





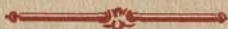
Volume 9
The Loves of Dāsīn
and Musa-ag-Amāstān
from the Tamashek and
Camel-Boy Rhythms
from the Arabic



EASTERN LOVE



THE LOVES OF DĀSĪN AND
MUSA-AG-AMĀSTĀN FROM THE
TAMASHEK AND CAMEL-BOY
RHYTHMS FROM THE ARABIC



ENGLISH VERSIONS BY
E. POWYS MATHERS



*

VOLUME IX

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JOHN RODKER
FOR SUBSCRIBERS
LONDON, 1929

for
E. R. M.

MADE IN ENGLAND

THIS EDITION OF THE LOVES OF DĀSIN AND
MUSA-AG-AMĀSTĀN FROM THE TAMASHEK
AND CAMEL-BOY RHYTHMS FROM THE
ARABIC, BEING VOLUME 9 OF "EASTERN
LOVE," IS HERE TRANSLATED INTO
ENGLISH FOR THE FIRST TIME, BY E.
POWYS MATHERS. THE EDITION OF 1,000
COPIES ON ALL RAG PAPER WAS PRINTED
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THIS volume combines with III, IV and VIII, and *The Garden of Caresses* and some few literary poems and prose pieces which will be found in the *Anthology*, to complete my examples of the Islamic conception of sex in art. This conception is discussed in the *Terminal Essay*.

The Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān, the first instance, as far as I know, of *Tamashek* literature to be translated into English, are interesting as being a compression of the orally transmitted songs of a mystical Tuareg fighter and nobleman, who was actually living them as he sang them, and which yet, in their least personal aspect, are founded on infinitely older traditional poems. *Musa-ag-Amāstān* died at *Tamanr'asset* on the 13th December, 1920, in the fashion, and after the happenings, told by the poem; and he was already a figure of legend. But the facts which are mingled with his vision may be taken as historical.

Camel-Boy Rhythms are examples of purely popular, as opposed to literary, verse. And though some are obviously modern the majority would be no easier to date than any other folk-songs. They derive from the chants of the camel driver leading the caravan, and the four heavy steps of the animal supply the measure, though the songs themselves, of course, are as likely to be heard now at a café as on the march. I

have chosen out of rather a large quantity of material only such poems as seem to me to give the spontaneous imagery of the Bedouin at its freshest and most startling.

In this volume I have selected and translated from 'Chants du Hoggar' by A. Maraval-Berthoin, 'Les Chants du Sable' by Émile Aicard, 'Chants de la Caravane' by S. Oudiane, and 'Une Chamelée Rithmique' by H. F. Bertnay.

CONTENTS

Introductory Note vii

The Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān :

Book I. The Asking and Refusal 1

Book II. Exile and Combat 15

Book III. The Dream and the Desire 27

Book IV. The Silence and Mystery 41

Book V. The Return 55

Book VI. The Possession and Death 67

Camel-Boy Rhythms 79

*The Loves of Dāsīn
and Musa-ag-Amāstān*

*Glory be to the Sole God,
for none but He continues!*

BOOK I

The Asking and Refusal

I.

DĀSĪN AMONG THE WOMEN IS A VINE
plant among wild plum trees,
Dāsīn among the women is a date tree among
fan palms,

Dāsīn among the women is a king's shield with
daily shields,

Dāsīn among the women is a bride's tunic with
common tunics,

Dāsīn among the women is a javelin between
lances.

O Dāsīn-ult-Yema, it is your cousin, the son of
the sister of your mother, it is Musa-ag-
Amāstān who sends this message :

He is as young as the new rice, as
noble as his fighting sword, because you love
him.

He has a beard of black silk, and none has seen
it. It is under his black veil, because you
love him.

Will you receive him at your gallant party ?

2.

Because my head was fated to rise above others,
my mother bound strong cords about my
brow.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

You will know me, as a royal palm above all
palm trees, at your gallant party,
O you whose brow rises above the brows of
women.

3.

This is the gallant party of my beloved.
And the swords of the men are more golden, the
women more fairly painted.
Hers is the most noted of gallant parties, be it
under a royal tent with decorated pegs, or
beneath the tent of a tree, its leaves kissing her
forehead, or below the tent of a mountain,
its rocks bowing before her.

4.

I say to all women :
If a man hide himself in the time of combat,
spread curses upon him.
At morning there was given a gallant party, the
thrown javelins wove a tent of steel above
us.
My enemies fled and I struck their limbs with
my sabre ; they flew into the air like grass
stems.

From the Tamashek

5.

O women who put blue between your lips and nostrils, I tell you their blood clothed me to the wrists in purple.

You have not heard it said that I hid in the rocks.

O young women coming together at the sound of the violin, fainting in three charges I was lifted and bound with cords upon my camel.

6.

I made ready for your gallant party, O Dāsīn.

I folded my blue gandourah over my white gandourah, in the way of a swallow's wings.

My boots of black leather and red leather seemed to be crushing poppies below my feet.

My collar of dark stone carries the words of safety.

My bracelets bind the strength of my naked arms.

My turban of tinted silks is bound by a cord with two dark tassels, and my black veil is holding the secret of my mouth.

I have taken the most glorious of all my lances.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

7.

My shield is made to my height with double antelope skin, and my lance is barbed with black steel.

My sabre served the father of my father. It has *Death for Death* upon its blade in letters of red combat.

O Dāsīn in your gallant party, riches and nobility and unbound strength lie at your feet. Behold me also !

I am the son of your mother's sister, and my blood runs in your body. But I have waited to tell you that I love you until the day of my harka chieftainship.

8.

With what proof will you try us, O Dāsīn ?

The learned must bring forth from the oasis of his thought, as from a precious box, words to caress like the red fig tree,

Words having the sugar of the grapes of the Tihoq,

The colour of rose trees,

The colour of the white bells of the desert broom and the gold scapes of the plum tree.

From the Tamashek

You have compared the mind of a fool to a man clad in a single tunic, to a beggar whose body may be seen through rags.

I ask God to breathe one breath of His spirit into my spirit, I beseech Him to clothe it in colour.

To-day will you find me rich in many tunics ?

9.

My most grave voice has not the sound to sing of pleasant things ; it rolls as a war drum or murmurs as a violin for pain, Dāsīn.

If you had asked me : *Which do you love the better, God or myself?* I would have looked and been silent.

But you would not question me ; you broke the bright snares of your wit because you loved me.

10.

Will you rule at my side, O daughter of him who ruled before me ?

Do not fear that I would make you a prisoner in my love, or keep you as a sand deer behind my fences.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

Walk free in the garden of my heart, Dāsīn.

I put my faith in you, O rose of my people, my blue mountain. I put my faith in you, O carpet of white wool, O my brown water jar.

I put my faith in her I love, my green river.

You are the perfumed of the proudest, you are the coolest of the beautiful.

And I am greater than the greatest who was your father, because I marry you.

II.

Those who are jealous say to me :

Dāsīn is the rose and the bird of our Springtime, how shall you hinder the rose from giving her perfume to the people, or the bird her song ?

And I say to those who are jealous :

I shall be the Kādī of the Kādī of the Summer for the rose of the Springtime.

I shall be Sidi of Happiness, seeing the grass flower, seeing the grass flower under the green hoofs of my white horse.

12.

I shall be the nest of the sun for the bird of my people.

From the Tamashek

A stranger passing through our land sees you but once, yet he does not forget you ; he departs and engenders children like you, and they say your name in their first murmuring.

O Dāsīn-ult-Yema, you put heat into my heart as God does, and you embrace it ; you are the mother of the children of the thought of the men who love you.

I have loved you since the bellies of our mothers ripened. I loved you when you were the president of little gallant parties and I led small battalions.

Dāsīn is my lover, and all that I see in her is pleasant.

A man beholding her cannot turn away his head ; a foe may wound a man who looks at her and yet draw no blood.

When you say : *I am noble*, she answers in the words of her sister : *God is not God at night*.

13.

The neck of Dāsīn is more pliant than the neck of a foal tied in a field of corn and barley.

God has made her to be a harmony, and full of seemliness.

No woman may find the poorest of husbands while my beloved strays free in the lanes of gallantry.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

14.

Dāsīn gives herself fine colours of ochre and indigo, like the yellow and blue mountain that dominates all men.

She walks with a tossing head. Her uncle is worn with answering the men who ask for her.

Your voice to your violin climbs in the sky and then falls back to my heart.

Your voice to your violin is a jet of water lifting to the sky among cypresses.

Your voice to your violin is silver, a river falling among the rocks.

15.

O you who listen to all voices and make them sing thereafter upon your violin, as the wind makes joy and sorrow chant in the grass of the rice-field,

Now hear the heart of Musa-ag-Amāstān to answer for my heart,

Now hear the voice of his father to vouch for his quality :

We die by gunpowder, not by disdain.

From the Tamashek

16.

When my father set me on his right hand for the combat, he said to me :

‘Let not your love for any woman transcend your love for fighting.’

Therefore I, yet being your slave, must be strong to love you less than I love the combat.

I am climbing to the sky, like the peak Ilaman.

When my father set me on his right hand for prayer, he said to me :

‘Let not your love for a woman transcend your love for love. If she seek another, tell her farewell and ride to forget her in the mosque with the sand carpet.’

Must I carry my prayers to the mosque with the sand carpet, Dāsīn-ult-Yema ?

When my father set me on his right hand for grief, he said to me :

‘Even if a man such as I displease a woman, even if a man such as this eagle my son displease a woman, let him be held apart, a camel that has not been chosen for the journey, a dog that has been driven from the feast.’

‘But if a woman cannot leave you with her eyes, take her without remorse and kill for her.’

If your eyes cling to mine, Dāsīn, and cannot look away, I shall know how to pour you the

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān
red wine of men and women to drink it with
you, for vengeance is whiter and sweeter than
the milk of camels.

17.

You are as free as the moon in the sky to hide
or show yourself, Dāsīn. If you answer me as
the moon answers the sun, I can be forgotten.
You may change your love as your feet change
their sandals.

But you must take a husband at the marriage
time of the seed and the furrow, when our
women sow their fields ; and they say there
are but three men to your liking.

Suri-ag-Shika will come to you in a cloak
of words, Aflān in majesty and Musa with a
sword.

Will it be wit or pride or love, Dāsīn ?

18.

The sun has risen upon the day of your choosing,
O Dāsīn, and the stars of our lance-heads
answer him.

Great Tamanr'asset is too small for the zebus
bearing gifts to you ; they move with diffi-
culty to the singing of the tribes, under the
glance of the terraces.

From the Tamashek

19.

O daughter of the star who pastures his gold camel on the black grass of the night, you have not wished one jewel on your white flesh to-day.

Your negress wears all the coloured moons of your coffer, and walks perfumed in oil. She casts a glittering shadow within your shadow, and knows your secret.

But you are sweeter before your dwelling than sugar bread, being as unadorned as God.

20.

We were ranged about you as the crescent moon is ranged at the feet of Allāh.

You chose Afān superb on his white camel, and my red camel is crying beneath my blows.

. . .

BOOK II

Exile and Combat

I.

I NO LONGER RECKON THE STAGES OF MY caravan, and yet my grief still tastes of blood, and I am killing Aflān in my dreams. A lie gives to drink once, it cannot give to drink a second time. Let yours be a joy that lies not, and may God pardon me. He who is inconstant as the froth of milk builds nothing durable; may the oath of Aflān be a sure support to you.

2.

I use my sword against my jealousy. Engraved on the black stone bracelet constraining my great strength, you may read that Hell herself cowers from dishonour. You may set up a new tent among the tents with Aflān the golden, and not fear my grief. But let him not be as the sweet date whose heart is bitter, or as one of whom it is said *He has eaten gazelle*, because he bounds from oasis to oasis after women.

3.

Aflān is the husband of your flesh.
As locusts upon the rice-field, as falcons above

I.

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Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān
the herd, as vultures disarranging a mound of
corpses, so are my griefs to me.
Aflān is the husband of your flesh.
I carry the rice-field of my learning, the herd of
my desires, and the green corpses of my hope.
I shall be faithful.
I am the bridegroom of your thought, and dare
to journey away and away from you.

4.

My white camel forgets at will the perfumed
berries of the gum tree. He will only eat
bitter herb and teasels when he has no she-
camel.
I wish to forget the days shaded by gum trees, or
days caressed by the deep-scented terebinth.

5.

Last night we made our camels kneel at the foot
of a wall looking upon space, and, behold,
Suri-ag-Shika came to me, and saluted my
grief.
Now we have talked late, and have agreed to
twine the thorns of our desolation together,
our emptiness of Dāsīn.

From the Tamasbek

He has been banished from his people for the murder of the beautiful camel of Aflān. His anguish has overflowed the torrent of his heart, but my heart is a ravine of granite to control my grief.

I shall be a man blinded by Dāsīn, and Suri shall be my stick; we will drink the forgetful poppy of the blood of man.

6.

We marched eternally, and once by a well we crossed our Brothers of the proud Veil. They had sold arms among the blacks, and a song guided their camels.

They were jinking gold and silver in their hands, and would see Dāsīn. The humps of their camels were full of fat, and the bellies of their sheep were moons. And they were laughing. The blacks seem to have nothing but vermin in their heads, our brothers say, but their charges for grass pass understanding.

7.

They joyfully played the war game, and I looked upon their play and their playing was beautiful,

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān
and the camels, driven by the naked feet of
their masters, shared the pleasure.

And I gave the shield of strength and the sword
of courage to a certain Amrar, but in the dust
that rose like gilded muslin I saw the veiled
Dāsīn.

8.

And they joyfully played at gallant parties, to
celebrate the caressing, the sole one, and they
said :

*She is silver and gold hammered together. She is the
wine of my mouth. She is a garden in sleep, the
water of the well preferred, a sky under which
the brave shall some day lie at rest.*

*It is for you, who love her more than the sum
of us, to tell us what she is.*

9.

Then I said to my brothers :

Dāsīn is the dove and the jackal, the bed and the
sepulchre, she is Hell and Allāh.

This is a thing not doubtful, a thing certain, that
I should be lying by the side of God to-night if
love could kill.

This is a thing not doubtful, a thing certain, that

From the Tamashek

if I were a son of the dust, I would leave the
comfort of my tomb to see Dāsīn.

I would have her to the warm fold of her heart,
and mix in the air she breathed, if I were a son
of the dust, if love could kill.

IO.

Then one whom we call the Bee of Love,
though he finds consolation in wasps of women,
hearts without honey, said to me :

O Musa, they are not worth our fighting camels,
for these return to us.

Come back and steal her away and have her,
struggling. A blow over the mouth is better
than compliments.

II.

And one who is ever laughing said to me, he
was my friend :

Aflān has nothing in his head but pride, in his
heart nothing but glory. She will soon cast
him off. These things are little food for
women.

There was a girl who wept like rain and cried
like a milk-camel for her man, lying upon his

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān
sepulchre. And on the dawn of the fourth
month she kissed the Book and tasted salt and
said: *Make my new robe of happiness, O sisters.*

12.

But I said :

Your love is rough for my heart, Dāsīn ; it has
fulfilled its thirst out of the blood of my flesh.
I am bones breathing slowly, breathing in
silence.

There was a soul, and a city of tortures was built
in it, and yet it lived.

That was my soul. Oh, go to your gallant
parties !

13.

The swords are calling me and my camel, who
are two fighters, for we have lost Dāsīn.
Speak to him of blood and he gallops furiously,
and for me, my pride of strength sets me taller
than my tall camel.

We go with our brothers to raid the Arab dogs,
and the dagger of the raid is in our teeth. But
the dagger of vengeance is in our eyes, slaying
two for one.

Their bones will crack in the palms of our
hands like breaking lances, their walls will

From the Tāmashek

crumble under the hammer of our knees as haystacks fall. For it is better to sleep the night with rage than with repentance.

14.

And death became Dāsīn and would have none of me. But he took a certain one for his lion's meal, blinded by a dagger and driven mad and trying to blind the sun, and he took the heart of a certain one opened as an orange, and the head of a certain one shattered as a pomegranate, and the bowels of a certain one leaping out and rolling like red snakes, and a certain one nailed to the sand by four lances.

We dug us pits in the sand, and became very earth within them, and knew the unsatisfied hunger of the grave.

Earth lets a man from her jaws for a little space, as a panther a rabbit, and we call it life.

So we lay in wait and killed them behind black shields.

15.

Night adds his treasure to my treasures, I walk on the sky's black rock, where the straw wagon

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

climbing to God makes a white road, and follow your steps across the time of time.

As the wagon sows her white straw, I sow the letters of your name between the stars.

I took my brothers to the oasis whose guards defend no more.

Hidden by the green wall of the palms and the red wall of the wall, the dates and women sleep, O dates and sugary women for my brothers.

They smell the life of the white date flowers and the rose smell of the women, and what we cannot bear away we crush under our heels, Dāsīn.

How shall I tell you of the drunkenness of killing, you who know love?

They are the two daughters of the panther, and bring life in sleep.

I would put the bitter taste of my kisses in your mouth to-night.

And when that oasis was emptied like a bag, we went to another, but there was a cry in the night: *The white camel is dying.*

His kneeling female chewed the invisible grass of prayer, the water of her glance flowed from the white camel to us, and from us to God.

He fought against death with the four lances of his stiffening legs, and cried *Dāsīn.*

From the Tamashek

16.

O you who love the victorious warrior, yourself greatly victorious, this shadow upon the shadow of the earth is of our fighting shields, as dear as our sons to us, and guarding our sleep. If your jasmine finger touched them they would tremble, if you laid your jasmine ear to them you would hear blood cries.

17.

We went slowly, weighed down with weariness and plunder, and other Arabs spied us with the white eyes of rage, and fell upon us. My brothers were still drunk with the palm wine of pleasure, and fell like dates, and I alone remained alive. Dāsīn, you hold my life and death between your hands, and play with them as a child plays.

18.

I washed my brothers with sand and dug their graves, and my weeping mingled with my sweat.

25

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

And my brown camel was weeping for the death
of my white camel. He is as tall as two men,
and his feet are as large as war drums. I set my
saddle of cheetah skin upon him.

O mahogany camel with white feet, time is a
great Amenokhal, he rules eternity.

Why do you seem to snuff Dāsīn in all the
breezes?

You bear me through the moonlight, red camel,
and your eyes desire the clouds. But I have
loſt death and I have loſt Dāsīn.

. . .

BOOK III

The Dream and the Desire

I.

AND MY THIRST FOR DĀSĪN GREW GREATER
sun by sun.

I declared war upon myself, that I might forget
her, but the ringdoves of my thought were
true to her.

Then silence fell on me like sand, and I could not
cut her name out of my flesh.

And I said your name in the chaplet of the days
with the name of Allāh, because, though it is
my hunger and thirst, it feeds me and gives me
to drink.

2.

There came a man against me rearing like
a horse and crying: *I love Dāsīn*. But I
bounded higher than he and broke his lance.
I would have killed him if I had not seen my
shield upon his arm.

‘Who are you,’ I cried, ‘who fight in the same
fashion as Musa-ag-Amāstān and with his
weapons?’

Then he unveiled his face, and his face was mine.

3.

And that man drew me into a cave where none
might enter, and there I slew a beast as great

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān
as a zebu. She was curled like a hedgehog
into a ball, and spurted scalding water.
And I said: 'Dāsīn will sing, because she
feared for her lovers.'

4.

I left that cave and heard the bleating of a kid.
But when I sought for it, it was a snake as long
as six men, and there were buck's horns upon
his head in a toothed wheel.
And I thought I had killed evil with my sword,
having killed the snake, but the eldest brother
of the lizard said to me :
Evil must be, for it is the night of good.
And I saw you smile, Dāsīn.

5.

Night was the blue veil of the giant Elias, whose
body is a gold column that the sand sends up
to God. And my camel, kneeling to kiss his
feet, seemed a white ant beside him.
Then the giant Elias fought with the mountain,
and split her to the heart with a single blow,
so that the desert cried with the voice of the
serpent of the lightning from East to West,

From the Tamashek

because there was now a breach for my heart
to come to Dāsīn.

And in the green fountain of a tree I saw two
ring-doves building.

Do you not hear my heart moaning against
yours ?

6.

A swallow, writing the name of Dāsīn in the sky,
cried out *I hear your hearts*, and all the other
birds sang in the sun of her.

And because her wing came back, the flowers
wrapped jewelled collars upon the branches,
and I felt your arms.

7.

And the four gates of the sky compassed me
with their pillars, and the North gate set a
platter of cool blue china at my feet, with
oranges and grapes and figs and pomegranates,
from the lands which go down to ocean.

Gather the honey of the Western combs of the
sun, said the second gate.

And the third gate showed me the blood of
dawn spilled on the tombs of the stars.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

And the fourth gate showed me the sun of the
South through the red stone of your heart,
Dāsīn.

And my camel, girt with the muslins of white
feasting, carried me over the four roads, and
did not move.

And the men who saw me cried aloud :

Greeting, O you whose thought is white upon a
white camel girt with white dreams.

Surely he will lead us to the white dwelling of
peace, a dome made by the great number
of his thrown javelins, the dwelling of
peace.

8.

I met the caravan of the Sages with all my
fathers walking at their head.

The song of the war drum went with them, and
their camels were whiter than jasmine, and the
two women, frankness and faith, guided their
way.

They carried jars full of cleansing and assuaging
water, and their passing made a white road on
the ground, such as the straw wagon of Allāh
scatters upon the night.

And we judge you according to the colour of
your road.



From the Tamashek

9.

I met the caravan of the sins, and they wished to kill my white camel because he carried my white thought. But I was stronger, and they knelt down to me, crying with closed lips: *When we cannot cut off a hand, we kiss it.* Their camels had the heads of apes.

I met the caravan of the merchants, each with the eyes of a wild cat, shining in the night, and their hands were the hands of vultures.

They said in frightened voices: *We are poor and weary beneath the gold of the sun, ah, pity us!*

10.

Thereafter my camel was whipped by the wind of the South, and in that region whither he fled he started an ostrich.

My shadow, stretching before me, gave birth to a gold rider in a gold bernous, and we four hunted the bird until evening lavished a woman's smile upon the desert, and sunset held forth an ostrich plume for Dāsīn-ult-Yema, and the rose chamber of the sky was shut.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

11.

The mirage built a city to hear me speak of you, Dāsīn, and I said to the priests and the warriors and the shepherds of that city that you were the rose of my people, wearing the new moon, and a star as bait for kisses.

12.

And when the mirage had veiled herself like a man to hear me speak of you, I said to the passing fever :

O red eyes of the hunting leopard, O hashish laugh and lioness hair, O hot hands of the monkey, what make you against Dāsīn ?

And fever, tittering, put aside her yellow veil and said : *Behold, she is here !*

And I saw you with hands that danced in the dancing sand ; you were a statue of white salt, and your hands alone were living.

13.

Tell me life with its milk and jasmine, its honey and roses, its pepper and henna, its falcon and knife.

From the Tamashek

I set the seal of love upon your mouth, and
possessed you as the sky possesses the moun-
tain, as the mountain the plain.
But you melted like salt between my hands, and
fever with her red eyes melted also.

14.

And a leopard said to me : *I am hungry for her
even as you are.*

And I said to the leopard :

O my fighting brother, we are dressed alike in
night and yellow day, and it is not by fasting
that we die, but by desire. Carry me, there-
fore, to the place of her violin and the light of
her singing.

But the leopard was jealous and would not
bear me.

15.

The wind carried your caravan towards me and
I saw your gilded camels and heard your
voice.

But when I would seize you, the wind fluttered
his veil before my eyes, and threw me blind to
the desert.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

16.

Then came thirst to me, with her hands of hot ashes, and she gripped me so that your name came forth from my lips. And dream with his eagle's wings set you before me, and you carried a jar upon your shoulder, silvered with water.

The hot ashes of thirst were quenched in your breath and scattered under the healing nakedness of your feet, your feet that assuage like water.

17.

But thirst rose up to snatch your jar from you with hands of flame, and as she burned your shadow, she whispered to you :

'There is one thing you may not steal from me even in dream, and that is the sacred cataract of my water, for the Sages alone shall give it, to each according to the number of his palm trees the Sages give it.'

O Dāsīn, let him be as a dog with green slaver, that flees from water and is killed by man.

36

From the Tamasbek

18.

Then death lifted the cover of the sand dune.
She has a black viper for a collar about her
neck, and her neck is of bone, and her heart is
a red scorpion.

She speaks not, because the wild cat of the night
has eaten her tongue.

She showed me the grave and made me a sign to
lie down within it, and gave me hashish.

The scorpion and the viper are blood and
shadow. They danced the leaping dance of
hashish upon my bones.

Their eyes shone like red stars, and they coupled
upon my body until death called them with her
empty eyes.

19.

Death came to me, wearing the white haik of
the moon ; and her black hands in the wet
shadow buried the dead ; and night that has a
jackal's voice beheld her.

Death left only your name living on the dead
sand.

And the mountains, with their brows of stone,
rose up to pray at my dying.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

They had been dead so long, and told me the peace of the dead. It is a light, whose seven rays are seven rivers.

20.

I, being ash within my tomb of ashes, saw you put on the seven veils of light and rule the seven rivers.

And I heard the voice of my mother, singing in my sleep :

‘When you must weep, O blood of the lion and my blood, the mimosa and the palm weep also, and the horse and the camel and your mother weep.’

But your red voice, O Dāsīn, covered her white voice, and said :

‘The song of the mother is milk, but the song of the mistress is of palm tree wine.’

And the milk song lulled me in my cradle on the branch of the gum tree :

21.

‘Do not weep, lamb hot against my heart, but suck this milk and that.

‘I have put wild mint upon you, and when you are grown you shall say :

From the Tamasbek

'Your milk was sweeter than dates and clearer than the light of the sun and moon, therefore I have increased as a palm tree.'

22.

And the voice of my mother fell silent, and all was covered in the unmoving dance of the sand, except your name.

I will no longer say your name, for I needs must fear it. As is the name of fire to the negro, so is your name to me. They say :

It is a red word like a red flame to burn the tongue that speaks it.

23.

Your name alone comes forth from the tall tower of my head, like the torch of a palm tree shaken in the South wind.

I am a bloody lance lying in the sand, the bitter rust of desire is eating my breast.

It is blinding my eyes with red dust.

. . .

BOOK IV

The Silence and Mystery

I.

THE DESERT OF MY HEART ADJOINS THE visible desert, making it greater still, and silence adds a veil above my veil with fingers of air and sand.

And silence adds a cry to all the cries with her mouth of air and sand.

And silence adds an image to the images with her eyes of air and sand.

And under my two veils I live two lives, to hear you and to see you, whom I would not name, whose name each beat of my heart is crying aloud.

2.

The Arabs, the conquered sons of the conquered and who speak like horses, say that we bear the Veil to keep us from the evil of the dust of the West; but that is because they lie.

Men of our dignity may not be seen.

Seven sorrows upon the man who shows his mouth, for the mouth is a leprous well where the devil of the tongue is lying in wait, for the mouth is a holy house and the angel of the word abides there.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

Seven sorrows upon the man who shows his mouth, for there a devil and an angel live in chains together.

3.

Your law is my master, O Dāsīn, but the law of the Veil is my guide ; it is my leader across the sand where the camel of each man passes. If the law of love is harder and brighter than emeralds and powdered gold,
The law of the dark Veil is clearer than the light ;
I must hide my face in anger and in pride, in love and suffering ; I must hide my face in death.

4.

And I must draw into myself, O Dāsīn, to veil my face from God for the five prayers of the day.
I must veil my face before old age to do obeisance to its old belief.
I must veil my face before my equal in nobility to do obeisance to our splendour.
I must veil my face before woman to do obeisance to her beauty, for it is as the beauty of that

From the Tamashek

moon which drapes a black veil before the cheeks of the sun.

Thus shall I dwell in truth and reach the seven rivers of the Garden of God.

And even as I veil my face before the wisdom of the years of my father, so must I be gone from him and leave him when he hears the song of the imzad and has thoughts of love : a palm tree, a father of palm trees, when the Summer sun returns.

5.

No woman has kissed my mouth, because I may not unveil my face ; I may not unveil more than the nostrils of my face at gallant parties ; I must keep my lips from all profane possession.

But you are noble, O Dāsīn, even as I am noble ; I will taste the lust of your heart in the breath of your mouth, I will pass my life in my breath to the lips of my beloved.

6.

I slept on the hot desert with your name in my heart, and my dream carried your name from

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

my heart to my lips ; at dawn in that place where my lips had kissed your name, I saw this flower which withers not, I saw the sand rose.

Each morning, that I might have strength to make your glance tender, I said my prayer towards the Eastern light in this way :

‘ See, O Sultān of Gods, O Guide and Eye of Heaven, the palm tree and the hill and the falcon have hastened and risen higher than You into the sky, that they may mount guard.

‘ Awake and climb, O Sun, climb higher than my voice, climb higher than the cries of the caravan, higher than the crying of the simoom, for he would roll your gold face in a black veil.

‘ O the gold rose, the honey and the lion and the fire, leave night, for she is dying, she is old and cold and sad, leave her to the jackal that howls his desire to her.

‘ Spread the warm oil of your heart in the sky, for our hearts adore your flame, and I will bear you on my brow as a falcon, even as the chief of noble birds of chase, a hawk with golden claws.

‘ I will lay you at the feet of Dāsīn-ult-Yema as a rose of fire.

‘ O you who suffer for love of the moon, and are weary from pursuing her on your gold camel and overtaking her not,

From the Tamashek

- ‘O warrior tamed by the victorious lance of night on the blood-red field of evening, surely you will have pity on Musa-ag-Amāstān and comprehend him.
‘Even as you lie down to die before me, you hold out your purple rose that I may take it to our well-beloved.’

7.

Then I said to the silent garden of the night as she piled the black mountain of the sky upon our mountain :

‘I would climb from rock to rock and pluck the silver rose of the moon and the young roses of the stars for Dāsīn.’

The moon is many and yet one, and you, O Dāsīn, are one and yet very many.

Therefore I mingle the two of you in my thoughts, and it is Dāsīn I see in the chamber of the stars at night.

8.

We must be of the desert, O Dāsīn, to know what silence is. It drips from the lamp of each star, it falls from the white grave of the moon.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

There is not any heart beat in the whole sand, it sleeps like the breast of a dead woman whom no kiss can wake. And there is neither bird nor tree to sing.

And he who does not know these things may say that he has never been alone.

I laid myself down in the vastness, and it dug the naked shield of the cradle and the grave beneath my feet.

9.

We must have seen a dead man couched in the desert to know how noble and beautiful he stays, he is in a sleep which wakes by the side of God.

The sun tans him as gazelle skin, and the spirits of evil odour do not haunt him ; he is like a gold statue, and the lion guards him.

10.

To-day the silence was so full of you that the earth beneath my fingers fell into your shape, and I watched it dance in my hands, and you came forth from my heart and gave it breath.

From the Tamasbek

And I thought of our game of making in red
clay the falcon and the hound and the horse,
the camel and the woman.

11.

The turning and returning days are full of gall,
and patience is the key of time.

I sit all night by the side of death, and he looks
upon me. I try to tell him to take me, but
cannot find my voice.

My heart opens and speaks *Dāsīn* to death, and
death smiles and lets me live.

12.

A light was born in the light, a silence was born
in the silence, and I heard your voice with the
voice of your violin :

‘Musa has washed the name of Aflān from my
life, and earth heeds nothing but Musa travel-
ling upon her to come to me.’

And I saw in my heart my green rice-field
offering the white pearls of its rice to me, O
you my green rice-field, you my rice. I would
eat you under my black veil, *Dāsīn*.

Glory be to God who has given me the wings

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān
of my red camel ; he carries me to the camp
of her I love.

Glory be to the Prophet who has borne the
torch of the word of God into the desert, to
light a sun which shall not be quenched in the
night of grief.

If the teeth of sorrow were blacker than the
black mountains,

If the teeth of night were longer than those of
death on the seventh day of mourning,

Yet would the Name of God gild them all over
as the name of Dāsīn is made gold in my
mouth.

13.

Her whom I love is Dāsīn, and they know
this well, from the ant to the camel upon
my way, from the slave to the proud in
heart.

The ant counts the paces of this notorious love,
the camel chews on the taste of it, the slave
weighs its chain, and the proud in heart raises
the prayer of it.

How should I hide this love ?

It is not in my hand, to be in any way shaken from
it ; it is in the hardest of my heart and nothing
can make it fall.

From the Tamasbek

14.

You are calling me in the mimosa, for his flower is blowing ; you are calling in the gum tree, his sugar is shining ; you are calling in the date palm, for his fruit is leaning to me, and in the oued, for his water trembles.

You are calling in the mimosa. The word of the Saint of Teleya was true, that you would some day love me. He said to me : 'Who loves you, were it a dog, you will some day love.'

15.

My naked feet hasten my camel, for Dāsīn awaits us. The unseen spirits of the twilight creep from the last rays and decorate the earth : they are leather workers with ochre and blood and saffron squares and cordings ; and a thread of black night surrounds these coloured things.

Earth is a vast red leather mat of execution, and Dāsīn gives herself naked to the love of the sword.

My camel uses all the fat of his hump in running, for Dāsīn awaits us.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

16.

My camel and I stretch forth our necks to you.
Will you sing of our coming ?

The moon makes our shadow run before us
along the sand. There is a blue cloud rolling
to Dāsīn upon the blue mountain. No raider
can stay it ; your name has made it invincible.

Why am I not the thunder or the hot wind to
come to you swiftly ?

The song of desire, Dāsīn, is older than the
rocks of the mountain.

The song of desire is my song. It swells my
tongue to a red pimento, it burns my blood
like pepper ; it twists me in the sand like a
snake, it makes me leap in the sand like a
hunting leopard.

I am maddened and scream and slaver at the
mouth.

17.

Does the demon tear you as he tears me ? Is he
more tender to your tenderness ? I think of
the old words, the young words of the man
who was at Abadal :

‘ I was at Abadal, and there I died of desire to
hear the sound of hair strings on the calabash.

From the Tamasbek

‘I dreamed of a young girl who makes music in the South, and I said to my camel : We must go swiftly from Abadal.’

18.

The camel of the man who was at Abadal ran with his legs, Dāsīn.

My camel loves you even as I love you. He gallops with his heart also to kneel before you.

. . .

BOOK V

The Return

I.

THE MOON IS MIGHTY TO-NIGHT AND increases in brightness to lighten the way to Dāsīn.

Look at the moon from the gallery of your dwelling to-night, how great she is upon Ilaman.

When the moon is mighty they say a king is journeying in her light.

2.

I did not know that I told you the truth, Dāsīn, saying that the moon grows great with a halo for the journeys of kings.

But my brothers came forth to meet me upon their whiteſt camels, making gunpowder sing for me, bringing the purple bernous and the war drum of leadership.

And the eldeſt among them said :

‘Greeting be upon you ! The deeds you have done in the desert make you our king.’

3.

Then the warriors said to me :

‘Seven honours upon Musa-ag-Amāſtān, our

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

Amenokhal, favoured of the Saint of Teleya,
who is most holy.

‘Seven honours upon him who has crossed the
desert gloriously to Timbuctoo.

‘The Niger is no bound to his authority.’

4.

And I said : ‘Unroll the fringes of the carpets
of return for me.

‘Dāsīn awaits me, and there is no fairer purple.

‘This is the horizon she looks upon, and this the
earth her walking lightly touches. These
mimosas powder her brow with gold, this
dwelling puts a garment upon her garment.’

It is the hour of the coming together of women
to do you homage.

They till the earth and take its colour, they have
left the reeds of their singing houses to carry
gifts to you.

They balance wooden dishes of green water-
melons.

And at their breasts the rose fruit lies like
children.

5.

And your noble sisters have decked themselves
in bracelets of silver and glass and goat horn.

From the Tamashek

Their rings are so many and so great that they may not labour at all.

They come to offer you tunics sewn with a cunning thorn, and little cords of the wool of wild sheep.

6.

They marry the white flowers of your choice to the green diss, as supple as a greyhound, to call down love upon you as they walk along.

The rose tears of the tamarind fall upon them as they smile at me.

They greet me at your door with the marriage song and the song of fruitfulness.

They are as beautiful as the antelope and the hare, who were our mothers.

7.

They sing this marriage song :

We are hungry, *You shall eat.* We are naked,
We will clothe you. We are walking, *You shall be set upon camels.*

They sing this song of fruitfulness :

I have seen dates this year such as the hand gives not to the tongue.

I have seen gold and silver threaded together

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

this year. I have seen the water of the well
this year and I have drunk of it.

I have seen antelope fawns this year, as tender
as children, and they spoke to me, softening
their voices.

I saw a colt this year and the love of him wounded
me. He feeds in a cornfield. If he were for
sale I would get a thousand boys by him.

8.

My feet are set upon the border of the carpet of
desire, and I do not move. I am bound hand
and foot to happiness.

You hold the water-jar of your imzad to the
water-jar of your proud body ; your greeting
is as soft as moonlight, yet it shoots joy
through me like a gun.

But above your voice I hear the voice of my
father, saying :

‘ Take thought before you pass the threshold of
the honeycomb.’

9.

I overleapt the stone of thought ; I see you
glittering in the night of your palace, and I
shut my eyes.

From the Tamashek

Who is about you, what men are considering you? What women are singing and what slaves are dancing? I cannot answer that. I see you alone and naked for me beneath your veils.

10.

Your jewels press red and blue kisses, drops of blood and azure, upon your body which is stretched out to me.

My lips conceive of doubling the number of them.

The doves of joy set their white flights upon my brow, for it has drawn near to yours.

Will the men never cease from telling their combats, and the women of singing their lies to the last lie?

Will the slaves not spare us of the dance of the days a single day?

11.

Your imzad has a single string but a thousand voices; it drives these proud bucks and bleating she-goats into silence.

Now I hear you and see you.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

Stones rise in the sky like eagles and tortoises
croon like doves.

The snakes of a waterless land turn into rivulets,
and the blue gum trees weep gold tears.

The simoom folds his wings of fire, and shivers
in the cold. And the dead return.

12.

Now that the gallant party is finished, I open
my eyes again to stay them with the sight of
you.

All the men who have passed their turn in your
bed are no more than clouds passing before
the moon.

When the clouds have gone she shines as
purely.

I have forgotten even Aflān.

He lives not, he is not dead, whom you love no
more.

And the women my father gave to me were no
more to me than vapours of the dew to the
sun who makes them.

13.

I see the dwelling built for you, its courtyard
watching the night like an unveiled head.

From the Tamashek

I see the gallery, an airy road for you.
You will come down from it at the hour of the
rising dust when the flocks return.
You will press the udders of our goats and our
she-camels, as the moon draws off the silver
milk from the nipples of the stars at
night.
Why do your eyes still look at the door which
has shut upon the last guest?
He was an Amrar, commanding a great tribe;
but he has not fought. He stays like a tent-
peg among the pegs of his tent.
Would you choose him as your guide now that
you have flown free again?
He who drinks from a pitcher is no good guide.
I have fought many fights, and drink from the
hollow of my hand.

14.

But why does your hand in this emptiness put a
gag upon my kiss?
Why does your body glide away from mine?
Do you not know me well enough, the son of
the sister of your mother?
I will open the book of my life and read for you
at hazard there, for you will see that your
name is written on each page.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

15.

I have graven your name on the stone of the blue mountain that guards the gold of the sun at morning.

I have graven it also in the stone of the black mountain that guards the gold of the sun at night.

The sky of God writes out your name for ever with an ink of gold.

16.

My father has never forgiven your marriage with Aflān. He wished me to marry a certain imperious woman of a haughty house.

I refused my father.

We would not have thrust out our necks to the same branches.

She would have dressed herself in pride, and I gone naked.

If she had been a barrel brimmed with camel milk and I thirsting, I would not have drunk of her.

I said to my father :

‘ If a man put a cord about his neck, God will find someone to pull on it.’



From the Tamashek

My father then questioned me in the language of our fathers :

‘Would you pass by a well without drinking and giving your camel to drink ?

‘Would you see a traveller without questioning him ?

‘Not so, for you obey the laws of the desert which God wrote on the stones of it.

‘O my son, O my noble camel, listen then to my laws.’

17.

Then my father asked Kashuni from her people. And all men said with him :

‘When Kashuni came to girlhood many women were put away and did not know why. Many camels were worn out in visiting her and men died by the sword. Saints came as ambassadors to the house of her mother, but her mother had chosen Musa-ag-Amāstān and paid no attention.’

Again I refused.

18.

Would you know the joy of bearing by me ?
It is the dawn and the dove, the dawn and the
dove and the white river.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

You would say :

‘ I have cradled a son of the strong Maſter with
the leopard’s heart, I have suckled a son of
the juſt Maſter with the lips of peace.

‘ I laugh and my laugh is a roſe,

‘ As roſe as the henna of a child’s hand.’

19.

Or do you wiſh me as the brother and lover of
your body ?

Or do you wiſh me one of the ſlain on the ſand
where there are no ſtones to bear wiſneſſ ?

Would you roll wool of the fineſt fleece for me
in the blood of henna,

Henna as red as your heart ?

20.

I ſtretch forth my hands to you, O God, and aſk
for the love of Dāsīn-ult-Yema.

I aſk it in an inviſible moſque that I have built for
You, more beautiful becauſe it is not.

How ſhould hands that God built of clay build
clay into a houſe for God ?

BOOK VI

The Possession and Death

I.

YOU ARE MINE NOW. YOUR ARMS ARE stretched out to me like palm trees, your hands have lifted the veil from my lips.

I have gone down into your love as into a tomb, life has closed over me.

What pleasure could sugared fruits and the honey give me now?

I have known your kiss.

What drunkenness could fighting give me now?

2.

Her kiss has the greedy smell of bread of date flour with hot butter.

It has the scent of the mimosa as she laughs to the blue gum tree under the gold hand of the morning.

Her skin is as soft as bread.

She is an antelope fawn going from gum tree to gum tree, eating the green leaves all the Summer night.

She is a white camel, she is the fringes of red belts, she is a grape ripening in the valley where the date is ripening.

Dāsīn is the thread of the pearls of my collar, the

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān
silk cord holding the talismans asleep upon
my breast.

I have gone down into her love as into a tomb,
and have no wish to find my life again.

3.

You have made a living death for me, O Dāsīn.
This second refusal is more cruel to me, because
you lay under me and forgot the others for a
short space.

You swore to break the collar of the past and be
my desire.

Then you called back the birds of your laughter,
to keep them in the cage of your mouth for
other men.

And yet my anger breaks like a flask of ointment
before the sun of your heart.

Tell me your thought, for my thought dare not
read it.

Is it to Aflān that you would have me give the
purple bernous of the Amenokhal?

Does the Amrar seem to you delightful?

4.

You are as proud as the light which holds us
beneath her chain of gold; surely you did not
believe that my love would tame you?

From the Tamashek

Dāsīn has killed me as the moon kills the sun on
the day of her raiding.

Shall I sell my flocks to buy you honey,
or silk of green and blue? Shall I buy
for you camels as silent, horses as proud,
or adamant rubies?

5.

Do you think me too generous to the
poor?

But you yourself are charity.

Do you thirst for the blood of captured
warriors?

But you yourself have cared for them and
restored them.

6.

Before the pity of your eyes and the disgust
upon your lips, Dāsīn,

I wished to go back to the desert when seven
times seven suns had fallen like dying shields,
but my camel would not.

He lay under my blows, and opened his mouth
to show the grass of his preference. He keeps
it in the corner of his cheek to chew upon, as
my heart chews your name.

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

7.

I stay.

I would sing Dāsīn-ult-Yema and her white camel and her saddle with ornaments, the whiteness of Dāsīn upon the whiteness of her camel.

It is as the Prophet appearing among his people. Dāsīn is the white moon, and I ask of God who rolled her in His hand to write me among His number.

There is no more. I stay and I cease to sing. I would hear her upon the violin that steals her voices.

8.

It is because God gave senses to the violin, so that when it sings men cease from speaking and every hand pulls down a veil over the eyes, that I most adore Him.

My camel and I were called by your violin, and we came to you and had peace.

I would rather not have known that peace, because you have broken it like a water-jar.

I am a blind man, seizing at shadows and falling upon death.

Keep my camel, for he will not leave you. I am going I know not whither.

From the Tamashek

9.

All grains of rice have the same taste, all dates
the same honey.

I told you that I would go to see women, and
be comforted.

They were all beautiful and all the same.

Dāsīn was different.

10.

I passed over the seas to gallant cities ; but the
palm of a man's hand cannot hide the
sun.

Who was she that came to me in the red veils of
hashish, to lie against me as upon coals ?

Who said to me : *Take my heart*, and cried so
terribly when I tore it from her.

I killed her because I had to kill that night ; I
did not know her name ; I was killing every
woman when I killed her.

11.

O Dāsīn-ult-Yema, will you be smiling awake,
or will you be pretending sleep, when I lift

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān
the fold of the garment that covers your head
on my return ?

If you drive me away again, Dāsīn-ult-Yema, the
sharpened knives of the sun must bury my
shame in the desert.

12.

Dāsīn did not look at my red hand, where the
life of the woman was weeping.

Dāsīn did not look at my red hand. She was on
her way to smile at red flamingoes.

I pressed the fruit of every lip in the city with
disgust.

Time has counted his gold beads over and over
since I set forth again.

13.

I lived because you judged me more worthy
than Afān to bring up your golden boy, my
name child.

The flesh of your flesh was near me, and I was
still the eagle, the king of the people.

His eyes dwelt upon me with the eyes of your
childhood mingled with my childhood ; but
he died fighting as a lion dies.

From the Tamashuk

I partake of the ash upon your brow; there is but one thing a man may give to a woman's grief, and that you do not want from me.

14.

You did not wish to see me, but the Saint of Teleya came to me bearing your farewell, and bringing me pardon.

My tears behold your tears; you are more beautiful under your tears than the earth in rain.

One morning far from now you will smile again at sunrise, astonished to smile. It will not be at Musa-ag-Amāstān.

The lion cub slain in battle would have moaned between us for ever.

15.

The Amenokhal of the men whiter than we, who commands the armies from the North, together with his warriors and the slaves who serve him,

He who has come to avenge the great captain of the first white harka,

Loves of Dāsīn and Musa-ag-Amāstān

He says that he will make us greater and more beautiful with my help.

I cannot live without Dāsīn-ult-Yema. Let another take my place at that captain's side.

16.

The black month that killed Sidna Slimān, Master of Jinn, is upon me now.

I will enter without fear among the dead.

Let them leave me alone with my black slaves.

Uthmān, stay at my head towards the East; stay at my feet towards the West, O Ilmak; so that I may die as a day dies between two nights.

Let the word of pardon fall upon my brow from God.

17.

God allows further that I should say this to you, my brothers in battle and in prayer :

He who has been alone in life would be alone in death,

Bury me between the breasts of the desert,
She is better than the visited tomb for him who

From the Tamashek

shall have neither offering nor prayer, but only sleep.

And I affirm the Unity of God, the second finger of my right hand being raised up to Him :

There is no God but God !

To him who dies of great love there needs a great forgetting.

18.

O my cousin, O son of the sister of my mother, they say that you are dead.

I climb the hill and take stones and bury my heart.

I smell the scent of you between my breasts, darling, and it is fire.

. . .

Camel-Boy
Rhythms



Compliment for Radya

AS LOVERS SING THEIR GIRLS
Saying they are like gardens
So paint my beauty,

Pour damask wine with compliment.

Therefore I said to her
 Whose lids are curved swords :

I have poured wine
 And nothing except the water of your mouth
 Is like it at all.

It is a crystal flame,
 As fresh as water from the rock,
 Soft as wild honey.

It has the odour of a basket of fruits
 From some green eye of God
 Among the deserts :
 But the smell of your body
 Is preferred to it.

Your breasts were ripened in the hands of the
 Prophet,
 They are apples smoothed with myrrh.

Camel-Boy Rhythms

Your navel is a silver cup,
A well of glowing water ;
The deer in the mirage of my dreams
Go down to drink there.

Your whole body is a dawn waking
Over orchards of opening pomegranate trees
Mingled with roses.

Torch among women,
I have sung the wine of our violet grapes
And the sealed wine of your beauty ;
Now God be merciful !

*Pour damask wine with compliment,
As lovers sing their girls
Saying they are like gardens
So paint my beauty.*

. . .

Song

RED IS THE BANNER THE PIRATES HOIST
When they take the open sea
And of such is your purple robe the wind whirls
Round the mast of your body.

White are the stars of the snow
Falling upon the oar reach
And bending the oars :
Of such is the balance of your neck.

And of your eyes and of your hair :
At midnight the crescent curves
And Aldebaran and Altair are like moons.

. . .

The Antidote

WHEN YOUR STARS HAVE BURNED ME
My thirsting love leans out
To the wet fruit of your lips.

Your closing eyelids are shadowed wings
For a protection
Beating over the lavender garden.

I drink an antidote for your eyes
In a place of snow.

. . .

Inflexible

IF I TOLD MY PAIN TO AN INDIAN SWORD,
 Yamena,
 It would melt in hearing.

If I spoke of my torment to the rocks of the
 mountain
 They would weaken and turn to sand.

Give me a feather of hope, disdainful falcon,
 For my torture has lasted too long
 And the waiting tears me.

But the girl with the tattooed brow made
 answer,
 Parting her veil :
 'When shall the bitter almond be made sweet?'

May the Jinn ravish you,
 Virgin without a soul !
 May the sky strike you !
 By the Face of the Compassionate God,
 By the Letters of the Book,
 By the Triumph of the Name,
 Be cursed, be cursed !

Your eyes are killing me,
 Yamena, gentle one.

. . .

Song

DEER OF THE RIVER,
Dove of the rocks,
O gold,
Your hair is the silk
Of the feathers of the maize, O falcon.

Your eyes are waters of the oasis
Mirroring date palms,
Your body,
Fastened at the breasts with coral,
Is opal gauze.

You are like Stamboul
Because of the number of your fervent,
Your feet are pigeons with silver collars,
They carry messages of love
And death.

. . .

Love's Warrior

HIS MARE IS AS WHITE AS FLAX,
As a king's war tent,
As the dome of holiness.

He has gold reins
And his pistols are gilded,
The dust rises before his riding
In storms of fear.

He defies the princes of the world
And his beauty is terrible,
Who but Fātimah of the rash dark glances
Would dare provoke him ?

. . .

Sovereign

HER EYES ARE CUT STONES
Shining and staying cold,
Her cheek is the opening of poppies,
Her cardinal lips are tinted
Like Morocco leather.

Her neck is the mast of a ship
Kissed by the fortunate breezes of the sea,
It is a tower above God's house.

Her breasts are like silver crowns
On the butts of pistols,
There is a coral ball let into each.

Her body is a flushed sword.

When she comes proud and dressed
My eyes must fear her,
My soul hates and adores her
For her cruel pride.

But when she lies naked and quiescent
On my dark carpet,
Seeing the doves of her kissing knees
I cannot believe her evil.

.

Youth

LITTLE BRANCH OF YOUTH,
Your cheek is coloured with copper apples.

Tell me what roses,
What flowering almond trees,
What garden with fountains saw you born,
Closed flower,
One morning fifteen months of May ago ?

. . .

In the Street of the Women

LIGHT SHOWS BETWEEN THE BEAMS OF YOUR
door
And there are many of us.

The old woman, pulling at the red curtain,
Peers among us,
But she will not catch my eye.

Once I gave you a French mirror
With other delights,
And you mouthed my nipples
And called me your Sultān ;
Now there are many of us
And light shows between the beams of your door.

. . .

To the Fair Anointed

FAIR, ANOINTED WITH ZEBED AND ESSENCES,
 Deer of the thyme-planted plains,
 Palm tree of Hanif,
 Mare of the Joad,

Apricot orchard,
 Dove of the penthouse,
 Spots of the panther,
 Moon of accomplishment,

Honey from a comb the bee has kneaded,
 Wheat in the ear,
 Tressed silk,
 O pure gum benjamin,

Diet of dates,
 Striped muslin,
 Riding of riders,
 O crescent cutting the nights,

You are as El-Jezireh,
 Pomegranate of Paradise,
 For the rich only.

Spring

DAWN SCATTERS PEARLS FROM EITHER HAND.

The flowers of the almond come abroad
And the breeze sows them upon the roses.

The amaranth and the purple
Woo the jasmine terrace.

The clove tree and the sweet-briar
Shine in their colours.

The birds in the green leaves sing their verse :
He is Allāh, the only, over and over.

The stars of the orange set in his branches
And I fail for love
Because the brightness of your mouth
Has touched these things.

• • •

Why?

GAZELLE,
Why am I driven to your feet ?

Why are the swords of your soldiers bright for
ever

Though you are faithless,
Why is my love a broken knife ?

Why does your beauty trouble the wit of man
And the fold of your eyebrow, eagle, hold in
chains ?

Why do the leaves of my branches strew the
earth,

Why is my garden wasted ?

Why does your meadow, breathing of the balm
tree,

Deny my flocks ?

Why is your body needful to me ?

Why do the readers of the Korān
Find you like wine ?

Camel-Boy Rhythms

Why am I as a dead man already washed,
Why do you refuse me resurrection ?

Why do my hopes break
As a ruin of mountains ?

Why have you lost me ?

. . .

The Burden of Love

THE BURDEN OF LOVE
Is greater than the vigour of my body.
The rank of my mistress
Surpasses the height of that star
Just setting to the West.

As a burned land waits for the rain
I wait for the beauty of this woman.

Flow more swiftly down to me, water of my life,
Hasten, O river,
Before the woof of my day falls from the loom
Where Allāh weaves.

. . .

The Naked Summer Moon

WHEN YOU RISE FROM YOUR SCATTERED
silks
In the darkened room,
Queen of my night,
When you rise
Dressed in your bracelets only
And your necklaces,
You are the slight and naked moon of Summer,
And glittering reign alone.

. . .

Message

MAY THE MORNING BE FORTUNATE TO YOU,
 Rider with spurs of fire,
 May your journey be prosperous !
 If you pass by the tribe of the fairest among
 women,
 Ask after her bended brows, my lord.
 She sighs for me no more.

Her forgetting is the stone of a tomb
 Sealed over me.
 O rider, question her
 That I may be delivered.

Tell her I sing her body
 That bends like an iris in running water,
 Her cheek as bright as purple wool,
 The moon of her brow with blue signs
 Putting a spell on reason.

Tell her that I sing her lips as crimson as flame
 Filtering out honey :
 It is blander than sealed wine in firelight,
 It makes the heart grow faint.

Tell her I sing her crystal neck,
 It is rolled round with scented collars ;

Camel-Boy Rhythms

Tell her I sing her ripening citrons
And her ivory flanks
And her little feet as plump as knuckle-bones.

Tell her I sing the small flowers of her nails
Red as carnation,
And the down of her cheek
Like the powdering of waterfalls
In the morning sun.

Tell her I sing and turn
And weep and am on fire.

May the morning be fortunate to you,
Rider with spurs of lightning,
May your journey be prosperous !
If you pass by the tribe of the fairest among
women,
Ask after her bended brows, my lord.

. . .

Meeting

THE POISON WIND HAS BLOWN ALL DAY.

As the sun went down
It swelled the silks of Lubna
Like the breast of a dove,
But she did not move her veil
Or turn her head.

The cloud has passed above us without granting
water,
Its thunder has grumbled without spreading rain.

. . .

How Many

PALM OF OUR GARDENS,
How many have your lids killed like knives?
Your breasts are quinces shaken
Under figured silk,
How many hungers have they lighted?
Your hands are turning ivories,
They are flowered with rings.
How many thirsts stretch forth
Toward your cups?

. . .

Song

HER WALKING IS A CYPRESS IN THE GARDENS
of Mornag,
Her body is a lance set above mosques,
As white as spinning silk.

I used to get drunk on the light of swords,
But love spurred from the ambush of her face
And has unseated me.

. . .

The Sand Gazelle

WHEN YOU SEE ME BENEATH YOUR STRIPED
veils

Your breasts tremble, Hudhailah.

As timid as the sand gazelle,

What do you fear when I meet you ?

Does the red furnace in my breast

Scorch your tenderness ?

Is the ocean of love

Roaring from my heart

And seeking to die down at your fragile feet

So terrible

That you will not bathe them in it ?

Or have you guessed that God made love

Out of a red furnace and a roaring sea ?

The wave and the flame of my passion

Are dancing about your body of pearl

And your closed heart.

That is why

When you see me beneath your striped veils

Your breasts tremble, Hudhailah.

Song

THE JUJUBE PLUM TREES
Grow by the town where I was born,
We boys played knuckle-bones
With the dropped fruit of
The jujube plum trees.
At night in Spring
All the town smelt of the flowers of
The jujube plum trees,
As sweet as the breath
Of one who played knuckle-bones
With my expectant heart,
But lay with me at last under
The jujube plum trees.

. . .

Wakefulness

I WAKE UNDER THE TENT WHILE OTHERS
sleep,
Because of black glances
Shining below curls of hair.

I compare myself with the sleepers,
God's peace is over them,
I wake to dream of raping her slim body.

I suffer for dark eyes and for a palm tree
And for a striped veil ;
She does not deign to turn her glances upon me
That rape my sleep.

. . .

Love's Bird

HER BROWS ARE TWO LETTERS NUN TRACED
 On the same line,
 Her eyes are drawn with a wine-sombre ink
 On rare paper,
 Her small mouth is a rivulet of honey
 And her cheeks have the scarlet of allspice.

Rise in your flight,
 Spread forth your wings,
 Sweet-footed gentle pigeon.

Circle toward the tribe of Nejma
 At the hour of prayer,
 And when the morning comes
 Drop down into her breast.

Tell her that I am as one
 Whose wound has reached the bone,
 He cannot draw the blade from it.

I was a partridge coming down to drink
 And a hunter crept upon me.

Sweet-footed gentle pigeon
 With the knowing eye,
 Drop down into the breast of Nejma
 At the hour of prayer :
 By her very delicate skin
 You will know Nejma.

The Partridge

I HAVE CAUGHT YOU
But will not kill you,
Partridge fallen among the lentisk trees.
Your feet are coloured like Āishah's,
They are painted red.
They are painted with the henna of the heels
Of my well-loved one.
My desire has not touched her
And her heart flies far away.

• • •

Image

THIS IMAGE IS MADE FOR HER WHOSE MOUTH
Is pure design.

I nourish myself in you
As flowers in the water of a cup,
I breathe your love
As other men breathe roses.

You are a garden of jasmine and carnation
Tangled together,
Complaining in incense.

As cool as dew,
As troublous as sweet wine,
Your flanks are of sea pearl.

This image is made for her whose mouth
Is pure design.

. . .

Propitious Hour

I MET A GIRL THIS DUSK
Who had cheek-bones as rose
As the arbutus tree,
And held her in my arms.
Good luck, she said,
O falcon full of ardour.
Kiss my small mouth,
When night comes you shall pick my fruit.

. . .

A Lonely Garden

THE SKY IS LIGHTLESS AND THE SPRING
 useless,
 The flowers open without a reason,
 Their perfumes waste in air.

Under the shadow of the lemon tree,
 White with blossom,
 Swollen with bees,
 I plunge my wrists into the runlets of water
 And my fever remains.

I remember you
 Under the rose tree of your choosing.

When the heavy roses
 Weary of waiting so long for you
 Let fall their purple tears,
 It is as if Christians were burning incense
 Before their dead.

My head used to rest upon your arm
 When I was asleep.

Allāh, if you would have me live,
 Paint from my heart the image of her little
 slippers
 Upon the threshold of my door
 Set side by side.

The Carpets

SHE STAYED HER STEPS
In front of certain opening flowers
And parted her veil in the sunlight
To breathe the noon.

She pointed to a carpet of Shiraz
Decking a balustrade :
' The flowers and the silks
Have the same abundant colour,
And it is as if the same hand
Had interlaced them.

' But the flower carpet
Is lent you for a short Spring only,
Its colours fade up in perfume as we speak
Like a smoke of incense.'

Therefore
Let us love desperately now,
Your beauty is hot as amber.

. . .

The Moon's Message

THE MOON BORROWED YOUR VEIL OF BLUE
silk

And bore me a message ;

I killed my white horse

And set the night on fire

To come to you.

You waited me, a field of lilies

On the shadowy carpet ;

My mouth is sweet with kissing your neck

And bitter with the henna of your feet.

. . .

Sorcery

HAWTHORN, I BURN YOU FOR LOVE OF SA'ID,
Arm of the panther.

Iris root, I mingle you with hawthorn
That he may desire me.

O dwarf jujube plum tree,
Come with your branch to swell the fire
To make my image a ghost about his thought.

O fir-apple, may Sa'id be thirsty for Zainah.

O green oak, may all other women
Be powerless to draw him from me.

Lavender, that my beloved upon my mouth
Be as an eagle with broken wings.

O violet fig, my husband is very old,
May God grant him His sleep.

O every plant,
Seal up the sense of an old and jealous man
And give me to the love of Sa'id,
Arm of the panther.

Mas'ūda

MAS'ŪDA IS GRACIOUS AS A ONE-YEAR HIND,
 And when she passes,
 Because of the smallness of her feet
 Earth keeps no trace of her.

Her neck is a flower after rain,
 Her eyes are turquoises in silver.

When Mas'ūda smiles
 We think of hailstones
 Dropped in a Persian rose.

Her arms are white adders
 Marked with blue markings,
 And her hair is rays of the rising sun
 Tressed in a skein.

She is a dove from a fine cote
 And has killed me with her gentleness.

.

The Feast of Pardon

IT IS THE FEAST OF PARDON.

‘Gather again the figs and the pomegranates
From my orchard,
Pasture again upon the breasts of the beloved,
For it is the Feast of Pardon,’

I fell on my face like a drunken man
And then rose up to dance ;
My tent is swollen with treasure
On the Feast of Pardon.

. . .

To an Ouled Nail

YOUR BROW IS LIKE A WALL PLASTERED
with lime,
And your breasts are ready pears.

The bands of your hair are black
Under silver fillets.

Your eyes are like holes
Where serpents lie in wait for ants,
Or coals beginning to grow red.

Musk is in all your ornaments.

Your belly is a melon rolling under silk
When you are dancing.

God knows why you are sombre before your
door
With heavy rings.

God knows why your mouth does not smile
To show your teeth,
Bleached bones on the desert of your heart.

You fear neither life nor death,
You follow your destiny.

God knows why.

. . .

Satisfaction

YOU FED MY THIRST WITH A DISDAIN
More bitter than aloes,
But now the gold of your pride
Is tumbled in the sand.

A rider passing in youth
Knew how to take you ;
And now he rides down other loves.

You are a door with a broken lock,
Robbed of its secret.

• • •

Riding

AT NIGHT I WAS TOLD SHE WAITED FOR ME.
I mounted my swart horse ;
Dawn drew her sword against the darkness
And cut a way for me.

. . .

To a Dancer

THE FAITHFUL REJOICE AFTER RAMADĀN ;
Women are the macerations of the fast to
me,

You are my feasting :
And when you begin to dance
My heart pricks up his ears.

If I were a snake
I would band your legs together with my body,
And rest my head
In the crook of your perfume cresset,
For the mad thought of that place
Is choking me.

. . .

Farewell

AS THE SUN WALKS TOWARD THE SEA
He throws burning torches before him
Into the water.

He walks in gold,
He walks as a bride in coloured garments,
His red and green garments, and as blue
As the glances of a Christian slave
His garments.

Call him farewell as he drowns,
For night comes drumming
To veil him and take away.

My love was a sun
Gilding your indifference a little while,
Now he is drowned in the sea of his tears
Cold with your coldness.

Cry farewell to him.

. . .

Anger in Love

ONE DAY I MADE YOU VERY ANGRY.

You rose in the rage of your torrential hair
And knotted the little adders of your arms ;
The rings of your fingers shone like eyes
And you defied me.

Your feet were closed blossoms,
The flowers of your heels were not parted,
You trembled and were as beautiful
As a silver sword.

But I knew how to cool you
So that you gave way beneath my mouth.
Then were your eyes stars in a dark river
And your face a drowned moon
In the lake of night.

. . .

Litanies

ALLĀH, WHO RIPENS THE FRUIT FOR AUTUMN,
Give me Zubaidah of the fine garments.

Allāh, who created the pomegranate,
Give me Zubaidah of the bleeding lips.

Allāh, who made fig blossom,
Give the musk flesh of Zubaidah.

Allāh, who fashioned new almonds,
Make her to smile on me.

Allāh, who planted the orchard of Sahel,
Give me to Zubaidah,
For she is a tree with fruits.

Allāh, who thought the first dark poppy,
Now grant her husband sleep and that she say
come.

• • •

The Rape

SHE HAS THE DARK WATER EYES OF A
 gazelle
 Feeding upon flowers.

The fish leaps between the breasts of the ocean,
 When he is drawn forth from the waters
 He lies as an image of such as I
 On the hot shore.

I have compared her to a forest of banners,
 To a wood of poplar trees,
 She trembles in her disdain as a mare trembles
 Saddled before the battle.

I surprised her in the time of sleep,
 She had unclasped her girdle ;
 The men of her tribe pursued me,
 Crying *Kill him, kill him !*

By the prophet Ahmad and by David, O Allāh,
 I hope for clemency ;
 Give me two bold companions for the darkness
 That I may see again the daughter of the Amīr
 Al-Kazwīnī
 In her far tribe.

The Victor

LISTEN TO THE REASONS
For the lightness of my singing,
O you who hear my gay embroideries
Of silk on song.

My joy is flowers growing in my breast,
My heart a coffer brimming with necklaces,
And the coloured crystals of my song
Escape sometimes.

There are narcissus eyes
Glancing in perfume to the soul,
There are flowery lights.

There is drunkenness of lips,
There is a scarlet mouth,
A coral cup.

There are white orange seeds
Ranged side by side
On purple silk.

There is a garden of carnations,
And by what miracle has a grain of musk
Fallen among them ?

Camel-Boy Rhythms

There is a crystal path,
And in a land where neither rain nor dew falls
A heart of palm.

There are two pomegranates
With silk rinds,
The height of God's achievement.

There are jasmine and wallflowers,
Rivers and honeycombs,
Baskets of rosemary
And tufts of basil.

I have not put on armour
Nor thundered my horse to the assault
To win these things.

I have come unarmed,
Setting my hand to my crushed breast ;
I have fallen as if for prayer at two jacinthine
feet
To win these things.

. . .

Song

WHEN SHE WHOSE BRIGHTNESS INSULTS
the emerald
Walks in our garden,
The odour of each yearning rose tree
So takes on sweetness
That the dew rolls from them
In a true rose-water.

O falcons of the air,
Fly after this wild dove for me
And drive her down into my breast
To sleep.

. . .

Vision

HER BODY HIDES UNDER SEVEN TUNICS,
But the breasts of it
Seem to be breaking through.

Her leg is a virgin yataghan
In a prince's fingers,
Her wrist shines like a mirror.

Her cheek has the light of Aldebaran
Taking his place among the constellations.

Her nose is as a falcon
Lit in a garden,
Defying with its wings.

Her eyebrow is the crescent bending at dusk,
And the creatures of God regard it.

. . .

Zohra

WHEN ZOHRA MEETS ME AMONG THE FIELDS
My heart grows drunk with her
And staggers to left and right.

When Zohra meets me among the fields
She seems to waver there
Like a new asphodel.

Her flushed legs seem to quarrel
With a bickering of silver,
The coupled rings of her little half-boots sound
Like the murmur of the Streams of Paradise :
Girls, leaning over their images,
Let fall the drunken flowers of their hair there
Upon the water.

But when the day goes down without a sight
of her
I know the thirst of the ungodly
Bewildered in the ovens of Hell
With snakes.

. . .

Yāsamīn of the Abid

THE WOMEN OF THE ABID ARE MOST
 beautiful,
 Expressing all with a sign of the eyebrow
 And disdaining speech.

Yāsamīn was the fairest of the Abid,
 The fruits of the others had ripened,
 But she had the tenderness of flower green.

I was as a pilgrim come too late,
 Silver made beautiful with chisels,
 O grafted rose, Yāsamīn.

Then you were a garment none had worn ;
 My heart weeps for the beautiful woman
 With the slender belt.

I was as a pilgrim come too late,
 Yāsamīn, my darling.

. . .

Elegy

FIRE IS EATING MY HEART
 As it lies in the tomb of the slight 'Azīzah.
 The young palm tree is cut down
 And the golden grape is trampled,
 The wine of her life has run away.

I am a very brave man,
 But death betrays me.

The young palm tree is cut down
 And the golden grape is trampled,
 The wine of her life has run away.

The twins of her breast
 Were the fawns of a wild hind ;
 I spoke of them as apples,
 My hands were not weary of holding them.

She was my mare,
 Obeying no other rider.

The young palm tree is cut down
 And the golden grape is trampled,
 The wine of her life has run away.

Camel-Boy Rhythms

My fair one died on my breast,
I looked at her
And she was for the first time cold,
I had only one eye when she chose me,
A thorn had pierced the other.
I follow my destiny,
Leave me to weep with my one eye.

Fire is eating my heart
As it lies in the tomb of the slight 'Azīzah.
The young palm tree is cut down
And the golden grape is trampled,
The wine of her life has run away.

• • •