verbal noun is conjugated into a verb.
Since the subject of testing has come up,
the story of Harut came to my mind at once.[8]

THE SNAKE-CATCHER AND THE FROZEN DRAGON

A snake-catcher finds a frozen dragon, takes it for dead, and hauls it to Baghdad.

3.976 Hear a story from the chronicler,
so that you may catch a scent of this hidden secret.
A snake-catcher went off to the mountains
to catch a snake with his spells.
Whether one is slow or quick,
whoever seeks will find.
Always throw both hands into the search,
for seeking is a good guide on the way.
Lame and limping, drowsy and uncouth,
crawl toward Him and keep seeking Him.

7 Quran 47:30.
8 Harut and Marut are two angels named in Quran 2:102; in tradition they were sent to earth, tested, and fell.

3.981 Now by speech, now by silence, now
by sniffing about, catch the King's scent on every side.
Jacob said to his sons,
"Search for Joseph beyond all limits;
in this search, earnestly drive each of your senses
in every direction, ready and alert."
He said, "'Do not despair of God's comfort':
like someone who has lost a son, go this way and that;
use the sense of the mouth and ask around;
put your ears to the crossroads.[9]

3.986 Wherever a sweet scent comes, follow it
toward that place you know so well."
Wherever you see kindness from anyone,
perhaps you'll find the way to the source of kindness.
All these delights come from a deep sea:
leave the part and set your gaze on the whole.
People's fights are for the sake of beauty;
the leafage of leaflessness is a sign of the Tuba tree.
People's angers are for the sake of reconciliation;
the trap of comfort is always discomfort.[10]

3.991 Every blow is for the sake of a caress;
every complaint tells of gratitude.
Follow the scent from part to whole, noble friend;
follow the scent from opposite to opposite, wise one.
Fights truly bring peace:
the snake-catcher sought a snake for companionship.
Man seeks a snake for companionship
and frets over a companion who doesn't care.
He was looking for a marvelous snake
around the mountains in the days of snow.

9 Quran 12:87.
10 The Tuba is a tree of Paradise. *Barg* means both "leaf" and "provision," so the phrase also means "the wealth of having nothing."

3.996 There he saw a huge dead dragon,
and its look filled his heart with fear.
The snake-catcher, in the bitter winter,
was looking for a snake and saw a dead dragon.
The snake-catcher, to amaze people,
catches snakes—that's how ignorant people are!
Man is a mountain: how can he be beguiled?
How can a mountain be amazed by a snake?
Poor man did not know himself;
he came from abundance and fell into lack.

3.1001 Man sold himself cheap:
he was satin, and he sewed himself onto a rag.
Hundreds of thousands of snakes and mountains are
amazed by him;
why has he become amazed, and a lover of snakes?
The snake-catcher picked up the dragon
and came to Baghdad to show off the wonder.
A dragon like the pillar of a house
he dragged along for the sake of a few pennies:
"I've brought a dead dragon;
I went through agonies hunting it."

3.1006 He thought it was dead, but
it was alive, and he hadn't looked at it very closely.
It was frozen from the cold and the snow;
it was alive but looked like a dead thing.
The world is frozen, and its name is "inanimate":
the inanimate is the frozen, master.
Wait until the sun of the Resurrection appears,
and you will see the body of the world move.
When Moses' staff became a snake here,
reason received news about the motionless things.

3.1011 Since He made a lump of earth into you, a man,
you ought to recognize what all earth is.
They are dead on this side and alive on that side,
silent here, and over there they speak.
When He sends them from that side to us,
that staff becomes a dragon for us.
The mountains, too, sing in David's tones;
the substance of iron is wax in his hand;
the wind becomes Solomon's porter;
the sea understands Moses' words.[11]

3.1016 The moon heeds Ahmad's sign;
fire becomes wild roses for Abraham;
the earth swallows Korah like a snake;
the Moaning Pillar comes to right understanding;
stones greet Ahmad;
a mountain sends a message to John:
"We hear and see and are glad;
with you outsiders we keep silent."
Since you are heading toward the inanimate,
how will you become intimates of the soul of inanimate
things?[12]

11 The mountains sang with David and iron grew soft for him, the wind served Solomon (Quran 34:10–12), and the sea parted for Moses (Quran 26:63).
12 The moon split at the Prophet's sign (Quran 54:1); a palm-trunk pillar moaned when he left it, and stones greeted him. The earth swallowed Korah (Quran 28:81).

3.1021 Go out from the inanimate into the world of souls;
hear the clamor of the world's particles.
The glorification of God by inanimate things will become
plain to you,
and the whispering of interpretations won't carry you off.
Since your soul has no lamps,
you have made up interpretations in place of seeing:
"The meaning isn't outward glorification—how could it be?
Claiming to see it is a deluded fancy.
Rather, the sight of the thing makes the beholder,
when he takes a lesson from it, glorify God.[13]

3.1026 So, since it reminds you to glorify God,
that pointing is the same as speaking."
This is the interpretation of the Muʿtazilites
and of anyone who lacks the light of spiritual experience.
When a person hasn't come out beyond the senses,
he is a foreigner to the picture of the Unseen.
This talk has no end. The snake-catcher
was dragging that snake along with a hundred groans,
until that showman came to Baghdad
to set up a show at the crossroads.[14]

3.1031 The man set up his show on the riverbank,
and an uproar broke out in the city of Baghdad:
"A snake-catcher has brought a dragon!
What a wonder—he's made a rare catch!"
Hundreds of thousands of raw-bearded fools gathered,
becoming his prey through folly, just as he himself was.
They were waiting, and he was waiting too
for the scattered crowd to gather,
so the audience would grow larger
and the begging and collection go better.

13 Quran 17:44: "There is nothing that does not glorify Him with praise."
14 The Muʿtazilites were a rationalist school of Islamic theology.

3.1036 Hundreds of thousands of babblers gathered,
forming a ring, toe to heel.
So thick was the crowd, men took no notice of women;
high and low were jumbled together as at the Resurrection.
When he started to stir the covering,
the crowd craned their necks.
And the dragon, frozen by the bitter cold,
lay under a hundred kinds of sacking and covers.
He had tied it with thick ropes;
that careful keeper had taken precautions.

3.1041 During the delay of waiting and gathering,
the sun of Iraq shone on that snake.
The sun of the hot country warmed it,
and the cold humors left its limbs.
It had been dead, and, wonder of wonders, it came alive:
the dragon began to stir.
At the stirring of that dead snake, the people's
single amazement became a hundred thousand.
In their amazement they raised shrieks;
all of them fled at its stirring.

3.1046 It was breaking its bonds, and with a loud noise
the ropes went snap, snap on every side.
It burst its bonds and came out from underneath,
a hideous dragon roaring like a lion.
Many people were killed in the stampede;
the fallen dead made a hundred heaps.
The snake-catcher froze where he stood in terror:
"What have I brought from the mountains and plains!"
That blind sheep woke the wolf;
the fool went to his own Azrael.

3.1051 The dragon made one mouthful of that fool;
bloodshed comes easy to Hajjaj.
It coiled itself tight around a pillar
and crushed the bones of the man it had eaten.
Your self is a dragon—how could it be dead?
It's only frozen by grief and lack of means.
If it finds the means of Pharaoh,
at whose command the river water flowed,[15]

3.1055 then it will lay the foundations of a pharaoh's rule
and ambush a hundred Moseses and a hundred Aarons.
That dragon is a little worm because of poverty;
with rank and wealth a gnat becomes a falcon.
Keep the dragon in the snow of separation;
careful—don't drag it out into the sun of Iraq.
So long as that dragon of yours stays frozen, well and good;
once it gets free, you are its mouthful.

3.1059 Checkmate it and be safe from checkmate;
show it little mercy—it isn't worthy of favors.
For when the heat of the sun of lust blazes up,
that worthless bat you inherited will flap its wings.
Drag it into holy war and battle,
like a man: "God will reward you with union."
When that man brought the dragon
into the warm air, that rebel grew lively;

3.1063 naturally it caused all that havoc, friend,
twenty times as much as we've told.
You hope that, without harshness,
you can keep it bound in dignity and good faith?
How can every worthless wretch have such a wish?
It takes a Moses to kill a dragon.
Hundreds of thousands of people, by his dragon,
were killed as they fled, by his design.

15 Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (d. 714), Umayyad governor of Iraq, was proverbial for his harshness. "The self" (*nafs*) is the lower self, the seat of appetite.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE DARK

People touch an elephant in the dark, and each describes it differently.

3.1259 An elephant was in a dark house;
some people from India had brought it there to put it on show.
To see it, many people,
one after another, went into that darkness.
Since seeing it with the eyes was impossible,
each one felt it with his palm in the dark.
One man's palm landed on its trunk;
he said, "This creature is like a water pipe."

3.1263 Another's hand touched its ear;
to him it seemed like a fan.
When another's palm rubbed its leg,
he said, "I found the elephant's shape is like a pillar."
Another put his hand on its back;
he said, "Why, this elephant is like a throne."
So each one, whatever part he reached,
understood it that way whenever he heard of it.

3.1267 Their words differed according to where they stood:
one called it *dal*, another *alif*.
If each of them had had a candle in his hand,
the difference would have gone out of their words.
The eye of the senses is just like the palm of the hand;
the palm can't reach the whole of it.
The eye of the sea is one thing, the foam another;
leave the foam and look with the eye of the sea.[16]

16 The letter *dal* (د) is curved, *alif* (ا) a straight stroke. *Kaf* means both "palm of the hand" and "foam," so Rumi slides from the hand to the sea.

3.1271 The foam moves day and night because of the sea;
you see the foam and not the sea—how strange!
We bump against one another like boats;
our eyes are dim, though we are in clear water.
You who have fallen asleep in the boat of the body,
you have seen the water: now look at the Water of the water.
The water has a Water that drives it;
the spirit has a Spirit that calls it.

THE CHICKPEA

A chickpea leaps up in the boiling pot, and the housewife pushes it back down.

3.4159 Look at a chickpea in the pot, how
it jumps up when the fire gets the better of it.
Every moment, as it boils, the chickpea rises
to the top of the pot and raises a hundred cries:
"Why are you setting me on fire?
You bought me—why are you turning me upside down?"
The housewife knocks it with her ladle: "No!
Boil nicely, and don't jump away from the cooking.
I don't boil you because you're hateful to me,
but so that you'll gain taste and flavor,

3.4164 so that you'll become nourishment and mingle with the soul.
This trial isn't meant to humiliate you.
You drank water in the garden, green and fresh:
that drinking was for the sake of this fire."
His mercy comes before His wrath for this reason:
so that through mercy one becomes fit for the trial.
His mercy has gone ahead of His wrath
so that the capital of existence may be gained.
For without pleasure, flesh and skin don't grow,
and if they don't grow, what will the Friend's love melt away?[17]

3.4169 If wrath comes to collect on that,
so that you will give that capital away,
grace comes again to make amends:
"You've washed yourself and leapt clear of the stream."
It says, "Chickpea, you grazed in the spring;
now pain has become your guest: treat it well,
so that the guest goes back full of thanks
and tells the King of your generosity,
so that in place of blessings the Giver of blessings comes to you
and all blessings envy you.

3.4174 I am Abraham, you are the son: before the knife
lay down your head: 'I see that I am to sacrifice you.'
Lay your head before wrath, with a steady heart,
so I can cut your throat as with Ishmael.
I'll cut off your head, but this head is a head
that is free from being cut off and from dying.
Yet what eternity intends is your surrender;
Muslim, you must seek surrender.
Chickpea, keep boiling in affliction,
until neither existence nor self remains to you.[18]

17 Echoes the hadith in which God says, "My mercy precedes My wrath."
18 Quran 37:102, Abraham's words to his son.

3.4179 If you laughed in that garden,
you are a rose in the garden of the soul and of sight.
If you have been parted from the garden of water and clay,
you've become a morsel and joined the living.
Become food and strength and thoughts:
you were milk—now be a lion in the thickets.
By God, you grew out of His attributes in the first place;
go back into His attributes, quick and nimble.
You came from cloud and sun and the turning sky;
then you became attributes and rose to heaven.[19]

3.4184 You came in the form of rain and heat;
you are going into the most excellent attributes.
You were part of sun and cloud and stars;
you became soul and action, speech and thoughts.
Animal existence came from the death of the plant:
'Kill me, my trusty friends' has proved true.
Since there is such a win for us after checkmate,
'In my being killed there is life' has proved true.[20]

3.4188 Action, speech and sincerity became the food of angels,
and by this ascent they rose to heaven,
just as that food became the strength of human beings,
rose from the inanimate, and became living.
A full and ample explanation of this
will be given in another place.
The caravan keeps arriving from heaven,
does its trading, and goes back again.

19 *Shir* means both "milk" and "lion."
20 From verses attributed to al-Hallaj (d. 922): "Kill me, my trusty friends, for in my being killed is my life."

So go sweetly and gladly, of your own free will,
not bitterly and reluctantly, like a thief.
I tell you bitter things
to wash you clean of bitterness.
Frozen grapes are saved by cold water:
they shed their coldness and frozenness.
When bitterness fills your heart with blood,
you pass beyond all bitterness.

THE BELIEVER LEARNS PATIENCE

The chickpea accepts the boiling and asks the housewife to keep striking it.

A dog that isn't a hunting dog wears no collar;
what's raw and unboiled is nothing but tasteless."
The chickpea said, "Since that's how it is, my lady,
I'll boil gladly—really, help me.
In this boiling you are like my builder:
hit me with the ladle, for you hit so nicely.
Like the elephant's, strike my head with blows and brands,
so I won't dream of India and its gardens,

so that I give myself up to the boiling
and find a way into that embrace.
For man grows rebellious in riches
and turns unruly like the dreaming elephant.
When the elephant sees India in its dreams,
it won't listen to its driver and turns treacherous."

THE HOUSEWIFE'S ANSWER

The housewife says she too once boiled, and so became spirit and the chickpea's teacher.

3.4203 The lady says to it, "Before this
I was like you, a part of the earth.
When I had drunk in the struggle of fire,
I became receptive and worthy.
For a while I boiled in time,
and for another while in the pot of the body.
Through these two boilings I became the strength of the senses;
I became spirit, and then your teacher.
When I was inanimate I used to say, 'You are running about
so that you may become knowledge and spiritual qualities.'

3.4208 Now that I have become spirit, once again
boil some more and pass beyond the animal."
Ask God that on these subtle points
you may not slip, but reach the goal;
for many have gone astray by the Quran:
by that rope some people went down into the well.
The rope is not to blame, you stubborn man;
it was you who had no desire to climb.

Book IV

The tanner in the perfumers' market; the Sufi in the garden; the pool and the three fish.

THE TANNER IN THE PERFUMERS' MARKET

A tanner faints from the scent of perfume, and onlookers try every remedy.

4.257 A certain man fell senseless, doubled over,
as soon as he came into the perfumers' market.
The scent of perfume from those generous perfumers struck him,
so that his head spun and he dropped where he stood.
He lay there like a carcass, unconscious,
at midday in the middle of the street.
At once a crowd gathered around him,
all of them saying, "There is no power but in God," and trying cures.
One rubbed his palm over the man's heart,
another sprinkled rosewater on him.[1]

1 "There is no power or strength except in God" (*la hawla*) is said in the face of misfortune.

4.262 He did not know that in that place
the attack had come upon him from the rosewater.
One kept rubbing his hands and head,
another brought wet clay-and-straw plaster.
One mixed aloeswood and sugar for incense,
another loosened his clothes,
another felt his pulse to see how it was beating,
another sniffed at his breath
to see whether he had drunk wine, or taken hemp or hashish.
People were at a loss over his senseless state.

4.267 Then they hurried to bring word to his family
that so-and-so had collapsed over there, done for:
"No one knows how he came to have this fit,
or what made his basin come crashing off the roof."
That tanner had a brother, a burly man,
shrewd and knowing, who came at once in a hurry.
With a little dog dung in his sleeve
he pushed through the crowd and came, lamenting.
He said, "I know what his trouble comes from.
When you know the cause, the cure is plain.[2]

4.272 When the cause isn't known, it is hard to find
the remedy for an illness, and there are a hundred guesses about it.
Once you have learned the cause, it is easy;
knowing causes drives away ignorance."
He said to himself, "In his brain and veins,
layer upon layer, is the smell of dog dung.
Up to his waist in filth until nightfall,
he is sunk in tanning to earn his daily bread.
Now the great Galen has said:
'Give the patient what he is used to,'[3]

2 "His basin fell off the roof" is a Persian idiom for a sudden, public disaster.
3 Tanners used dog dung in curing hides.

4.277 for his illness comes from what goes against his habit;
so seek the cure for his illness in what he is used to.
He has become a dung beetle from hauling dung,
and rosewater makes a dung beetle faint.
His cure lies in that very dog dung,
since that is what he is accustomed and used to."
Recite the verse "Foul women for foul men,"
and understand this saying front and back.[4]

4.281 Well-wishers try ambergris or rosewater
as his cure, to bring him round.
Good things do not suit the foul;
they are not fitting or proper for them, my trusty friends.
When the perfume of revelation left them twisted and lost,
their cry was, "We see an evil omen in you.
These words are pain and sickness to us;
your preaching is no good omen for us.[5]

4.285 If you start giving open advice,
we will stone you on the spot.
We have grown fat on idle talk and amusement;
we are not kneaded from the dough of counsel.
Our food is lies and boasting and jokes;
this message of yours upsets our stomachs.
You make our sickness a hundred times worse and more;
you are dosing reason with opium."[6]

4 Quran 24:26.
5 Quran 24:26 continues "good women for good men"; Quran 36:18, the words of the townspeople to the messengers sent to them.
6 Quran 36:18 continues: "If you do not stop, we will stone you."

THE TANNER'S BROTHER CURES HIM

His brother revives him by secretly holding dog dung under his nose.

4.289 The young man drove the people back from him,
so that they would not see his treatment.
He put his head to his brother's ear like someone telling a secret,
then held that stuff under his nose,
the dog dung he had rubbed in his palm—
he had seen that this was the cure for a polluted brain.
After a while the man began to stir.
People said, "That was a marvelous spell!
He recited a charm and breathed it into his ear;
he was dead, and the charm came to his rescue."

4.294 The corrupt are stirred by what lies that way:
fornication, flirting glances, and arched eyebrows.
Whoever gets no good from the musk of good counsel
must, of course, grow used to the bad smell.
God has called the polytheists "unclean" because
they were born inside dung from the very start.
The worm born in dung for all time
does not change its nature for ambergris.[7]

7 Quran 9:28.

4.298 Since the scattering of the sprinkled light did not fall on
him,
he is all body, without a heart, like husks.
But if God gave him a share of the sprinkled light,
then, as is the custom in Egypt, the dung gives birth to
birds—
not some lowly barnyard fowl,
but the bird of knowledge and wisdom.
You resemble the one who is empty of that light,
because you keep putting your nose to filth.[8]

THE SUFI IN THE GARDEN

A Sufi sits with head bowed in a garden, saying the true garden is within the heart.

4.1358 A Sufi in a garden, seeking to open his heart,
laid his face on his knee, as Sufis do.
Then he sank deep into himself.
A meddler, irked by the look of his sleep, said:
"Why sleep? Come, look at the vineyard,
see these trees, these signs, this green.
Hear God's command—He has said, 'Look!'
Turn your face toward these signs of mercy."
He said, "His signs are the heart, you trifler;
what is outside is only the signs of signs.[9]

8 Alludes to a hadith: God created creatures in darkness, then sprinkled His light upon them. In Egypt eggs were hatched in ovens warmed with dung.
9 Quran 30:50: "Look, then, at the signs of God's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death."

4.1363 The gardens and the greenery are in the very essence of the soul;
outside is their reflection, as in running water.
It is the image of the garden in the water
that quivers because the water is so fine.
The gardens and the fruits are in the heart;
the reflection of their grace falls on this water and clay.
If it were not the reflection of that cypress of joy,
God would not have called it 'the abode of delusion.'
This delusion is this: this image
comes from the reflection of the hearts and souls of true men.[10]

4.1368 All the deluded have come to this reflection,
thinking that this is the house of paradise.
They run away from the roots of the gardens
and make merry over an image.
When their sleep of heedlessness comes to an end,
they see truly—but what use is that seeing?
So a wailing and sighing rises in the graveyard,
"Alas, alas!" over this mistake until the Resurrection.
Happy the one who died before death—
that is, who caught the scent of the root of this vine."

10 Compare Quran 3:185: "The life of this world is only the enjoyment of delusion."

THE THREE FISH

Fishermen spot a pool with three fish; the wise one leaves at once for the sea.

4.2202 This is the story of the pool, you stubborn one,
in which there were three fine fish.
You will have read it in *Kalila*, but that
is the husk of the story, and this is the kernel of the soul.
Some fishermen came toward that pool,
passed by, and saw what was hidden there.
Then they hurried off to bring their nets.
The fish became aware and alert.[11]

4.2206 The one that was wise resolved to set out,
resolved on a hard, unwelcome journey.
He said, "I won't consult these others,
for they would surely sap my strength.
Love of birthplace and home is spun tight around their souls;
their sloth and ignorance would rub off on me.
For counsel you need someone truly alive,
who will bring you to life—and where is that living one?"

4.2210 Traveler, take counsel with a traveler,
for a woman's counsel will keep you lame.
Pass by the saying "Love of the homeland"; don't stop there,
for the homeland is over there, dear soul, not on this side.
If you want the homeland, cross to the far side of the river;
don't misread this true saying.[12]

11 *Kalila and Dimna*, the Arabic and Persian version of the Indian animal fables of the *Panchatantra*.

12 A pun: *ray zan* means both "take counsel" and "a woman's opinion." "Love of the homeland is part of faith" is a saying attributed to the Prophet.

THE PRAYERS OF ABLUTION

Rumi explains the prayers said for each washing in the ablution.

4.2213 In the ablution, a separate prayer for each part of the body
has come down in the traditions, to be recited.
When you rinse your nose, breathing in the water,
ask the all-sufficient Lord for the scent of paradise,
so that scent may draw you toward the gardens of paradise:
the scent of the rose leads to the rosebushes.
When you wash after relieving yourself, the prayer and words
are these: "Lord, make me clean of this.[13]

4.2217 My hand reached this place and washed it,
but my hand is feeble at washing the soul.
You through whom the souls of nobodies become somebodies,
it is the hand of Your grace that reaches into souls.
This was my limit; base as I am, I have done it;
beyond that limit, make clean, Generous One.
God, I have washed the skin of filth;
wash this friend of Yours clean of the things of time."[14]

13 The ablution is the ritual washing before prayer; traditions assign a short prayer to each washing.
14 A pun: *hadath* (ritual impurity) and *havadis* (events, the contingent things of time).

THE WRONG PRAYER

A man says the nose prayer while washing after the toilet, and someone corrects him.

4.2221 A man, while washing after the toilet, said,
"Keep me close to the scent of paradise."
Someone said, "A fine prayer you've brought,
but you've got the wrong hole for it.
This prayer belongs to the nose—how is it
that you've brought the nose prayer to your backside?
The free man gets the scent of paradise through the nose;
when would the scent of paradise come from the rear?"
You who show humility to fools
and show arrogance to kings,

4.2226 arrogance is good and fitting toward the base;
watch out, don't go backward: the reverse is your fetter.
The rose grew for the sake of the nostril;
scent is the nose's business, you brute.
The rose's scent is for the sense of smell, bold one;
this lower hole is not the place for that scent.
How could the scent of paradise reach you from here?
Look for scent in its proper place, if you want it.
Likewise, "love of the homeland" is true,
but first, master, know what the homeland is.

4.2231 The clever fish said, "I'll set out
and tear my heart away from their opinions and counsel."
It is no time for counsel—come, take to the road;
like Ali, breathe your sighs into a well.
A confidant for that sigh is very rare.
Travel by night and move in secret, like the night watch.
Set out from this pool toward the sea;
seek the ocean and leave this whirlpool behind.
Making his breast his feet, the cautious one went on
from that place of danger toward the sea of light.[15]

4.2236 Like a deer with a dog on its trail,
he runs as long as there is a vein left in his body.
A hare's nap, with the dog behind, is a mistake—
and how could sleep come to a frightened eye anyway?
That fish went off and took the road to the sea,
took the long road and the wide expanse.
He suffered many hardships, and in the end
he reached at last safety and well-being.
He threw himself into the deep sea
whose bounds no glance can find.

4.2241 Then, when the fishermen brought their net,
the half-wise fish was filled with bitterness.
He said, "Ah, I've missed my chance!
Why didn't I go along with that guide?
He left suddenly, but once he had gone
I should have hurried after him."
Regret over what is past is a mistake;
what is gone won't come back; remembering it is wasted
breath.

15 Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, is said to have confided his sorrows to a well.

THE CAPTURED BIRD'S THREE COUNSELS

A captured bird wins its freedom by giving three pieces of advice, then mocks its captor.

4.2245 A man caught a bird by trickery and a snare.
The bird said to him, "Noble sir,
you've eaten many cows and sheep,
you've sacrificed many camels;
you were never filled by them in all your days,
and you won't be filled by my little bits either.
Let me go, and I'll give you three pieces of advice,
so you can see whether I'm clever or a fool.
The first I'll give while I'm still in your hand,
the second on your mud-plastered roof,

4.2250 and the third I'll give you from the tree.
These three pieces of advice will make you fortunate.
The one for the hand is this saying:
don't believe an absurdity from anyone."
When, on his palm, he had given the first weighty advice,
he was set free and went up on the wall.
He said, "The next: don't grieve over what is past;
once it has gone from you, feel no regret for it."

4.2254 After that he said to him, "Hidden in my body
is a single matchless pearl weighing ten dirhams.
It was your fortune and your children's luck,
that jewel, I swear by your life.
You let the pearl slip—it wasn't your lot—
a pearl that has no equal in all existence."
Like a pregnant woman at the time of birth,
groaning, the man set up a great clamor.

4.2258 The bird said to him, "Didn't I advise you
not to grieve over what passed yesterday?
Since it is past and gone, why are you grieving?
Either you didn't understand my advice, or you're deaf.
And I gave you the second advice: never, out of folly,
believe an absurd statement.
I myself don't weigh three dirhams, my lion;
how could there be ten dirhams' weight inside me?"

4.2262 The man came to his senses and said, "Well then,
tell me that good third piece of advice."
The bird said, "Yes—you've put the others to such fine use
that I should give you the third for nothing!"
Giving advice to a drowsy fool
is sowing seed in salty soil.
The rent of folly and ignorance won't take mending;
don't give him the seed of wisdom, adviser.

THE HALF-WISE FISH PLAYS DEAD

The half-wise fish plays dead, is thrown aside, and slips back into the water.

4.2266 The second fish said, in the hour of trouble,
when he was left cut off from the shade of the wise one:
"He has gone to the sea and is free of grief;
I have lost so good a companion.
But I won't dwell on that; I'll see to myself
and play dead right now.
I'll turn my belly up,
back down, and float along on the water.
I'll drift on it the way a bit of straw drifts,
not swimming the way a person would.

4.2271 I'll become dead and give myself up to the water;
death before death is safety from torment."
Death before death is safety, young man:
so the Prophet commanded us.
He said, "Die, all of you, before
death comes, or you will die in trials."
So he died, and turned his belly up,
and the water carried him, now down, now up.[16]

4.2275 Each of those hunters was much aggrieved:
"What a pity—the better fish has died!"
He was glad at that "What a pity,"
thinking, "My trick has worked; I've escaped the blade."
Then a worthy fisherman picked him up,
spat on him, and threw him on the ground.
Rolling over and over, he slipped secretly into the water.
The fool was left behind, thrashing about.

4.2279 That simpleton kept leaping left and right
to save his skin by his own efforts.
They cast the net, and he was caught in it;
his folly set him down in that fire.
On top of the fire, on the back of a frying pan,
he became the bedfellow of folly.
He sizzled in the heat of the blaze,
and reason said to him, "Did no warner come to you?"[17]

4.2283 Under the torture and affliction he kept saying,
like the souls of the unbelievers, "They said: Yes."
Then he said, "If this time I
get free of this neck-breaking ordeal,
I'll make my home nowhere but in a sea;
I won't make some pool my dwelling.
I'll seek boundless water and be secure;
forever I'll go in safety and health."[18]

16 A saying attributed to the Prophet, often quoted as "Die before you die."
17 Quran 67:8.
18 Quran 67:9: "They will say, 'Yes, a warner did come to us.'"

A FOOL'S VOWS

The foolish fish, caught and frying, vows to reform; Rumi says such vows are never kept.

4.2287 Reason said to him, "Folly is with you,
and with folly, vows get broken.
Keeping vows belongs to reason;
you have no reason—go on, you're worth no more than a donkey.
Reason remembers its pledge;
wisdom tears the veil of forgetting.
Since you have no reason, forgetting is your master,
the enemy and undoer of your plans."
For lack of reason, the paltry moth
doesn't remember the fire, the burning, the crackle.

4.2292 When its wings are burned it repents;
then greed and forgetting throw it back into the fire.
Holding fast, grasping, keeping, and remembering
belong to reason, for reason raised them up.
When there is no jewel, how can there be its gleam?
When there is nothing to remind, how can there be a return?
This wishing, too, comes from his lack of reason,
for he doesn't see what that folly is like.
That remorse was the product of pain,
not of reason, bright as treasure.

4.2297 When the pain went, that remorse was gone;
such repentance and regret aren't worth dirt.
That regret was loaded up in the darkness of grief,
so "the word of the night, the day erases."
When that darkness of grief goes and he feels fine,
its product and offspring go from the heart as well.
He repents, and the elder, Wisdom,
cries out, "Even if they were sent back, they would return to it."[19]

19 "The word of the night, the day erases" is an Arabic proverb. Quran 6:28.