

THE · GARDENS  
OF · PARADISE  
OR  
WILDFLOWERS  
OF · GRANADA

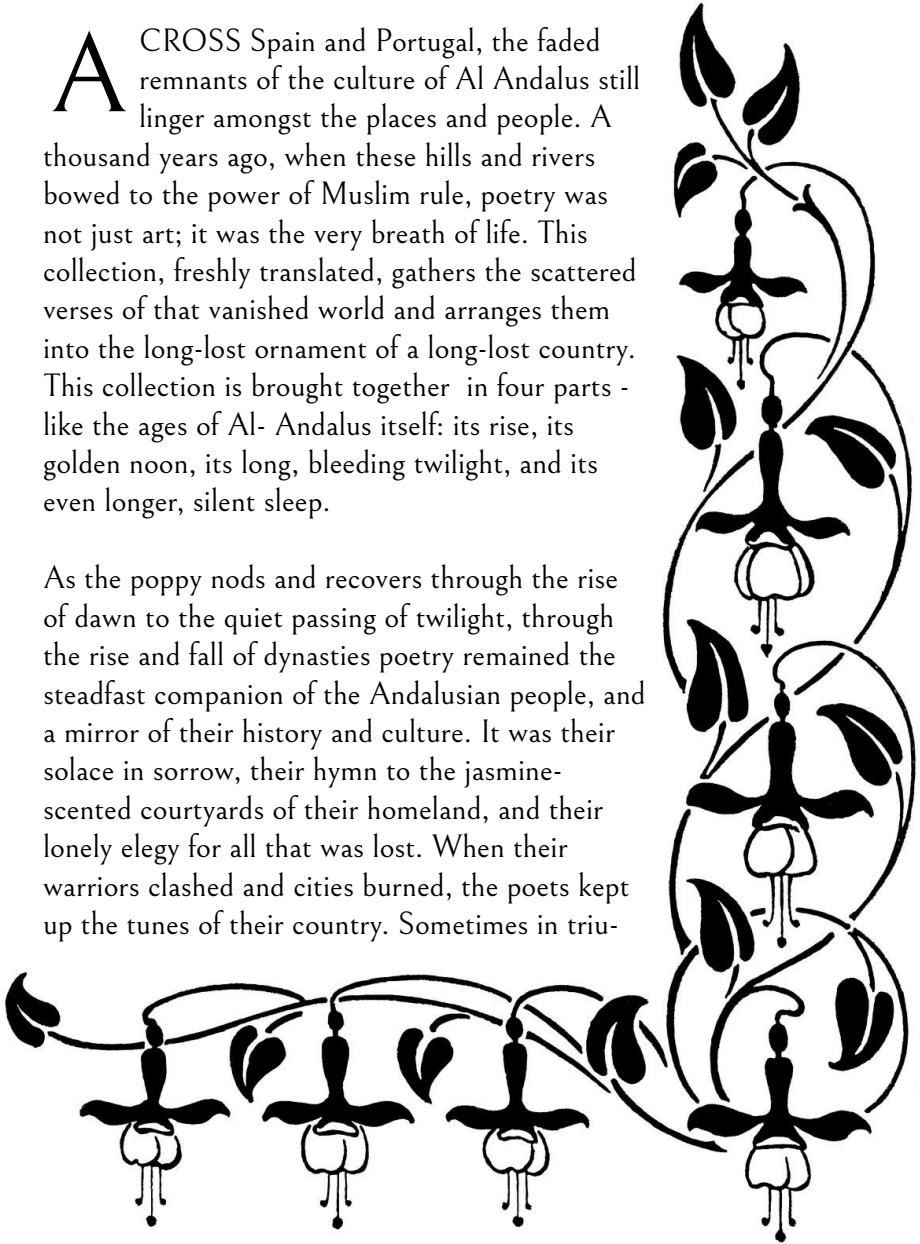
TRANSLATED BY  
M.J.S. IN MMXXIV  
AND ILLUSTRATED  
WITH ENGRAVINGS  
BY WALDEMAR ZA-  
CHRISSE

A house without books is like a  
city without flowers; there are no  
quiet gardens of reflection, and no  
roots to grow strong in the sun-  
shine and in the rain.

This collection of one hundred poems from  
Al Andalus, medieval Muslim-ruled Spain,  
was translated and adapted by M. J. Steel  
from Spanish into English in 2023-4 and  
was first published in the UK in June 2024.

**A** CROSS Spain and Portugal, the faded remnants of the culture of Al Andalus still linger amongst the places and people. A thousand years ago, when these hills and rivers bowed to the power of Muslim rule, poetry was not just art; it was the very breath of life. This collection, freshly translated, gathers the scattered verses of that vanished world and arranges them into the long-lost ornament of a long-lost country. This collection is brought together in four parts - like the ages of Al- Andalus itself: its rise, its golden noon, its long, bleeding twilight, and its even longer, silent sleep.

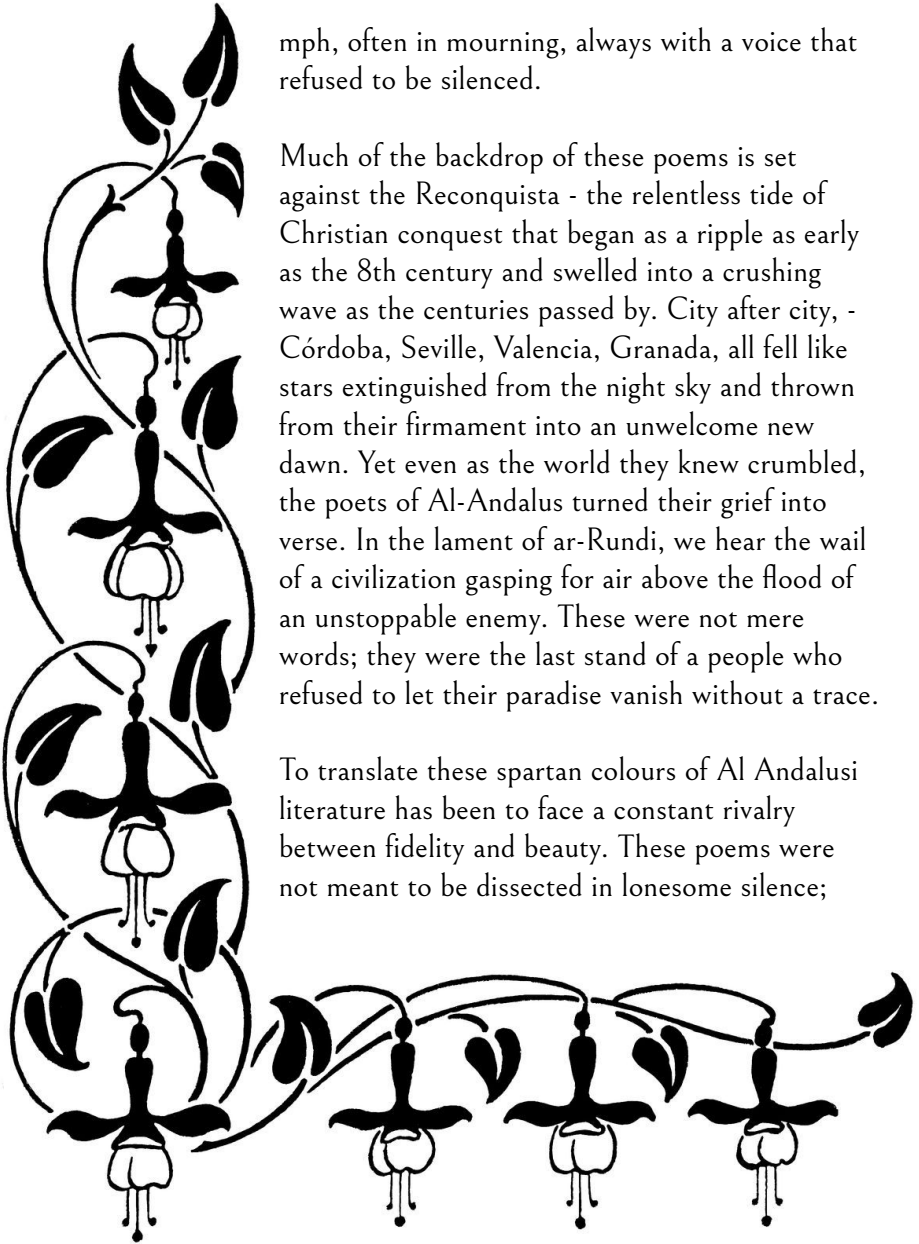
As the poppy nods and recovers through the rise of dawn to the quiet passing of twilight, through the rise and fall of dynasties poetry remained the steadfast companion of the Andalusian people, and a mirror of their history and culture. It was their solace in sorrow, their hymn to the jasmine-scented courtyards of their homeland, and their lonely elegy for all that was lost. When their warriors clashed and cities burned, the poets kept up the tunes of their country. Sometimes in triu-



mph, often in mourning, always with a voice that refused to be silenced.

Much of the backdrop of these poems is set against the Reconquista - the relentless tide of Christian conquest that began as a ripple as early as the 8th century and swelled into a crushing wave as the centuries passed by. City after city, - Córdoba, Seville, Valencia, Granada, all fell like stars extinguished from the night sky and thrown from their firmament into an unwelcome new dawn. Yet even as the world they knew crumbled, the poets of Al-Andalus turned their grief into verse. In the lament of ar-Rundi, we hear the wail of a civilization gasping for air above the flood of an unstoppable enemy. These were not mere words; they were the last stand of a people who refused to let their paradise vanish without a trace.

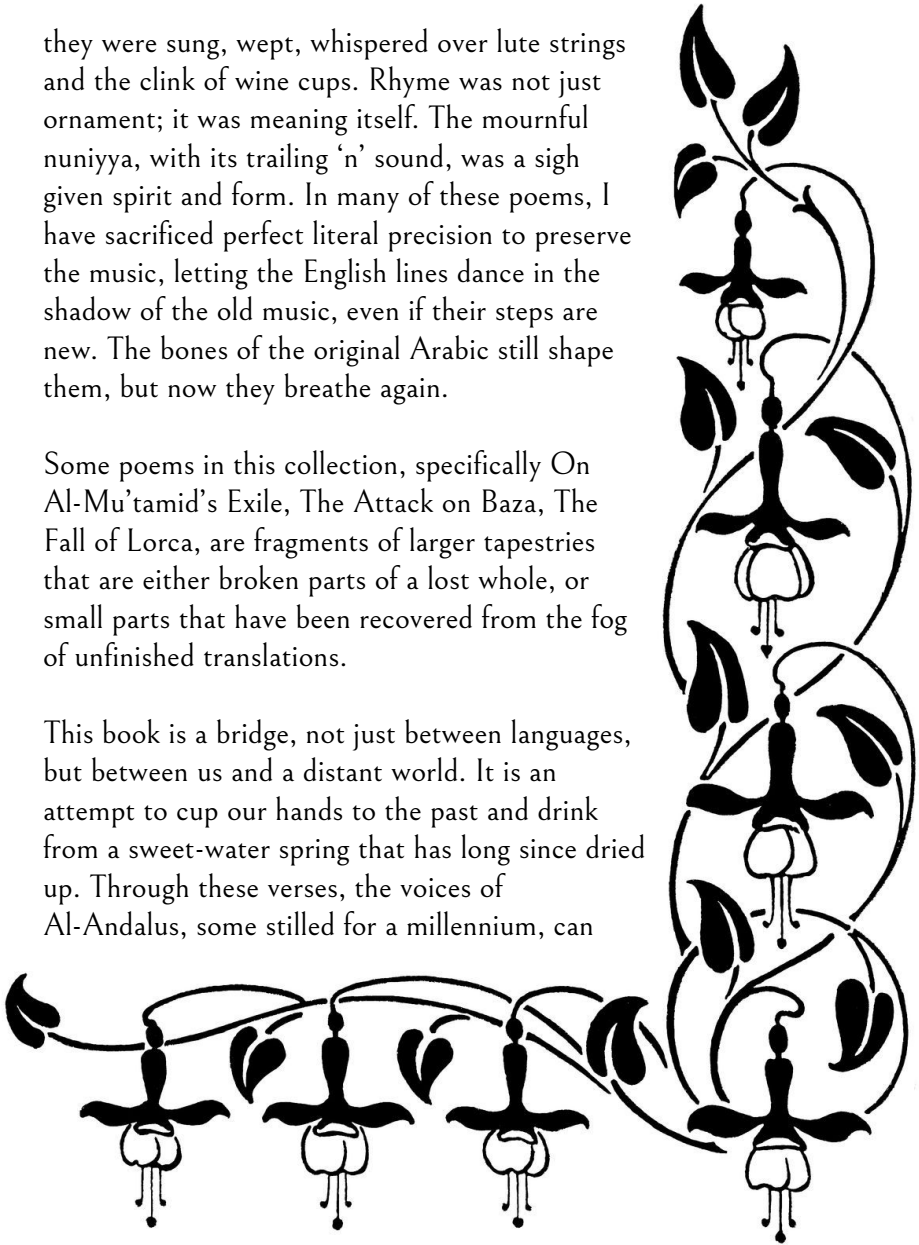
To translate these spartan colours of Al Andalusí literature has been to face a constant rivalry between fidelity and beauty. These poems were not meant to be dissected in lonesome silence;



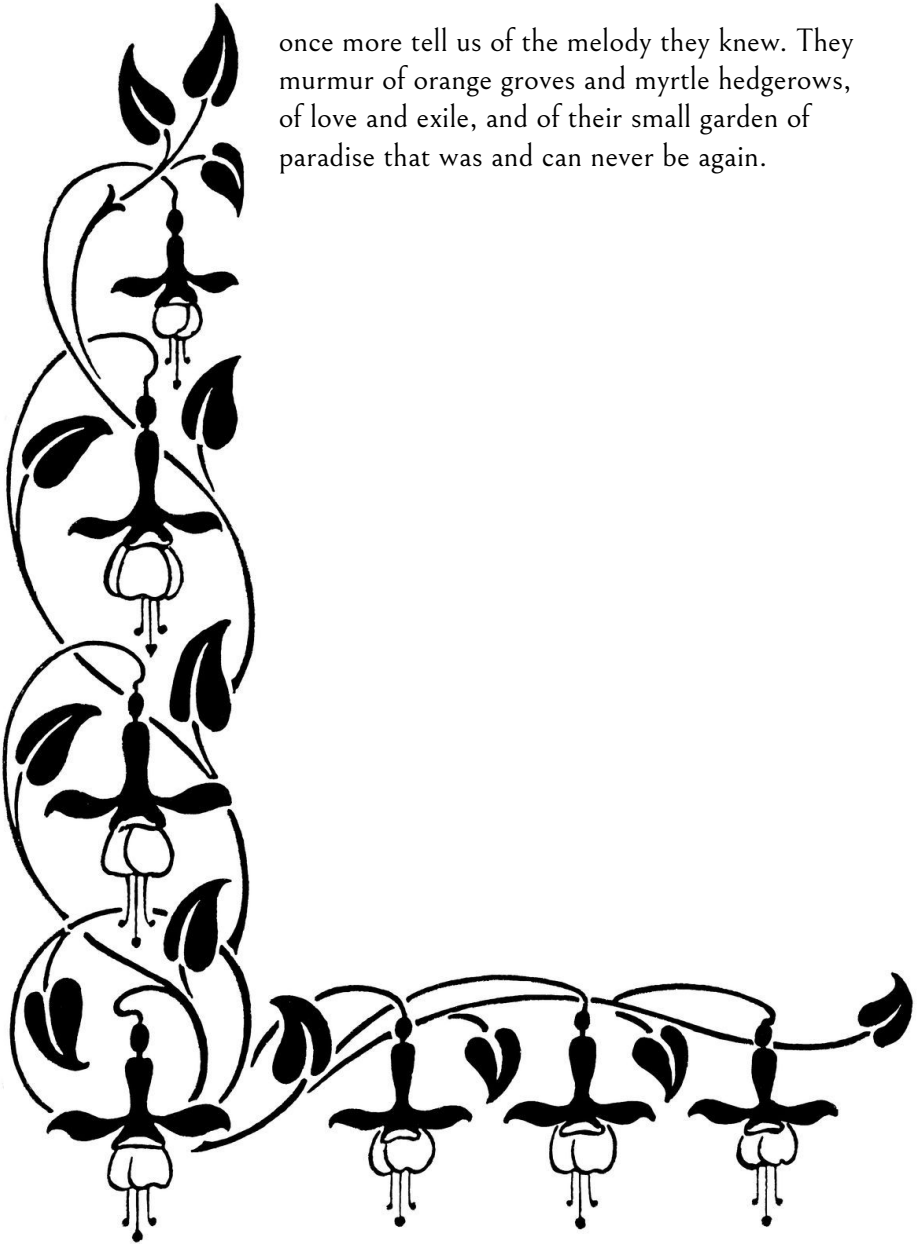
they were sung, wept, whispered over lute strings and the clink of wine cups. Rhyme was not just ornament; it was meaning itself. The mournful *nuniyya*, with its trailing ‘n’ sound, was a sigh given spirit and form. In many of these poems, I have sacrificed perfect literal precision to preserve the music, letting the English lines dance in the shadow of the old music, even if their steps are new. The bones of the original Arabic still shape them, but now they breathe again.

Some poems in this collection, specifically *On Al-Mu’tamid’s Exile*, *The Attack on Baza*, *The Fall of Lorca*, are fragments of larger tapestries that are either broken parts of a lost whole, or small parts that have been recovered from the fog of unfinished translations.

This book is a bridge, not just between languages, but between us and a distant world. It is an attempt to cup our hands to the past and drink from a sweet-water spring that has long since dried up. Through these verses, the voices of Al-Andalus, some stilled for a millennium, can



once more tell us of the melody they knew. They murmur of orange groves and myrtle hedgerows, of love and exile, and of their small garden of paradise that was and can never be again.



PART I · LIFE · AND · THE  
LANDSCAPE · OF · AL-ANDALUS

ON · A · PALM · TREE

'Abd al-Rahman I (Córdoba, reigned 756-88)

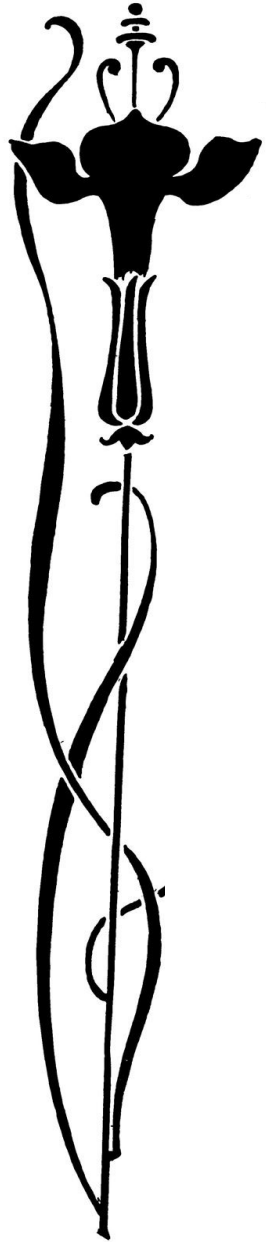
A palm tree stands in Ar-Rusafa,  
Born in the West, far from the land of palms.

I said to it: we are alike, far away in our exile,  
Long separated from kind faces and homely charms.

You have sprung from a land where you are a stranger,  
And I, like you, have traveled very far.

May clouds refresh you as in your homelands  
And may the raindrops be your comforting balm.

*This poem is attributed to 'Abd al-Rahman I, the founder and first emir of the Emirate of Córdoba. Ar-Rusafa was the name of his palace near Córdoba, where the gardens were laid out with plants and trees to remind him of his native Syria. It was named after his grandfather's palace in Syria at Al Reşafa.*



## ON · COURT · LIFE

Abu l-Ayrab Ya`wana b. al-Simma (Córdoba, c756)

Sometimes I see myself, important and vain,  
My head rich with hair, combed and tied in braids.

A life filled with wealth is not one of art,  
Rivers and pastures are better for the heart.

## THE · LILY

Abu Marwan Abd Al Malik Ibn Idris Al Jawlani Al Yaziri  
(Algeciras, c950)

Tattered lobes of purest white  
That blaze as well in yellow, bright,  
The stamens counted - six I've seen -  
And a seventh one hides in-between.

In her lap these figures lay  
As if she were a mother glad to gaze  
Upon her newly nursing babes.

Her glassy chest, filled with perfume  
Exhaling saffron from within;  
Her warm scent and pretty bloom  
Inviting love and passion in.

## THE · MOON

Abu Marwan Abd Al Malik Ibn Idris Al Jawlani Al Yaziri  
(Algeciras, c950)

In a moment the moon appears from her shroud  
And shows herself, complete and full,  
Then wraps herself in a veil of cloud.

This is because, as her robes undid,  
She saw my face, and ashamed, she hid  
If she, far away, could listen to me  
She'd hear my words and would agree.

## ON · BLOOD-LETTING

Abd al-Raḥmān III (1st Caliph of Córdoba, ruled 929-961)

Hurt with caution  
This arm with your knife:

Through these veins  
Runs the world and all her life.

*This poem is attributed to 'Abd al-Rahman III, who ruled Córdoba and raised it to a caliphate. He is said to have composed this poem when a doctor approached him to cure an illness by blood-letting.*

## THE · FALLING · STARS

Abd a Kassim Mohammed Ibn Hani (Seville, 936-972)

How beautiful is the night! And in haste, her messengers appear  
We watch the zodiac twins as the stars pierce each ear.

A cup-bearer came, and rebelled against the night  
He was a candle of dawn, everlasting and bright.

He had the voice of a gazelle, and fragrant scent  
His figure was light, with his liquor-heavy eyelids downward bent.

By the trembling wine both his hands were erased  
And bending to fill glasses had stolen his waste.

His hips were earth on which his body swayed and fanned  
Don't you know how the reed sways on a heap of sand?

From heart to heart, the love began  
And kisses - lip to lip they ran.

But, for your life, awake the cup-bearer and the glass;  
His eyelids will open, and the dream has passed.

The darkness unravels, from its shackles it is torn  
The army of the night lines up to battle against the dawn.

A · GARDEN · IN · SPRING

Ibn Faraj al-Jayyānī (Jaén, d. 976)

Spring brings verdant offerings to you  
With this the day dresses in shirts of tissue.

Lightning pulls on the tails of the air  
Flying with red and white flowers to wear.

The two are coloured for the symbols of love;  
One is for the lover, the other for the loved.

Some blush with modesty; others pale and fleeting  
Like the loved and the lover suddenly meeting.

Now it seems like it spills from their eyes all around  
Are symmetrical pearls from the rain in the clouds.

And in the garden the wind plays with them, sighing,  
They remember them parting, each hugging and crying.

## THE · PLEIADES

Ja'far al-Mushafi (Córdoba, 10th Century)

They asked me to what can I compare the Pleiades;  
I said; mounted full of amber, it rises like a stem

The sky set in its centre, and emerald bright it seems,  
And around it are the stars - each a precious gem.

## TURNING · AWAY · A · LOVER

Aisha bint Ahmad al-Qurtubiyya (Córdoba, d. c1010)

I am a lioness:  
Next to me, I will not allow anyone to lay;

So why would I yield to a dog  
After the lions I've turned away?

THE · SHAVED · SLAVE

Abu Úmar Yusuf Ibn Harun Al Ramadi  
(Córdoba and Zaragoza, d. 1022)

They shaved his head and dressed him in rags;  
In jealousy and fear of the beauty he had.

Before they shaved him he knew night and day;  
They have left him in the dawn, and taken night away.

THE · SPRING · LILY

Ibn Darraj al-Qastalli (Dénia, 958-1030)

The hands of spring have laboured here,  
On every high green stem behold -

A lily castle, embattled, where bright defenders cheer  
Grouped around their prince with swords of gold.

## THE · STORM

Ahmad Abū 'Āmir ibn Šuhayd (Córdoba, 992-c1035)

Each flower opens its mouth in the shadows  
Awaiting the udders of nurturing rain.

And the clouds in their armies, loaded with water,  
Parade in their majesty with bolts of gold flame.

## ON · HERSELF

Wallada bint al-Mustakfi (Córdoba, c1001 - 1091)

I was made by God for glory  
And I walk my path with pride.

My lover may kiss me on the cheek,  
Who I kiss, I will decide.

DESCRIBING · THE · PALACE · OF  
AL-MU'TAMID · EMIR · OF · SEVILLE

Ibn Wahbūn (Seville, 1039-1090)

The roof is made of waves from the sea;  
Formed into hills and mountains there;  
Here men of learning fear to tread  
To see the sea made in the air.

In great plenty, banners are in flight,  
There's no shortage of sunlight, nor of the half-moon,  
In the hallways there is a roof of light  
Shaped like rings, high above us they swoon.

It is decorated like embroidered cloth  
And on it the finest artwork lies displayed;  
The air would make you think that in a garden you walk  
And the ceiling is a mirage far away.

The fire you see is a column rising high  
And it seems to be a river surge  
Its solid nature flows fast by  
And its vapours seem to flash and burn.

The figures are alive, and yet not  
A flirting beauty is all you see  
They move, but have no movement  
They can be understood, but do not speak.

An elephant pours out a watery sword  
Like he is in a rage with his fellow beast  
And does not complain that he is bored  
Though his down-facing duty has never ceased.

He has let the myrtle all around the patios grow,  
Which men once planted, long ago.

## THE · GREEN · FLAG

Abu Asbag ibn Arqam (Guadix and Almeria, 1040-1091)

A green flag:  
Made from a belt of the white morning bright  
Like a joyful wing, it spreads over you;  
May it help secure your every delight  
By raising your spirit triumphant and new.  
It watches with care every omen of bliss  
And before you shall fly, bringing joy and success.

*Ibn Arqam served as the vizier to King al-Mu'tasim of Almería, when he saw the green and white flag on top of the Alcazaba of Almería he was inspired to write these lines. This is the first time a flag is described in European literature.*

## ON · READING

Ibn Ammar, (Sives, d. 1086)

My eyes free what the page holds trapped;  
The whitest white and the blackest black.

## ON · FORGIVENESS

Ibn al-Haddad (Almeria, c1030 - 1088)

Love those around you; if one should offend  
Know nobody's perfect, and forgive your friend.

In everything you will find problems to pick;  
Even the brightest of lamps will smoke at the wick.

## A · LOVE · POEM

Abbada Al-Qazzaz (Malaga, c1060)

She is the moon, the sun, the stalk that grows  
With a rich musk perfume.

Around her the aroma of love, it flows,  
Perfect and bright, and full of bloom.

Whoever looks at her falls in love  
But may never enter the same room.

## ON · TRAVELING

Al-Humaydi (Denia, 1029-1095)

It is my long-lived habit to be absent from my home  
Some like rest, but movement is my life.

I have countless friends in each and every land;  
In a thousand cities I've slept, my tent raised up high.

From the East to the sunset, I will travel all the earth;  
There will never be a lack of tombs in which my soul can lie.

## MOURNING · IN · AL - ANDALUS

Abu Al Hasan Al Husri (Exfiliana, d. 1095)

If white is the colour that we wear  
In Al-Andalus, it is a thing most fair.

Dressed in white, do you know on what you gaze?  
My grey hair in mourning of my youthful days.

*In Al-Andalus it was normal wear white in mourning. This tradition began in the era of the Emirate of Córdoba, founded by 'Abd al-Rahman who belonged to the Banu Ummayyad dynasty. The rival Abbasid dynasty of North Africa used black as its colour of mourning, so the Ummayyads began to wear the colour white instead.*

## THE · ORANGE · TREE

Abu-Muhàmmad Abd-All·lah ibn Muhàmad Ibn Sara  
as-Santaríní (called Ibn Sāra) (Santarém, c1040-1123)

See the fruits of the orange tree, displayed above,  
That look like crimson tears from the trials of love.

Topaz branches filled with carnelian balls  
And the hand of the wind beats at them all.

Sometimes we smell them, some of them we kiss,  
They are bottles of perfume or fair maidens' lips.

## THE · BRAZIER

Abu-Muhàmmad Abd-All·lah ibn Muhàmad Ibn Sara  
as-Santaríní (called Ibn Sāra) (Santarém, c1040-1123)

The brazier is our cure tonight  
Against the scorpion-stinging cold

Its light cuts us warm blankets from the dark  
And the chill can't find us beneath the folds.

This is the bowl of fire we all surround  
As if it were full of wine from which we taste.

Sometimes it lets us come near and sometimes pushes us away  
Like a mother feeds a babe or takes away her breast.

## THE · ROOSTER

Al Asad Ibrahim Ibn Billita (Toledo, 11th Century)

He stands and calls  
His eyes are true and bright  
And with a poppy on his head  
He declares the death of night.

With his song he calls to prayer  
And himself follows the rest  
Raising his wings and his plumes  
And beats against his chest.

The mighty king of Persia  
Gave him his crown, it's said,  
And perhaps Maria the Copt  
Hung the pendants from his head.

His fine, attractive coat  
From a peacock he had plucked;  
And still not satisfied,  
Stole his strutting from a duck.

## THE · WHEAT · FIELD

Ibn Iyad (Málaga, 1083-1149)

See the heads of golden wheat  
Bending in the breeze.

Like troops of horsemen in defeat  
Bleeding wounds of red poppies.

## THE · STORK

Ghalib bin Rabah (Toledo, 11th Century)

She is an immigrant from another land  
And heralds good weather when she speaks;

She spreads her ebony wings, showing her ivory chest  
And laughs out loud with her sandalwood beak.

## THE · FLOWERS

Ibn Hafis al-Yaziri (11th Century)

How often in the morning I walk in the gardens  
And the branches, like lovers, they all intertwine.

The wind has wrapped them all up together  
Roses are cheeks, daisies mouths, jonquils for each eye.

## LIVING · WAS · DELIGHT

Al Gassaniyya (Pechina, 11th century)

Living was a delight, in the garden  
Of life, a perfumed and a radiant place.

Happy nights when there was no fear  
Of the reproaches that love can face.

And when we were together, I did not think  
Of betrayal, while assaulted by pleasure and ease.

And with such wishes we embraced  
Like tree branches pushed together in the breeze.

## THE · FIRE

Ibn Abi al-Khisal (Segura, 1072-1145)

See the dancing fire turn;  
Her sleeves of joyous fire burn

Her wondrous work we now behold:  
Transmuting ebony to gold.

THE · MORNING · DEW

Abu Bakr ibn Isa al-Dani (called Ibn al-Labbana)  
(Denia, d. 1113)

You see the dew; each part like pearls  
Like necklaces around they're spread

The droplets wander end to end;  
A brow that covers every head.

As if the garden, colour filled,  
Had many tears of sadness shed.

A · RIVER · IN · AN · ORCHARD

Abu Bakr ibn Isa al-Dani (called Ibn al-Labbana)  
(Denia, d. 1113)

Have you trust in God, and yet do not see  
In the presence of a garden split by a stream

What is this water with grass all around  
But a mighty sword with a hilt of green.

## OBSERVING · THE · STARS

Abu Bakr ibn Isa al-Dani (called Ibn al-Labbana)  
(Denia, d. 1113)

The stars and their streams, he watched with his eyes  
I saw nothing good, and in silence I paused.

A tear fell on his cheek and on it I gazed  
And it turned black with the envy it caused.

## BACCHIC · SCENE

Ibn Siraj (Córdoba, d. 1114)

When I saw the day receding into death  
And the rising night approach - youth in every breath.

When the last saffron rays were spreading past my sight  
The valleys were already powdered with the black musk of night.

Then I made the moon of wine rise afar  
You are the planet mercury accompanied by guests - your  
surrounding stars.

## ON · A · FALCON

Abu Bakr Ibn al-Qabturnuh (Badajoz, c. 1126)

Oh king, born of fathers great and strong;  
Whose gifts are plenty and rare;

You have given me here, with his wings fine and long  
A falcon; a king of the air.

His feathers were shaped by the hard northern wind  
He will walk in the daybreak with me

I will make the wind move, and so, feather-skinned,  
With this chained one, I will capture the free.

## AL · ANDALUS

Abu Ishaq ibn Ibrahim ibn Abu al-Fath  
(also called Ibn Khafaja) (Alzira, 1058–1138/9)

Oh, people of Al-Andalus!  
What joy in your shade, trees, rivers and shores,

The gardens of Paradise exist only in your country  
If I had to choose a home, I would choose yours.

Don't dare to think that hell would take you  
You can't enter hell when you've lived beyond Paradise's doors!

## ON · AN · ORANGE · TREE

Abu Ishaq ibn Ibrahim ibn Abu al-Fath  
(also called Ibn Khafaja) (Alzira, 1058–1138/9)

How he struts so proud beneath the rain,  
Gifted red jewelry, and his robes of green unfold.

The saliva of the clouds is melted silver  
And in his branches turns to purest gold.

## TO · THE · PALACE · OF · ALJAFERIA

Al-Yazzar as-Saraqusti (Zaragoza, c1060-c1120)

Oh, palace of joys,  
Oh, handsome halls of gold,

With these two things I dreamed  
I am glad with what I behold.

My kingdom might not have  
More jewels or famous treasure,

But in these two things  
I have fulfilled my endeavour

With this enchanting fortress  
My joy will last forever.

## THE · WHITE · HORSE

Abū aṣ-Ṣalt Umayya (c1068-1134, Dénia, Toledo, and Seville)

As white as the morning star at the hour of sunrise  
He steps forward, proudly harnessed and saddled in gold.

In envy they look when he goes with me to battle;  
They've seen me come riding, and here's what they told:

“Who harnessed the dawn and the Pleiades?  
“Who saddled the moon and lightning, which we behold?”

## THE · GREEN · EARTH

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Isa Abd al-Malik ibn Isa ibn  
Guzman (Cordoba, 1087–1160)

The world spreads out a carpet of green,  
Daisies open, and the earth with blossom teems.

Speak of the lily, so handsome and white,  
Do not forget the rose and its magnificent sight,  
And place the narcissus on the left, never the right.

And speak not of the jasmine until in beauty it blooms.

## POPPY · FIELDS

Ibn al-Zaqqāq (Valencia, d. 1134)

I stepped across the poppy fields  
The wind was speaking music in the rain

And with his whip of quicksilver flogged  
The wine coloured flowers on the plain.

What crime was theirs, are they thieves that you seek?  
Did they steal the crimson from your cheek?

## THE · BLEEDING · RIVER

Ibn al-Zaqqāq (Valencia, d. 1134)

The flowers staggered in the gale;  
With petals the water's festooned.

As if the river were rippling chain-mail  
Torn open and bleeding from its wound.

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## RAIN · ON · THE · RIVER

Abu l-Qasim al-Manishi, (Seville, 12th Century)

The hand of the wind does the work of a goldsmith  
Working the river into a thousand rings.

And when it has finished forging the pieces  
The rain binds it together with hundreds of pins.

## AN · APOLOGY

Ibrahim ibn Uthman (Córdoba, 12th Century)

My heart has been captured by a singing voice  
I am not disloyal - do not think me so.

Sometimes you must be serious, and other times not;  
From wood you can make a harp or a bow.

## TO · A · LOVER

Amat Al-Aziz as-Sarifa al-Husayniyya  
(Valencia, 12th Century)

In a sudden moment we fell in love  
In the light of a day we did not see;  
Before the thought could enter ours eyes  
You spoke, and the joy was that of a dream.  
Life floods in among the myrtle grove  
And the tapestry of flowers gaze.  
The heart renews - a treasure-trove  
Of truths you cannot hide away.  
With forbidden words your lips now shine,  
And pulse the blood in every vein  
This moment that is yours and mine  
And never might be ours again.

BESIDE · A · RIVER

Hamda bint Ziyad al-Muaddib (Guadix, 12th Century)

In the beautiful valley my tears start to fall,  
There's meadows and valleys with streams bounding all;

A young black gazelle stole my heart as I weep  
And she longs to lie down in the long shade of sleep

I see the moon in black clouds in the hair of this fawn  
As if daybreak had lost a brother, and dressed itself to mourn.

## THE · GARDEN

Abd Allah ibn al-Simak (Granada, d. 1145)

The garden rises bright and green  
Clothed for guests, like none you've seen.

Shining gems you would behold  
As if the plants were dowry gold.

Or like powdered musk were in the soil  
Mixed with perfume and scented oil.

To every branch the small birds throng  
Like girls bent over lutes in song.

From fountains glittering water whirls  
And shimmers silver strings of pearls.

And in the breeze the flowers nod  
Reflecting every work of God.

## ON · THE · SOUTH

Abu Ahmad Ibn Hayyun, (Seville, 12th century)

You could never banish me from the south.

My smouldering eyes will always bring me home,  
When July ripens the vines and summer's breath through the  
hayfield roams.

It's these sun filled harvests that in my heart I see  
My empty alcove waits, even if none remember me.

It is filled with my absence, made out of stone  
Promising my return; the south waits until I'm home.

## TO · AHMAD

Abu Bakr Yahya Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Rahman Ibn Baqi  
(called Ibn Baqi) (Cordoba or Toledo, d. c1150)

Behold Ahmad, at the height of his glory  
Whose power unparalleled cannot be ceased.

He is the sunlight born in the West  
Who can find no equal in the East.

*Ibn Baqi moved between his homeland of Al-Andalus and  
Morocco, writing many poems including this one  
honouring members of the Banu Asara family of Salé.*

## ON · A · LETTER

Abu Ya'far Ibn Sa'id (Granada, executed 1163)

The missive you sent me is the envy of every age;  
Night is its ink, dawn is the page.

In this Divine letter, that is and is not a spell;  
All the dreams of my eyes, my ears, my heart do dwell.

Yet that your Author knows such wonders - it does not surprise;  
For His clothing is earth, and in His hands the great seas rise.

Just as we know the orange blossom grows upon the plain;  
For we have seen it multiply beneath His falling rain.

A · GREETING · TO · THE · KING  
OF · THE · ALMOHADS

Abu Ya'far Ibn Sa'id (Granada, executed 1163)

Speak, for time has stopped to hear  
In this age no one has more power.

Command, and your wishes will appear;  
Not land nor sea can escape in this hour.

There's a welcoming sign in the sea and the waves  
That kiss the land where your armies tread.

The oceans all murmur their unending praise  
Before you, the glory of the day is spread.

Be careful, for there are those in uproar  
Who tomorrow against you would plot and scheme.

The peninsula looks to your guiding star  
You are the reality of a long looked for dream.

Ibn Nuṣayr could never have such a victory  
And Tariq would be desolated at such a sight.

They paved the way so that in your glory  
You could rule their land like the moon at its greatest height.

## A · TROUBLED · HEART

Abu Ya'far Ibn Sa'id (Granada, executed 1163)

Into the burning fire of your heart, you fall,  
You dive into the sea poured from your eyes.

Is it Abraham or Moses that you are called?  
Whose being cannot drown, nor in fire dies.

## ON · SAYINGS

Abu Ya'far Ibn Sa'id (Granada, executed 1163)

Each century brings us its different expressions  
Let's not have ours be "Stop, let us weep"

Let not desert flowers be our sad obsession;  
Let's speak of our roses and daffodils sweet.

## THE · BLUE · RIVER

Muhammad Ibn Galib, known as al-Russafi  
(Valencia and Granada, d. 1177)

Between his banks the murmuring river swirls  
So clear, you'd think him a stream of pearls.

At noon the great trees all arrayed  
Rust the river with their shade.

Here you see him, blue, brocade tunic clad;  
A warrior resting in the shadow of his flag.

## THE · WATERWHEEL

Muhammad Ibn Galib, known as al-Russafi  
(Valencia and Granada, d. 1177)

You moan with such sadness, it captures the soul  
Between the flowers you turn, making dry landscapes whole.

Ignoring misfortunes, flowers smile at your tears;  
Blades cover your eyelids, at each a handle appears.

## THE · PINE · TREE

Muhammad Ibn Galib, known as al-Russafi  
(Valencia and Granada, d. 1177)

The garden displays the rippling fountain,  
The gurgling waters compete with the breeze,  
And next to the water, its trunk tall and mighty,  
With deep silent roots is a handsome pine tree.  
He seems with his roots, from the earth they have sprung  
Where the water is spilling like waves of the sea  
Like a dark serpent coiled, guarding his young.

## THE · BOAT · RACES

Ibn Lubbal (Jerez, d. 1187)

I love to see the fine boats racing;  
One after another, like horses, chasing.

The neck of the river was empty before  
But now, in the darkness, it glimmers once more.

The candles all mingle with the stars of the night  
Reflecting in the water like swords set alight.

Some fly by sail, others walk on their oars;  
Like rabbits running while the cruel falcon soars.

## LIGHTNING

Hafsa bint al-Hajj al-Rakuniyya (Granada, c1135-1190)

Go and ask the trembling lightning  
That strikes in the calm of the night

And reminds me of far, distant loved-ones  
And shakes at my heartstrings with fright.

Clouds dark with water fill the skies  
And conjure raindrops from my eyes.

## ON · A · FULL · HEART

Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Arabi (Murcia, 1165-1240)

My heart is a pasture that welcomes all;  
It feeds the deer; it's a church for Christian souls.

It is the holy Kaaba and a shrine for a pagan;  
It loves the Tora; and loves the Quran.

My religion is Love; where his camels go  
I will follow, with the seven pillars I know.

In Bishr and Hind this faith is unfailing;  
In Qays and in Lubna; in Máyya and Gháylan.

## THE · BATTLE

Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi (Alcalá la Real, 1213-1286)

Oh God! The banners of the knights  
Circle like birds round your enemies.

Their spears punctuate what their swords have written  
The dust dries the ink and the blood perfumes the page.

## LINES · FROM · A · LOVER

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Ibn Sahl (Seville, 1212-1251)

On my life, her red lips are bright as embers,  
But, on the face, they are soft and cool.

They ask me, joking: Of what faith am I?  
But sadly this love has divided my soul;

In my heart I am Muslim, but my eyes are weak  
They follow Zoroaster's religion now  
And worship the fire of her cheek.

*Ibn Sahl was born to a wealthy Jewish family, but later converted to Islam. The line in this poem questioning his religion may be a reference to this.*

## THE · WATERWHEEL

Ibn al-Abbar (Valencia, d. 1260)

How marvellous is the water wheel!  
It turns like the firmament, but bears no stars

It refreshes spirits; dry lands it heals;  
And is ceaseless in its labour through tiredness and scars.

It is an innocent man in chains, or a prisoner marching free,  
It is loved by all who look upon it and think,

As it springs out water, like a cloud brings from the sea,  
Servant to the garden; a cup-bearer who does not drink.

## RIVER

Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi (Alcalá la Real, 1213-1286)

The river is a piece of parchment  
On which the breezes trace and draw.

The treetops see such perfect writing  
And their branches stoop to read in awe.

## FROM · A · LOVER

Abu Hayyan Al-Garnati (Jaén, 1256-1344)

Have your eyes cast a spell, or why does my heart reel?  
Is your body purest sweetness, or is it silk I feel?

Your waist moves like a spear shaking in the heart of your lover:  
She is a maiden perfectly dressed, with charms like no other.

She moves like a branch in the gardens outside;  
Now she struts - the branch is overcome by its pride.

She mixes her fragrance into the surface of the earth  
And her perfume brings out flowers bursting from the wild turf.

She strides while others linger, and in her youth she's dressed;  
Half her body stirs them, while they're settled by the rest.

With a look she has you, and pierces her lovers' hearts,  
No magic and no amulet can save you from that glance.

PART II · FAITH · AND · DEATH  
IN · AL-ANDALUS

## PARADISE

Hassana At Tamimiyya Bint Abu l-Majsi  
(Elvira, 8th Century)

Some day, father, there will be a place  
In the shade by the sea, or a rich meadow of green.

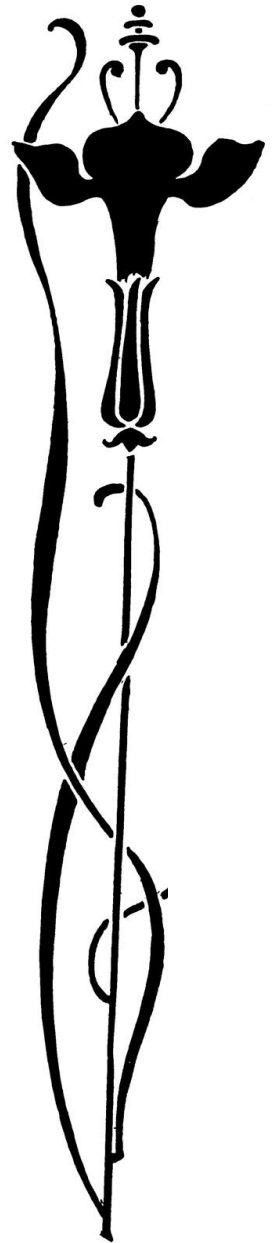
Where the quiet hours of the afternoon sleep  
After all other things have passed and been.

Although all things change, even those we love,  
Still without medicine, there will be life.

We will reach our hands to a realm of wings and kisses  
Redeemed from sadness, fear, and strife.

Some day, father, we will meet our friends again  
And a March breeze will kiss the mountains tall.

That day I will begin my wandering again  
By saying goodbye I will start the last journey of all.



TO · AL · HAKAM · I · ON · THE · DEATH  
OF · HIS · FATHER · ABU · L-MAJSI

Hassana At Tamimiyya Bint Abu l-Majsi  
(Elvira, 8th Century)

I come to you, Al Hakim, in mourning for Abu l-Majsi  
May God water his grave with endless rain.

I lived a blessed life, protected by his kindness,  
Al Hakam, may I be sheltered under your name.

You are the guide that our people follow;  
And he who all nations gave their power.

I fear nothing when you are my shield  
With your protection, evil cannot flower.

Continue resplendent in your glory  
That makes all Arabs and non-Arabs cower.

## LIFE · AND · DREAMS

Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (Córdoba, 860-940)

Is this world not the same as what a dreamer sees?  
And the best part of life how quickly it flies.

You have hope today, because yesterday brought you joy;  
But then hope is taken. Aren't you the same as the dreamer  
that sighs?

Whether sleeping or waking, death changes not  
It's the same for the foolish and for the wise.

## FULL · OF · GUILT

Ibn Al Faradi (Córdoba, 962-1013)

Trapped by my guilt, Lord, I am at your door  
Awaiting, fearing the punishment in store.

All my faults, You gaze upon;  
Fear scares me, but Your hope pushes me on.

For what else but You does the soul hope or fear  
Failure before Your justice is the only thing clear.

In Your book where You've written the debts to my name  
To that sum of my evils; I will listen with shame.

Enlighten and comfort me from the grave, which I fear  
Where I will lie forgotten by those I hold dear.

Grant me forgiveness; my faults - may You repair -  
For without You I will wait for an eternity of despair.

## THE · WEeping · DOVE

Abū Ish.āq al-Ilbīrī (Granada, fl. 1066)

The desert dove sings with a tune sad and long;  
What is it you weep with your beautiful song?

Believe me, I tell you the grief that I've known -  
Whatever your sorrow - it can't equal my own.

Perhaps you cry out for a lover or friend  
Who has left you alone and bereft in the end.

How different the grief overflowing my heart  
Tormenting and hurting my soul - every part.

I cry for my sins and the chains they have made me  
And wish that my tears could deliver and save me.

Have mercy, forgive me, oh God above;  
My crying is mine, and not like a dove.

## THE · TEMPORALITY · OF · LIFE

Abū l-Qāsim Khalaf ibn Faraj al-Ilbīrī

(also called al-Sumaysir) (Granada and Almeria, late 11th century)

The world is fleeting, it seems like a mirage  
All will fall to ruin; these places will not stay.

Destiny is greedy, it is a restless thing;  
It steals away its gifts, or it gifts punishing days.

On judgment day all of us must answer;  
For every small thing; all questions will be asked.

Every moment will have ended and there's nothing we can hide  
And know that God will count up each thing that has passed.

HIS · OWN · EPITAPH

Abū Marwān ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Zuhr  
(known as Avenzoar) (Seville, 1049-1162)

Stop and consider;  
Think on my final palace,  
Where all in rest will come to be.

My face is covered in dust where you step;  
I have freed many from death  
But I myself can not be free.

ON · THE · APPROACH · OF · DEATH

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn al-Sa’ig ibn Bayyah  
(known as Avempace) (Saraqusta and Zaragoza, 1080-1139)

I saw that my soul feared death,  
And I told it “You must be prepared;

“Sorrowing for it is a coward’s waste of breath,  
“You calmly wait for it, and be not scared.”

## IN · HIS · EIGHTY-SIXTH · YEAR

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Ibn Farqad (Morón de la Frontera, 1091-1176)

For eighty-six years, I have flourished as I live;  
Now the tears of guilt keep me from my sleep

A remorseful heart, hoping others might forgive  
So I can wash away the sins I keep.

Oh, He who listens to all and me  
I hope and pray for your mercy.

## ON · THE · DEATH · OF · A · SINNER

Abu al-Hashash al-Munsafi (Almusafes, c. 1210)

My dying soul said to me, as my days were done,  
“Death has come for you in your sea of sin;  
“And you have not prepared for the journey to come.”  
“Be still,” I said, “What could I hope to bring  
“Before the throne of the Giving and Generous One?”

PART III · CONQUEST · AND · THE  
FALL · OF · AL-ANDALUS

THE · SOLDIERS · AT  
GUADALETE

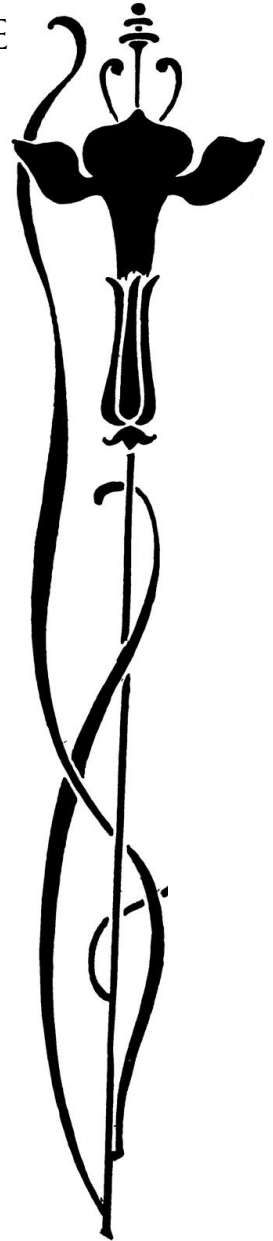
Abbas ibn Firnas (Córdoba, c810-887)

The army together advances, crying in discord  
They swallow the fields, bringing order as they go.

In between them their swords flash like lightning  
And it seems like the clouds hide each one below.

Banners are flying above them, waving together  
They look like stranded ships, which cannot row.

*The Battle of Guadalete was a battle in 711 AD  
while the Muslim forces under Tariq ibn Ziyad  
were beginning their conquest of the Iberian  
Peninsula.*



## LAMENT · TO · SUHAYD

Ahmad Abū 'Āmir ibn Šuhayd (Córdoba, 992-c1035)

Where are the generous nobles who lived within your womb?  
That often, in their loving arms, would welcome me home?

They have not answered to my heartfelt cry  
Only from the branches I hear the turtle doves sigh.

My home, it brings great sadness to see evil running free  
And I grieve that I cannot punish all this evil I see.

*Written after hearing that Suhayd, his birthplace, near  
Malaga, had been destroyed by the Christians, and all his  
relatives and loved ones had been killed.*

ELEGY · TO · CÓRDOBA

Ibn Hazm (Cordoba, 994-1064)

*Written 1031 after the Arab sack of Córdoba*

Peace be upon the home we have left,  
Empty of friends, like a desert bereft.

To see her you'd think; "There art never bloomed;  
"There people never lived"; though yesterday it was true.

Our homeland, it was not by our own choice to go;  
We would stay (if we could) until death lays us low.

But Allah predestined and we by his course  
Were led to destruction, by our choice and by force.

Oh best of homes, we left your streets bare  
Where the morning clouds gathered and rain filled the air.

Oh gardens and courtyards where good days have passed  
By winds of misfortune, we left them in dust.

Oh fate, bring my greetings to those I don't know  
Who now live in al-Marwayn or by the stream's flow.

Let days their days be peaceful, let judgement be kind  
Though that patience tastes bitter to us left behind.

If for her loss we are thirsty, we were fed a long time  
And if now we are wronged, we were pleased a long time.

Oh home that we loved, though the dark clouds abound  
The rain that comes from them will water your ground.

Though your beautiful ladies might never return  
With the men and our heroes who like brightest stars burn.

They are lost and have perished, but forever remain,  
And the fate of these people bring tears out in pain.

With faith and with patience we hope to find aid  
And perhaps our good patience will soon be repaid.

But even if fate could bring us to our homes  
What of our friends who lie in their tombs?

Oh hours that passed, will you ever return?  
For time that is lost our broken hearts yearn.

For the days and the nights in the shelter of home  
Where the sun rose above us, or the light of the moon.

My body is weak, but my heart remains strong  
My soul cries in anguish for an un-righted wrong.

Worry, do not infect me; grief, do not appear  
Passion, let me stay focused; separation, bring no fear

Fate, do not abandon me, for my home is far away  
Eyes, do not stop weeping; this sickness it will stay.

Until the sky has fallen I will lament the day;  
That loss of our own heaven, while we roam astray.

## TO · CÓRDOBA

Abu Bakr (Toledo, before 1085)

Oh, city of cities; Córdoba, mighty and grand  
When will I return to you, my beautiful, beloved land?

I hope the rain is fertile and on your gardens falls,  
While thunder tells your stories and echoes off your walls.

Let your nights pass serenely, in an emerald belt of green  
Surrounded by your meadows, perfumed, pure, and clean.

## ELEGY · TO · THE · RUINS · OF · ELVIRA

Abū Ish.āq al-Ilbīrī (Granada, fl. 1066)

*The poet was originally from Elvira, and after it was conquered during the 11th century civil war by Zāwī bin Zūrī, the citizens of Elvira were forced to flee to Granada where they settled.*

A holy oath is broken; a duty lies in dust;  
The blame lies in our people and these times we cannot trust.

Do I mourn the ruins of this country that we knew  
While no one mourns Elvira or the places that we flew.

She was the sun and the moon comforting our land  
Now all the rest is darkness and desolated sand.

How many came running, answering her cry!  
We searched throughout the deserts till we left the deserts dry.

How many noble blooded men came rushing to her cause  
And how many were the scholars with their camels at her doors,

How many were the hopes that they came and realised,  
Their dreams, their wants, desires, that Elvira satisfied.

How many numbered all the suns that from Elvira rose.  
How many were the moons and stars that trod within her groves.

How many gazelles there were that hunted youthful lions,  
How many young women defeated heroes strong and defiant!

FOLLOWING · THE · FALL · OF  
TOLEDO

Ibn Ghassal (after 1085)

People of Al-Andalus! Spur your mounts and ride!  
Our life here is all a lie!

The fabric of our land unravels from every side  
The cloth has begun to untie!

Surrounded by enemies who will not subside  
In a basket of vipers we lie!

LAMENT · ON · THE · LOSS · OF  
MADINAT · AL-ZAHRA

Abū l-Qāsim Khalaf ibn Faraj al-Ilbīrī (also called al-Sumaysir)  
(Granada and Almeria, late 11th century)

I stopped at al-Zahra and wept to gaze upon  
The slow decay of beauty and lamented all now gone.

“al-Zahra, please return,” I whispered with my breath;  
al-Zahra spoke to me: “Who can return from death?”

I stopped again and, weeping, cried more than I can tell;  
But tears were not a balm to heal the ground on which they fell.

Instead they were the traces of where other tears had flowed;  
Of mourners paid to mourn the loss of those they did not know.

FOLLOW · ME · INTO · THE · DESERT

Abu 'Īsà Lubbun (King of the Taifa of Murviedro and Sagunto  
from 1086 to 1092)

Follow me into the desert, to the ruins of my beloved's home  
I want to remember the joy we had and lament days now gone;  
My youth was a growing flower, blooming like the sun  
In gardens where I saw her eyes, they glittered and they shone.

Tell me where the stars have gone that used to shine by me?  
Where are the nights when, next to her, I waked so joyfully?  
When you would bring the golden wine to me  
And like a living flame, burned like a carob tree.

ON · AL-MU'TAMID'S · EXILE  
FOLLOWING · THE · ALMORAVID  
CONQUEST · OF · SEVILLE

Abu Bakr ibn Isa al-Dani (called Ibn al-Labbana) (Denia, d. 1113)

I will never forget the early morning dawn  
When I was stood by the Guadalquivir,  
The ships were lined up like the dead in their graves.  
And crowds of people came from far and near.

They looked upon the floating pearls  
Laying on their white beds of foam  
They neglected their virgin girls  
Their veils uncovering their faces with each on show  
Which, more than their clothes, were torn with pain.

And when the time came, what a riot began  
As everyone clamoured to wish them farewell  
From every maiden, and every man.

The ships left weeping  
Like the lazy merchant's caravan  
Which the camel driver encourages with song.

Oh, that river, how many tears did it make?  
Oh, how many hearts did we see break?  
From our unfeeling galleries looking on.

AN · ELEGY · TO · VALENCIA

Abu Ishaq ibn Ibrahim ibn Abu al-Fath  
(also called Ibn Khafaja) (Alzira, 1058–1138/9)

The deer wander free in our ruined gardens;  
The fires have ruined you beautiful view.

If a passerby comes who remembers your beauty  
He will weep at the thought of what's happened to you.

Stones have been thrown at the hearts of our people  
Our fate has been turned to devastation and rue.

Time has written in our streets, spelled out in our gardens:  
“Your home is not your home, and you are not you.”

## VERSES · ON · LEAVING · JAÉN

Ibn Abi Rukab (Jaén, c1088-1149)

Oh Jaen, you are the river from which I must depart  
Yet the thirst to drink from you lies burning in my heart.

When the north wind blows, I dream in waking hours  
And see your distant outline; your walls, your gates, your towers.

But when I want to come to you and heal my lonely pain;  
I know our enemies still plunder you, and I can't return again.

## LAMENT · FOR · AL-ANDALUS

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Ibn Farqad  
(Morón de la Frontera, 1091-1176)

Oh, my prudent and accomplished tutor,  
Without consolation, how I cried to see  
Al-Andalus, that land of beauty,  
Which from the evils of time cannot break free.

Let him sadly praise the honoured ruins  
We poor poets, he pities us few,  
Let him mourn lost days and their orphans  
And mimic the sad music the pigeons coo.

To God, let him raise his sad voice again  
In his home and in the streets let him implore  
Because it was by this, the rage of pious men,  
That idolatrous hopes could change once more.

This home for those who love their faith  
Has become a refuge where atheists resort.  
Such a lump in the throat, to our enemies we gave  
And now our wealth has turned to wars of every sort.

ON · THE · RUINS · OF · MADINAT  
AL-ZAHRA

Muhyi al-Din ibn al-Arabi (Murcia, 1165–1240)

The halls and gardens gleam with light;  
But they are in ruin and empty as the night.

The birds are lamenting from their roosts all around;  
Sometimes in silence, sometimes murmuring a sound.

I spoke to one of this wing-borne choir  
Whose saddened heart refused to tire.

“For what do you lament with such endeavor?”  
It said - “For an age now gone, and gone forever.”

AN · ELEGY · FOR · VALENCIA

Anonymous c1238

What is wrong with your eyes that pour out with tears,  
What is wrong with your heart, troubled by its lot?

Is it because in you chest is a hole made from fears;  
Your goods are taken and your home is now forgot.

Or is it because of your children, whose homelands are  
scattered;  
Separated from their kin, and whose dreams can never be.

Or is it because of a moment that has passed, when your world  
was shattered,  
A world that now no one shall ever see.

Valencia, your home, is now home to a heathen  
Your ground is poisoned by unfaithful hands.

That new Egypt was paradise in every season  
Where pure rivers flowed across the lands.

In enlightened moonlight its nights used to bathe;  
Now its days are darkened by a deluded faith.

## AN · ELEGY · TO · VALENCIA

Ibn al-Abbar (Valencia, d. 1260 CE)

Where is Valencia; its houses, and the singing, cooing doves?  
Where has the glory of our Russafa gone?

Where are its handsome places that spread all happy things?  
Where are the fine green spaces that once brightly shone?

Where are the streams and the leafy trees?  
Where are the fragrant gardens that delighted in the sun?

The garlands of flowers have fallen from their necks  
And the brilliant light of Albufera and the sea has been undone.

LAMENT · FOR · THE · FALL · OF ·  
AL-ANDALUS

Abu al-Baqa ar-Rundi (Seville, c1267)

All things once in glory must fall and be done  
A false, easy life can't fulfil any one.

These are the days as I have seen come,  
What others find joyous, brings terror for some.

Our home in this moment shall not stay for long;  
And all shall be blown by the wind and be gone.

Time makes sand from each rock, and every stone,  
It waits not for peace, nor for wars to atone.

Age, unlike wars, unmakes blades of iron  
The sword of Dhul-Yazan now is dust and for no one.

Such kings of Yemen, where are these great ones?  
Glowing with gold, with gems, and with diamonds?

Where is Shaddād, who with gold built Iram?  
Where are the armies of the great ruler Sasan?

Where is the wealth once so treasured by Qarun?  
Where are the people of 'Ad, Shaddad, and Jurhum?

Age gave its answer; to each their time had come.  
Great kings have fallen; it's as if there were none.

What once was of power when kingdoms begun  
Now are stories of mirages made by the sun.

Time turns its back on Darius' bones,  
Khusro finds no shelter in old palace stones.

How hard in dark times to find a solution;  
When ruling the earth eluded even Solomon.

Around days like these woes and troubles hum  
But to all ages good and evil days will come.

For evil days, you may find some solace to rely on,  
But no solace can be found for what has befallen Islam.

This beautiful land is damned and undone;  
The great mountain was struck and has thundered down.

The evil eye fell on us, and every one  
Fled town, field and village - until there were none.

Ask Valencia what has become of its own;  
Ask Xàtiva or ask Jaén where their people have flown.

What happened to Cordoba, where learning called home;  
Now scholars have fled and it stands alone.

Where has Seville with its fair beauties gone?  
Why trembles her river where bright waters shone?

Foundations that stood and were pillars of stone,  
What will remain, when the pillars are gone?

The fair-skinned maiden weeps for days now undone  
Like the lover cries in anguish and separation.

These lands, which Islam's glory has now emptied from,  
Lie desolate, lie cold; only unbelief lives on.

Where there were mosques, churches crushed every one,  
Empty of faith; sad bells and crosses are hung.

Even the mihrabs weep, though they are silent stone,  
Bowing pulpits lament, and mourn high and alone.

Awake slumbering one, heed the sad lesson  
While you slumber and dream, such days press on.

Exiled ones, think fondly of where you're from;  
Seville sleeps, and where next can you move on?

These tragic days have ended all we've known;  
Yet it remains, remembered, till judgement day is come.

You riders on your horses swift and strong,  
That ride like the camels in the racing throng.

You warriors with swords in India formed  
That flash fire red in battle's fog and storm.

You famed travellers riding the high sea foam  
Who have wealth and fortune in your distant home.

Did you hear from Al Andalus the messengers come;  
Telling the sad stories of what has been done.

How often the weak and oppressed cry alone,  
And the mighty turn a deaf ear till they're gone.

Why be divided when you have Islam's bond,  
Why servants of God - brothers - don't you respond?

Is there no one there; no souls left to go on  
To fight for good, to stand and say we're not done.

Reduced from their glory, from their limitless bourne  
Now by blasphemy ravaged, and by tyranny torn.

A day since these people were kings in their home  
Now are slaves to the heathens who call this land their own.

If only you saw them, lost, lonely, and wan;  
Clothed all in sad colours that mark them to shun.

The tears on their faces as each one is sold  
The vision would strike out your heart and your soul.

God, have you mercy? Child from mother is torn;  
Like souls without bodies, they are lost and forlorn.

And the fair-skinned chaste maiden, bright as the sun  
As if gemstones and corals within her were spun:

Is taken, with tears and with fear of each dawn  
By Godless heathens defiled; her chastity gone.

For suffering and anguish, our hearts writhe like a storm  
And can't understand it, if we have faith in Islam.

## THE · ATTACK · ON · BAZA

Ibn Al Qaysi Al Basti, the last celebrated Poet of Al Andalus  
(Baza, 15th century)

This is why we abandon our homes  
And why our eyes are drunk with sleep.

No one was left there, not one at all;  
To these people you've watched the fate of exile creep.

These enemies that came and harmed us  
In our burning land, they burned the crops we reap.

## THE · FALL · OF · LORCA

Ibn Al Qaysi Al Basti, the last celebrated Poet of Al Andalus  
(Baza, 15th century)

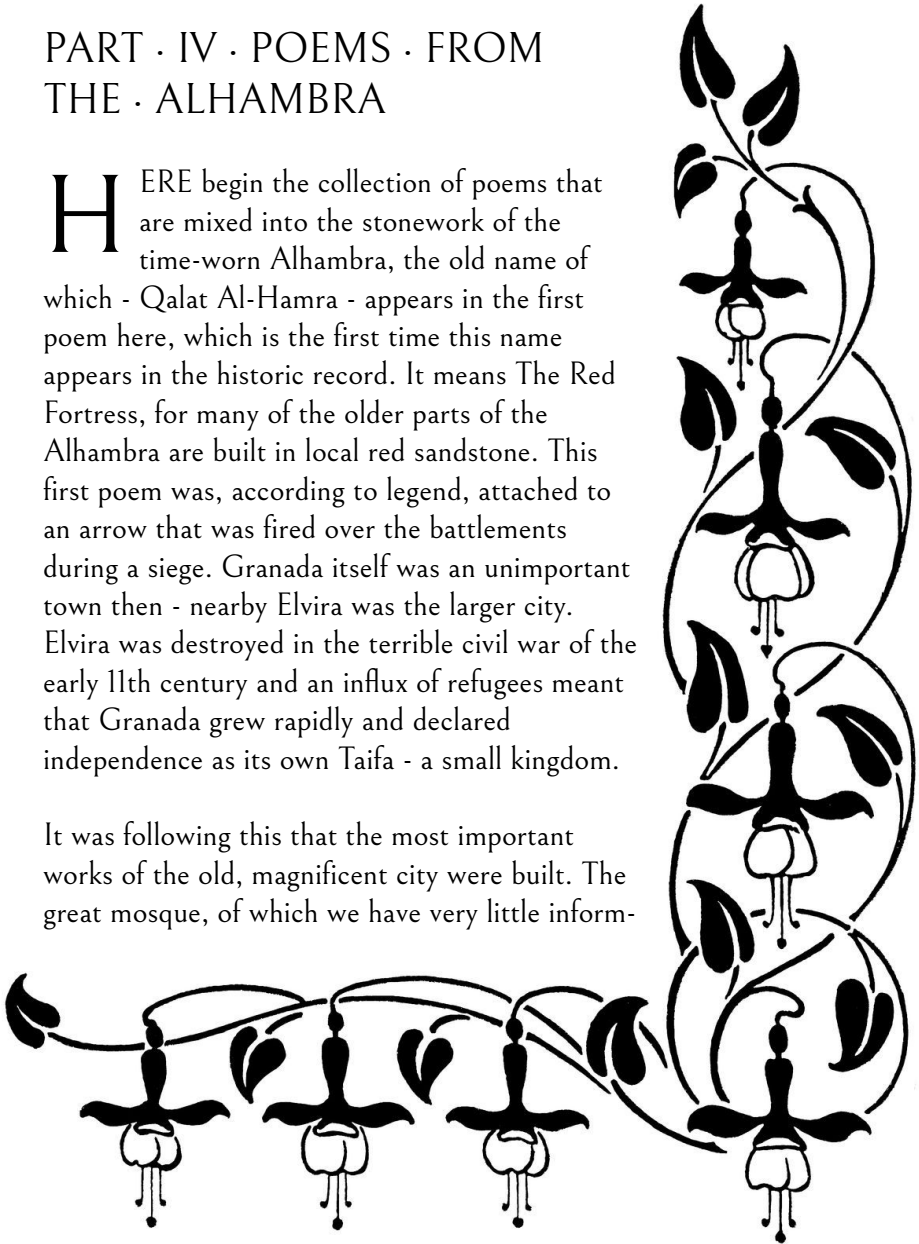
Time has ended for everything,  
It has violated the honour of our people and our land.

Who knows if Allah will save Lorca from its sorrow  
We only ask that our victory might soon be at hand.

PART · IV · POEMS · FROM  
THE · ALHAMBRA

**H**ERE begin the collection of poems that are mixed into the stonework of the time-worn Alhambra, the old name of which - Qalat Al-Hamra - appears in the first poem here, which is the first time this name appears in the historic record. It means The Red Fortress, for many of the older parts of the Alhambra are built in local red sandstone. This first poem was, according to legend, attached to an arrow that was fired over the battlements during a siege. Granada itself was an unimportant town then - nearby Elvira was the larger city. Elvira was destroyed in the terrible civil war of the early 11th century and an influx of refugees meant that Granada grew rapidly and declared independence as its own Taifa - a small kingdom.

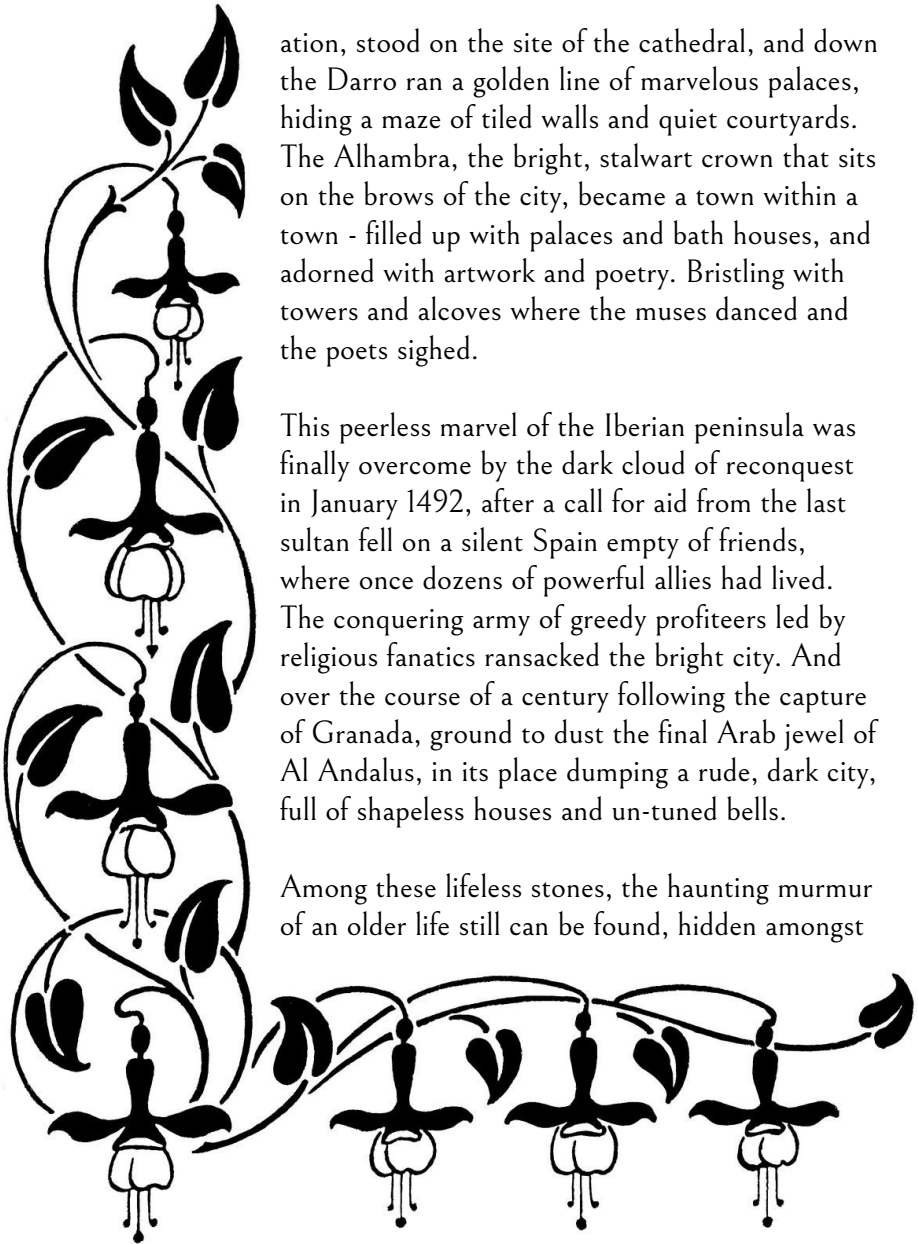
It was following this that the most important works of the old, magnificent city were built. The great mosque, of which we have very little inform-



ation, stood on the site of the cathedral, and down the Darro ran a golden line of marvelous palaces, hiding a maze of tiled walls and quiet courtyards. The Alhambra, the bright, stalwart crown that sits on the brows of the city, became a town within a town - filled up with palaces and bath houses, and adorned with artwork and poetry. Bristling with towers and alcoves where the muses danced and the poets sighed.

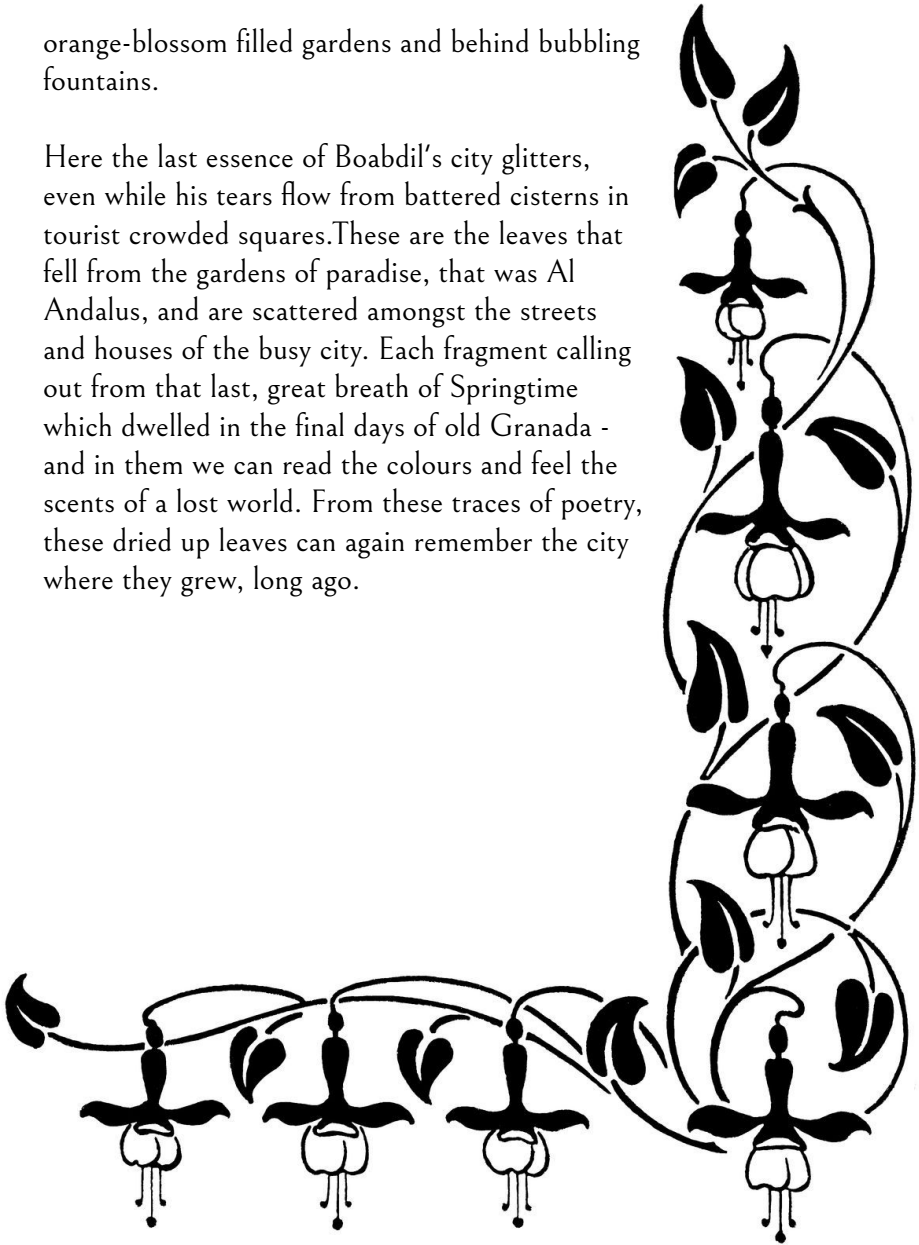
This peerless marvel of the Iberian peninsula was finally overcome by the dark cloud of reconquest in January 1492, after a call for aid from the last sultan fell on a silent Spain empty of friends, where once dozens of powerful allies had lived. The conquering army of greedy profiteers led by religious fanatics ransacked the bright city. And over the course of a century following the capture of Granada, ground to dust the final Arab jewel of Al Andalus, in its place dumping a rude, dark city, full of shapeless houses and un-tuned bells.

Among these lifeless stones, the haunting murmur of an older life still can be found, hidden amongst



orange-blossom filled gardens and behind bubbling fountains.

Here the last essence of Boabdil's city glitters, even while his tears flow from battered cisterns in tourist crowded squares. These are the leaves that fell from the gardens of paradise, that was Al Andalus, and are scattered amongst the streets and houses of the busy city. Each fragment calling out from that last, great breath of Springtime which dwelled in the final days of old Granada - and in them we can read the colours and feel the scents of a lost world. From these traces of poetry, these dried up leaves can again remember the city where they grew, long ago.



POEM · ATTACHED · TO · AN  
ARROW

Anonymous (11th Century)

We left their houses deserted and roofless  
Where rainfall invades them and winds tread the ground;

They plot and they scheme in Qalat Al-Hamra'a  
While ruin and sorrow on each side surround.

POEM · IN · THE · PORTICO · OF · THE  
GENERALIFE

Ibn al-Jayyab (Granada, 1274-1349)

She knocks at the door to the chamber of joy  
To enter and serve the king in his hall.

In the name of God, what beauty she has  
At the right hand of the king of all.

When she appears with vases of water  
They are like her handmaidens raised up tall.

Rejoice with Ismail, for it is through him  
That's God's gifts of joy, on you can fall.

Through him, may the mighty strength of Islam endure  
And stands to defend this great thronehall.

LINES · IN · THE · TOWER · OF · THE  
CAPTIVE

Ibn al-Jayyab (Granada, 1274-1349)

To decorate the Alhambra, I have gathered these words  
In this home for the peaceful and this home for the sword;  
Qalahurra, where sits this palace of lords.

A fortress for war and a palace for joy it is called.  
And in this palace splendour is shared with all -  
Under its roof, over the floor, and between its walls.

There are marvels written in tile and plaster  
There is even more wonder in each sculpted rafter  
And united together, they are perfect for ever after -

Built where already the finest mansions stand;  
Each inlay, every branch has poetry in each strand.  
And see the face of Yusuf; a sign we understand -

He has gathered perfection together for your eyes  
He is from the tribe of Khazraj, in faith he is wise  
And his work is like the dawn that over horizons will rise.

ON · A · HORSE · RACE · IN · THE  
ALHAMBRA

Ibn al-Jayyab (Granada, 1274-1349)

The steeds run fast and free in your honour  
They are swift and silent, like the look in their eyes.

One is amber, and on his forehead shines a star  
Another is red, towards your Alhambra it flies.

Another is black, its mane a robe of night  
He is like a falling star, or hawk in the skies,

One more is yellow, bathed in a sea of gold,  
These bright stars run to you lightly, awaiting their prize.

POEM · AT · THE · GATE · OF · THE  
MYRTLES

Al-Din Ibn al-Jatib (Granada, 1313-1375)

I am a crown that sits on the brows of my gate;  
The East envies the West in my heart.

Al-Gani Biya commands that I make haste;  
Listen for victory, and towards it depart.

I wait and watch to see the face of my king  
Who like dawn on the horizon will one day shine.

As a mirror of his temper and strength of his being  
May God make all his works equally divine.

POEM · ON · THE · FOUNTAIN · OF ·  
THE · LIONS

Ibn Zamrak (Granada, 1333-1393)

Blessed be He who gave the Imam Muhammad  
The wonderful dreams, which decorate this place.

Do you not see the wonders in this garden  
That God has made, with no equal on this earth.

See before you a sculpture carved from pearls  
With a border made from gem-filled lace.

Among these pearls, molten silver flows  
And brightest, purest beauty springs to birth.

The water and the marble seem to blend  
And we cannot tell which into which has flowed.

Do you not see how the water overflows its cup  
But spouts and falls, and yet where it falls is hid?

It is the eyelids of a lover spilling out with tears  
Which he hides for fear his love will be known.

Is it not like a white, beaming cloud  
That pours down water on the lion's head?

And like the hand of the Caliph who, at break of day,  
On his lions lavishes favours like a flood.

Whoever sees these lions as a threat or warning  
Knows only loyalty to the Caliph keeps his rage calm.

Child of the Ansars, though not by direct line;  
By despising fools, you are of noble blood.

May the peace of God be with you and always be safe  
Bringing food to your table, and bringing your enemies harm.

LINES · FROM · THE · DOOR · OF ·  
MEXUAR

Ibn Zamrak (Granada, 1333-1393)

This exalted podium of royalty and its glorious way;  
Lead this work to fine and victorious end

The monument to all is the Imam Muhammed  
And God's shadow falls on all in His way.

LINES · FROM · THE · FOUNTAIN · IN  
THE · GARDEN · OF · DARAXA

Anonymous (Granada, 14th Century)

I am a globe made from water, to all creatures I am clear,  
An ocean whose shores are from finest marble made  
And over stonework carved like ice, my pearls of water steer.  
Sometimes by inundation I am overcome  
Other times I am freed from my veil of watery tears.

Then I, with my flooded fountain filled so much  
Am like a sheet of ice, half melted, half untouched.

And when with unmatched abundance I shower down  
I am the sky studded with stars, I am a shell filled with pearls  
Like gemstones the jeweller has put into a crown  
The crown of Ibn Nasr gave me treasures from all the world.

With his joys doubled, may this child of Galib live each day,  
Among the children of fortune in this palace of noble ways.

Of the children of Kabyl of Khazraj, and who to Islam belong  
He is the new Sa'd, and has turned our darkness into light;  
He has raised the throne to protect the faithful from wrong  
For nothing greater than I stand in the East nor in the West  
Or has ever been made by any King, in Arabia or beyond.

POEM · ON · THE · ARCH · OVER · THE  
ENTRANCE · TO · THE · PALACE · OF  
DARAXA

Anonymous (Granada, 14th Century)

With glory and with beauty, these arts have been refined  
And enriched with every splendor and perfection of mankind.

Judge the beauty that you see of every single part  
By the bride who will approach it asking favours from her heart.

When he who looks and contemplates the beauty he perceives  
He will look attentively, but his eyes will be deceived.

He will think the full moon came, and here has made his home  
And abandoned his far mansions to live within my own.

My palace is not lonely, here are gardens bright and green  
Wonderful and perfect, like none you've ever seen.

This is a palace made of crystal, and yet the uninformed  
Look upon it thinking it's ocean marred by storms.

This is Imam Ibn Nasr's work, this palace is mine  
May God protect the other kings of this glorious line.

It was with his ancestors that the glory of his blood begins  
For they hosted the Prophet and all the Prophet's kin.

POEM · IN · THE · HALL · OF · THE  
TWO · SISTERS

Anonymous (Granada, 14th Century)

I am the garden that the beauties adorn  
One look and you'll know all my wondrous form.

By Mohammed, I am on par with my king,  
As well as every noble who will be and has been.

Fate demands that none to my equal can rise;  
I am the finest wonder made for your eyes.

Here, the hero stoops to renew his dreams  
The Pleiades his necklace, guarded by a magic breeze.

Above, the brilliant dome shines without compare  
With many beauties gleaming, and others hidden there.

Gemini reaches, and surrenders her hand;  
The moon ventures forward to speak of his plans.

With the haste of the world, the blinking stars fly  
Setting themselves in the wheel of the sky.

And beneath them, both courtyards dutifully stand  
Waiting to follow his every command.

It is no wonder the stars cross the night's crown  
Serving the glorious moon, and attaining his renown.

The gate to this palace bears such beautiful arts  
It competes with the vault of celestial stars.

Adorned with such fabric as if brought from heaven  
That one might forget the great looms of Yemen.

Up to the roof, arcades rise above pillars glowing bright  
Like burning stars spinning on towers of the dawn's own light.

Each column fair and beautiful, with fire at the brim  
The flames flow like tongues, or like banners in the wind.

The bright, gleaming marble casting light like flames  
Invading each black corner, which the darkest shadows stain.

Its glittering reflections all together shift and swirl  
They shimmer at once, you would think they're made of pearl.

No other garden has flourished to greater extent  
Nor brought forth such harvest, or such a sweet scent.

By command of the judge of beauty, double his tax is paid  
In such a great palace, so bright and cleanly made.

But never with two coins, for two drachmas of light left at dawn  
The zephyrs would throw to the bushes for the double gold of  
sunlight to adorn.

(And such kinship as there is here, links victory within  
For such a lineage is ceded only by the king.)