THE SUFI TROBAR CLUS AND SPANISH MYSTICISM: A SHARED SYMBOLISM

Luce López-Baralt

Translated by
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"Fragrance of Yemen"

The Islamic past of Spain and the influence it exerted on almost every aspect of the cultural and intellectual life of the Peninsula is a recurring theme in Iqbal's prose and poetry. In fact some of his masterpieces were composed during his visit to Spain. In his famous poetical work "the Mosque of Cordova" he sang the following verses about Al-Andalusia:

Ah, those proud cavaliers, champions Arabia sent forth
Pledged to the splendid Way, knights of the truth and the creed!
Through their empire a strange secret was understood:
Friends of mankind hold sway not to command but to serve.
Europe and Asia from them gathered instruction: the West
Lay in darkness, and their wisdom discovered the path.
Even to-day in this land rich with their blood, dwells a race
Carefree, open of heart, simple and smiling-faced;
Even to-day in this land eyes like the soft gazelle's
Dart those glances whose barbs stick in the breast where they
fall:

Even to-day in its breeze fragrance of Yemen still floats, Even to-day in its songs echoes live on of Hejaz.¹

His interest in the Muslim Spain was not limited to the poetic inspiration that he received in the wake of his sojourns in Spain. As reflected from his remarks made in Madrid during his lecture he had a perceptive vision of the intellectual history of Spain. As reported in the contemporary sources:

"In the lecture, he put the influence of the poets and philosophers and of Islamic Spain in relief over the Muslim intellectuality up to the Far East. He mentioned how all of them are studied; especially Ibn Zaidūn and he also cited AlBirūni, Al Mas'ūdi and Al-Kindi. He made reference to the multiple investigations being carried out in this aspect."3

The lecture was presided over by M. Asin Palacios. 4 He remarked:

"India and Andalus, in the extreme confines of the Islamic world, offer to the historian of culture the common feature that they were both experimental laboratories of cultural synthesis. There the Islamic culture was established with the Aryan and the Semitic elements while here it was established with the Greek, Roman and Christian elements; there this integral culture is operative while here it is only a subject for historical research. And yet great minds of these two far-off countries feel alike the charms of science and art."

Asin had very rightly termed the Islamic past of Spain as "experimental laboratory of cultural synthesis". The problems related to the past history of this "experimental laboratory" have ever since attracted the attention of many scholars, generated on going debates and have spawned one of the most important critical controversies of the entire twentieth century in Spain. The history of this country —an "uncomfortable" history, as Francisco Marquez Villanueva has astutely called it indeed "different," for it follows a course inevitably distinct from that of the history of the rest of Europe in the Middle Ages.

This complex and long drawn out historical process must inevitably have produced a cultural "cross-fertilization" or "hybridisation" of the Western and Eastern elements on the Peninsula. (To assume that the Christian inhabitants of the Peninsula borrowed nothing from their extraordinarily refined and cultured Arab and Jewish neighbours is to brand the Christians virtual hayseeds, if not barbarians, and void of all intellectual curiosity—a characterisation which seems to us highly improbable). It is essential that one keeps this fact in mind when one begins formulating an explanation for the cultural particularity of Spain and trying to understand the unexpected fecundity of a literature—especially in its medieval and

Renaissance incarnations—in so many ways so mysterious and original in comparison to the contemporary literature of Europe.

A large part of this history is still shrouded in mystery. Recent scholarship has devoted a lot of effort to resolve the enigmatic questions that have puzzled the students of Spanish history for a long time. Dr. Luce López-Baralt who made a major contribution to this field in her earlier work Islam in Spanish Literature,7 had remarked, "Neither the basically Islamic astrological knowledge of the shrewd Archpriest of Hita nor Spanish mystical literature—St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa de Jesus, the anonymous author of the famous sonnet "No me mueve, mi Dios, para quererte" - can be fully understood without taking into account their Muslim contexts. For years, critical orthodoxy has marvelled at the extraordinary "originality" of some of the most important symbols of Peninsular mysticism: we have only to think of the seven concentric castles of the soul, of the solitary bird of contemplation, of the dark night of the soul. Yet often these images are not original at all—we have simply performed but a partial reading of the Spanish mystical texts. When we turn to the mystical or spiritual authors of Islam, we immediately find that the pieces of the puzzle begin to fall into place—the seven interior castles are a commonplace of medieval Sufism; the solitary bird is of Persian lineage; and the dark night of the soul is prefigured not only by Ibn 'Abbad of Ronda but by Niffari and Lāhiji as well. It seems, then, that a great part of the supposed "originality" of some Spanish writers consists not in "inventing" this complex mystical imagery, but rather in adapting it, in their own unique way, to their own literary ends."8

Along with other scholars she continued her research and the present study is a natural sequel to and culmination of the earlier volume, and represents an updating of many of the ideas that she expressed there.

Exploring the same themes further brought revealing new facts into light. She referred to these findings in the following words: "The startling parallels between Islamic mystical further verified in subsequent studies, is still a source of great amazement for me. It was this question that first gave Miguel Asin Palacios, and since then has given me, many sleepless nights through the years. I am very pleased to be able to say that we know a bit more today about that "missing link" between the saints and Sufi mysticism than we knew before. And I do not think I am over-enthusiastic in believing that there is more reason than ever to explore the possibility that it was the Jews and converts from Judaism to Christianity who were, to some degree, responsible for brining into the Western world a significant part of the cultural heritage of Islamic mysticism."

Not only that. There are certain motifs and symbols that do not lend themselves to an easy interpretation. For example, it is almost impossible to trace with a sure hand and in a convincing manner the presence of the symbol of the "solitary bird" found in the works of St. John of the Cross in the preceding western literature. Like "the dark night of the soul" and the "lamps of fire" - and in spite of its humbler literary scale - this mystical image has always been profoundly enigmatic to the scholars and readers of St. John, due largely to the total lack of Western antecedents for it. The readers would see the convincing details in the following pages but here we would only like to say that it is still so curious that St. John appears to be closer to Suhrawardi-who was not translated into medieval Latin 10 than to Avicenna, who caused a furore in twelfth-century Paris with his commentaries on Aristotle, which circulated widely among the European religious community of that period. But since the long medieval process of translating works written in Eastern languages still holds many mysteries, we can also not afford to discard the possibility that Persian authors such as 'Attar or Rumi (or, more probably, some of their followers) may have been translated into Latin or some other Romance language. All in all, it seems more plausible to think that the influence of Muslims writing in Arabic (especially the influence of Hispano-Africans) was what, after centuries, reached St. John. Miguel Asin Palacios has established important parallels between St. John and such Muslim mystics writing in Arabic as Ibn Al-'Arabi of Murcia and the Hispano-African Shādhilites. In the present study Dr. López-Baralt was fortunate in being able to build upon discoveries in this field made by Asín Palacios. She also discussed there the problems of how this very problematic cultural transmission between St. John and Islam might have occurred; this is not the place to repeat those conclusions. I only wish to insist upon one fact which I believe, in the light of the documentation offered and for the sake of intellectual honesty, that it is essential to accept, and that is that the "solitary bird" of St. John of the Cross is not, however much we might wish it to be, the nightingale of the Georgics that Maria Rosa Lida has written so eloquently about. This enigmatic bird of the spirit, solitary, flying in the highest part of the heavens, holding its beak aloft, into the wind, singing softly, and free of colour, coincides in every detail with the Simurg of the Muslims, and bears no relation to the literary birds of Homer or Virgil. Some day, perhaps, we will learn what paths of transmission led from East to West. For the moment, however, there is nothing for it but to lament once more the loss of St. John's exhaustive treatise on the "solitary bird" which must have held so many additional keys to the puzzle and perhaps might even have confirmed the Muslim filiation that we propose.

The case of St. Teresa is also similar. One can safely assert that although there is a possibility that the symbolic imagery of St. Teresa may have received certain influences from the rabbinical and cabalistic sources, it is much closer to that of the Sufis than to the rabbinical and cabalistic literature. More over we cannot discard the possibility that both lines of spiritual writings may in some way have entered into her contemplative literature. Miguel Asin, perhaps discouraged by the Zohar's deus absconditus theology and by the relative poverty of medieval Judeo-Spanish mysticism (he never mentions the Hekhalot)¹¹, definitely felt that Jewish spiritual literature was very distant from the writings of St. Teresa of Avila. We agree to this position, but at the same time emphasise that in the future an indepth comparative study of the two Semitic literatures will be

needed, to include their possible—perhaps joint—impact on the genius of St. Teresa. And at the same time it seems impossible not to finally accede to an idea which has constantly provided the underpinning to Dr. López-Baralt's investigations into this matter, namely that the symbol of the seven spiritual palaces or castles, with all its variants, is Semitic in origin rather than Occidental.

St. Teresa may not have specifically introduced the figure of the seven concentric castles or dwellings into the history of mystical writing, since the weight of documentary evidence inevitably demonstrates St. Teresa's figure to have been in one way or another linked to the Islamic literary formulation of the eastles (which in turn have a plausible though remote Hebraic ancestry and/or literary parallel). And from there, we are led to ask whether we have here a case of definite indebtedness to Muslim culture on the part of St.Teresa. Establishing such a definite borrowing would doubtless be extremely problematic. since we would have to ask ourselves how, in the midst of the Spanish sixteenth century with the Inquisition at its peak, such precise information could have come into St. Teresa's hands? Dr. López-Baralt has successfully resolved some of the enigmas and we can conclude that, given the eloquent testimony of Muslim tracts, it seems impossible not to feel St. Teresa somehow close to them. St. Teresa, perhaps unconsciously, would seem to have continued the Islamic mystical tradition in which the symbol of the seven concentric castles of spiritual access to God is elaborated through many centuries, perhaps with the help of remote Judaic antecedents. St. Teresa raises the image to such a high level of spiritual and artistic richness and immediacy that her Semitic sources become in comparison a pale mirage in the Oriental landscape. Or one might put it another way-in grafting her own Christian cultural heritage onto this Oriental image, St. Teresa perfected the image, creating the radiant hybrid which crowns the spiritual literature of the Spanish Renaissance.

Yet it was precisely thanks to these Semitic cultural "traces"

- " the fragrence of Yemen" as Iqbal called it— that Spanish

Fragrance of Yemen

mystic such as St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa found it possible to achieve the wonderful synthesis of the three castes that together made up "Spanish culture" – the Christian, the Jewish, and the Muslim. And it was by forging such a synthesis that their mystical writings became in consequence some of the most original in Europe.

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Notes and References

- Translated by Kiernan in Poems from Iqhal, IAP/ Oxford, Karachi, 1999, p. 96.
- On his return from England Iqbal visited Spain in 1933. In Madrid he gave a lecture on "Intellectual World of Islam and Spain" under the Chairmanship of Mr. Asin Palacios, the famous author of Islam and the Divine Comedy. The report of this lecture was published in a Spanish daily El-debate.
- ³ See B. A. Dar, Letters and Writings of Iqbal, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1981, p. 78.
- 4 "In his speech of introduction, Mr. Asin referred to him as an illustrious juri-sconsult, who comes from the most remote limits of the Islamic East to bring the echo of the Musalman soul from its distant country, which evokes, in romantic longing, the remembrance of our medieval Andalousia." Letters and Writings of Iqhal, op. cit. p. 78.
- ⁵ Ibid. p. 79.
- Francisco Marquez Villanueva, "Sobre la occidentalidad cultural de Espana" ["On the Cultural Western-ness of Spain"], in Relecciones de literatura medieval, University of Seville, 1977, pp. 167-168.
- ⁷ Islam in Spanish Literature, E. J. Brill, 1992.
- 8 Ibid. p. IX-X.
- 9 Ibid. p. XIV.
- ¹⁰Three Muslim Sages, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1964; reprint, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1988, 1999, pp. 34.
- Asin probably had no access to editions of the Hekhalot before 1944, though he did to later editions and studies (though partial) of the Zohar; Ariel Bension's book was published for the first time in English (Routledge, London) in 1932, and appeared in Spanish in 1934.

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The process of assimilating the æsthetics, the mysticism, and the and metaphoric narrative symbolic devices that were present in the literature of their Moorish neighbours went on among the Christians of Castille for hundreds of years; some day fthe co-presence of that literature in Spanish letters] will be talked about with the same naturalness as we say today that Virgil and Ovid were present in the literature of the sixteenth century.

Amhrico Castro

fter the vast work of the Arabist Miguel Asin Palacios, few Tof us will be surprised today by a study whose purpose is to link the Spanish mysticism of the Siglo de Oro to the mysticism of the Islamic Middle Ages. The present author has detailed, in more than one study, the close parallels between the two traditions. But the degree to which the mystical literature of Spain comes under the influence of Islam is much greater than we have seen to date, certainly greater than Asin Palacios was able to document in the essays in which for the first time he established the connection. Writers such as St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila (to mention but the two greatest figures) present us with a singular phenomenon: they share with their Islamic counterparts many of the same symbols and much of the most important technical language of mysticism. This fact is most significant, for (at least from the literary point of view) it implies that one must seek the precedents for much of St John's and St Teresa's vocabulary among the Sufis. We find ourselves dealing, therefore, with the phenomenon of a sometimes quite enigmatic European literary Symbolism that only keys from Arabic and Persian literature unlock.2

Although Sufi poets and their commentators often employed a poetic language that we might call "open," with unlimited and arbitrary meanings (we might think of the extraordinarily free glosses to the mystical verses of Ibn 'Arabi and Ibn al-Fāriḍ, themselves so resembling the verses of St John of the Cross), still they respected a number of fixed conceits. They used, that is, a "secret language" to create a *trobar clus avant la lettre*—one whose key, according to critics such as

Louis Massignon and Emile Dermenghem, only Sufi initiates possessed:

Les mystiques, dit Lahiji, commentateur du Goulcha-i Raz, Roseraie de Savoir, de Chabistari[,] . . . ont convenu d'exprimer par des métaphores leurs décovertes et leurs états spirituels; si ces images parfois étonnent, l'intention n'en est pas moins bonne. Les mystiques ont arrangé un langage que ne comprennent pas ceux qui n'ont pas leur expérience spirituelle, en sorte que lorsqu'ils experiment leurs états. . . comprend le sens de leurs termes, mais celui que n'y participe pas le sens lui en este interdit. . . Certains initiés ont exprimé différentes degrés de la contemplation mystique par ses symboles de vêtements, boubles de cheveux, joues, grains de beauté, vin, flambeaux, etc. . . . qui aux yeux du vulgaire ne forment qu'une brillante apparence. . . . Ils ont signifié par la boucle la multiplicité des choses que cachent le visage de l'Aimé. . . le vin répresente l'amour, le désir ardent et l'ivresse spirituelle; le flambeau l'irradiation de lumière divide dans le coeur de celui qui suit la voie (Dermenghem, Foreword, Al Khamriyah 62-63).

This encoded or "secret" literature is of great antiquity; it has been a literary tradition at least since the tenth century. Farid al-din 'Aṭṭār gives us a conversation between Ibn 'Arabī (d. 922) and his interlocutors:

How is it with you Sufis," certain theologians asked Ibn Aţā, "that you have invented terms which sound strange to those who hear them, abandoning ordinary language?"...

"We [have done] it because it is precious to us. . . and we desired that none but we Sufis should know of it. We did not wish to employ ordinary language, so we invented a special vocabulary" (qtd. in Arberry, 237-8).

Islamicists constantly insist on that "special vocabulary": "the *Ghazels* or odes . . . are, to those who possess the key to their symbolic imagery, the fervent outpourings of hearts ecstasied...., intoxicated with spiritual love," says Margaret Smith (45), underscoring the mystical meaning beneath the erotic metaphors. "But as time went on certain words began to have a recognised meaning amongst themselves," notes Florence

Lederer (5). And she is right: over time the *trobar clus* was indeed lexicalized and became an easily recognised literary convention. But we should recall that these tropes were recognisable as conventions *within Islam*. So when we come upon that same secret symbolic imagery in the pious and unquestionably Christian pages of a St John of the Cross, a Francisco de Osuna, a Juan de los Angeles, or a St Teresa of Avila we cannot help taking the enigma of this presence as an authentic problem of literary history.

We can see immediately that the similarities between the Spanish and Islamic mystics do not lie simply in these shared cryptic conceits —whose origins within Islam (Massignon -Essai sur les origenes) are attributed to Qur'ānic sources—but rather involve a broader, and perhaps even more significant, Symbolism, including the dark night of the soul and the lamps of fire found in St John of the Cross and the seven concentric castles of St Teresa. Asin Palacios' suggestion (cf. Escatologia musulmana) that Islamic eschatological imagery may be detected in the Divine Comedy comes immediately to mind, and we take our cue from him. Indeed, his book (widely attacked when it appeared in 1919) was the brilliant prelude to all the subsequent discoveries that we comparatists and Islamicists have been granted as we have followed in Asin's footsteps and compared the two literatures.

Let me make one brief clarification before proceeding. Here, I am "lumping together," as it were, two distinct phenomena: the technical equation of terms—which often borders on the "allegorical" or reminds us of the extended comparison of the European "conceit"—and symbols. Clear differentiation between "conceit" or "allegory" and "symbol," however, is extremely difficult and subtle, even when we are conscious of the many attempts that have been made, from Aristotle and Goethe to Henri Corbin and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, to draw the theoretical distinction between the two. But in this essay, what I propose to do is go to the heart of things and attempt to show that the mystical literature of Spain, and especially that of St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila, is

fed by similes, metaphors, equivalences, and symbols—in a word, by a symbolic imagery—taken in large part from Islam. (We explore the historical routes by which this influence arrived in our study San Juan de la Cruz y el Islam, q.v.)

I should also note that although this essay will focus on the close parallels between many images and symbols in St John and St Teresa and those used for hundreds of years (so that they finally constitute a literary "tradition") by Islamic mystics, I do not thereby deny the fundamental influence of other, Western, literatures on the two Spanish writers. In the case of St John of the Cross, influences on his writings may be traced from Castillian poetry, the "cult of Italy," popular poetry, the cancionero tradition, the "divine lyric," and the Song of Songs, as a number of scholars have pointed out. What I will attempt to show is that even when St John evidences having read these sources and closely imitates many lines and many turns of phrase, and even the style, found in those other traditions, the rich semantic content that his symbols hold coincides to a remarkable degree with the semantic content of those same symbols among the Sufis. Thus we will see how, even though St John of the Cross imitates lines from Garcilaso's Eclogue II ("hizo que de mi choza me saliese por el silencio de la noche oscura": "made me leave my hut and go into the silence of the dark night'), he elevates the phrase to the level of symbol, and the details with which he presents the image seem closer to Niffari and Junayd than to the spiritual generalizations of Sebastián of Córdoba, whom we know St John of the Cross read. St John is, of course, stylistically distant from the Arabs, and yet a substantial part of his Symbolism would appear to belong to the Islamic literary tradition. The case of St Teresa is similar: although she buttresses her conceit of the interior castle filled with "rooms" with Biblical passages ("In my father's house there are many mansions," John 14:2), the symbolic conception of seven concentric castles marking the mystic's progress through seven spiritual stations seems virtually a "direct quotation" from the frequent literary formulations of the same image presented for hundreds of years by Muslim sufi writers.

With that said, let us look at the work of these two Spanish Christian mystics. We will begin with St John of the Cross.

ST JOHN OF THE CROSS

St John may be a somewhat surprising "Sufi initiate," yet he would seem to be quite familiar with the codes and "secret language" of the Islamic trobar clus, and to employ the same hermetic language that many Muslim mystical poets employed. We, like any elementary reader of Carl Jung, Evelyn Underhill, or Mircea Eliade, may take as a given that certain fundamental symbols or images (light, fire, darkness) recur in all religions. But that is not precisely my argument with respect to St John of the Cross. I will attempt to show that St John's knowledge of the semantic content of some of the most important Islamic symbols is altogether too specific, too detailed, to be merely a casual coincidence that one might expect in any religious person. Even in some cases in which the symbol under consideration might be the legacy of universal mysticism-such as the ascent of the mystical mountain or the transmutation of the soul into a birdthe particular way in which St John portrays the details of the image closely parallels the Sufi counterpart. As we might expect, there are divergences between St John and the Muslims-that is only natural—and yet I have been able to document more than thirty of these fixed conceits or shared symbols. In this essay we will look at only a few of the most significant of these, while noting that I have chronicled in another essay the work of the medieval European mystics who in one way or another echo this Sufi symbolism that antedates them by hundreds of years.

(a) Wine and mystical drunkenness.

Although the Sufis were not the first to use wine or the vineyard as the archetype of spiritual wisdom—we find the association as early as Gilgamesh and the Mishna (Eliade, Patterns 284-6)—we are obliged to note that after several hundred years of its employment in the mystical literature of Islam, the conceit of wine, understood invariably as mystical ecstasy, becomes a very part of the language. It is probably this lexicalization of the image that explains the several cases of

wine/vineyard symbolism that I have been able to document in a number of medieval European mystics; for this, cf. San Juan de la Cruz y el Islam. But no mystical tradition insists so greatly upon the trope of the wine of ecstatic drunkenness as the Muslim tradition does. St John of the Cross always uses the figure of wine in that same sense; he would appear to be aware of the Sufi "exegetical key" when he sees in his "seasoned wine" a "most great mercy which God makes to those souls who partake of it, for He intoxicates them with the Holy Spirit with a wine of soft love. .. which is that which God gives to those who are now perfect." In other lines, in which there is obvious allusion to the wine and vineyards of the Song of Songs ("In the interior wine-cellar of my Belovtd did I drink" [Spiritual Canticle, II. 81-2]), we are once more in the presence of an ecstatic experience: "the soul becomes God" (CB 26:6; VO 700)

We find this same equation of wine and ecstasy among the Sufis, who are quite conscious of employing a technical vocabulary. In declaiming the verse from Ibn al-Fāriḍ, "Nous avons bu a la mémoire du Bien-Aimé un vin dont nous nous sommes enivrés avant la création de la vigne," Birūni and Nāblusi have this to say:

Biruni — Sache que cette qacida est composée dans la langue technique des çoufis, dans le lexique desquels le Vin, avec ses noms et ses attributs, signifie ce que Dieu a infusé en leur âme de connaissance, de désir et d'amour. . . Le vin, ici, c'est la Connaissance de Dieu et le désir ardent d'aller vers Dieu (Dermenghem, L'Éloge 117).

Nablusi — Le Vin signifie la boisson de L'Amour Divin qui resulte de la contemplation des traces de ses beaux Noms. Car cet amour engendre l'ivresse et l'oubli complet de tout ce qui existe au monde (119).

The Muslims tend to be more specific and more sophisticated in their employment of this symbol of the wine than St John of the Cross, who would appear to have a vague and distant, though accurate, memory of the invariable equivalences. Thus, for Ibn 'Arabi the manifestation of God occurs at four levels represented by images of drinking: the first is dhawq

(tasting), the second *shurb* (the drink itself, or the wine), the third is *riy* (extinction of one's thirst), and the fourth *sukr* (drunkenness). (*Tarjumān al Ashwāq*, 75; hereafter TAA⁴). If ever a lexicalized "conceit" existed in Sufism, it is this one: wine understood as ecstatic drunkenness. The Persian poets Jalāl aldin Rūmī, Shabastarī, and Ḥāfīz devote entire poems to this drink, which was forbidden by the Qur'ān but celebrated by poets at a new secret level throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In his "Wine of Rapture," Shabastarī exclaims:

Drink wine! For the bowl is the face of The Friend.

Drink wine! For the cup is his eye. . .

Drink this wine and, dying to self,

You will be freed from the spell of self. .

What sweetness! What intoxication! What blissful ecstasy!

(Lederer, 34-35)

The impassioned Rūmi is quite close to St John: "the heat of the wine fired my breast and flooded my veins," Rūmi exclaims (Nicholson 15), and St John appears to follow him almost word for word: "just as the drink spreads and flows through all the members and veins of the body, so does this communication from God spread in substance throughout the soul" (CB 26:5; VO 700).

But by this late moment of splendor in the poetry of Persia, the symbol of wine was already very old; the Persians had received it as a fully-worked-out trope from Sa'di (cf. Smith, Sufi Path 113), Semnāni, Al-Ghazzāli(cf. Pareja 295). One of the first times we find the figure documented is in the ninth century, when Bisṭāmi and Yaḥyā ibn Mu'ādh exchange impassioned mystical correspondence in code, employing, as Annemarie Schimmel points out, precisely the terminology of wine:

Sufi hagiography often mentions a letter sent to Bayezid [Bistami, d. 874] by Yaḥyā ibn Mu'ādh, who wrote: "I am intoxicated from having drunk so deeply of the cup of His love—". Abū Yazīd [Bayezīd] wrote to him in reply: "Some one else has drunk up the seas of Heaven and earth, but his thirst is not yet slaked: his tongue is hanging out and he is crying 'Is there any more?" (Abu Nu'aym al-Iṣfahani,

Hilyat ul-awliya', Vol. 10, Cairo, 1932, p. 40, quoted in Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions 51)

Naturally, theorists of Islam give great weight to this simile, considering it to be of vital importance in the understanding of this mystical literature à clef and often devoting extensive commentary to it. Often, indeed, it is those critics, gleaning specific nuances from the symbol, who once again remind us, in a startling way, of the closeness of St John of the Cross and the Sufi mystics. Laleh Bakhtiar underscores the emanations received by God's mystic and changing his soul: "Wine is a symbol for the eestasy which causes the mystic to be beside himself in the presence of a vision of emanation of the Beloved. . . . Wine is the catalyst which causes a motion between the mystic's soul and the spiritual vision" (Bakhtiar, Sufi Expressions 113, emphasis ours). Similarly, when St John comments upon his enigmatic lines "Al toque de centella, / al adobado vino. / emisiones de bálsamo divino" (CB 25:5; VO 697), he alludes to the "exercise which these souls perform inwardly upon the will, moved as they are by . . . two mercies and inward visits which the Beloved makes to them, which are called here "the spark is struck and the seasoned wine is drunk" (ibid.).

In addition to these images, St John of the Cross employs the variant of the *must* [or dark wine] of the pomegranate to indicate ecstatic knowledge and rapture, noting how, under the apparent multiplicity of the grains of the pomegranate, there lies the absolute and indisputable unity of God, represented by the intoxicating drink:

Because, just as from many grains of the pomegranate a single must emerges when they are eaten, so from all these marvels. . . of God infused into the soul there emerges a fruition and delight of love, which is the liquor of the Holy Spirit. . . divine liquor (CB 37:8; VO 730).

It is precisely this fruit—the pomegranate—that marks the Sufi's arrival at the fourth stage on the road or in the mystical garden, and that symbolises, Bakhtiar says, "the integration of

multiplicity into unity, in the station of Union" (30). The Book of Certainty, insists on the pomegranate as emblem of the essence and ultimate oneness of God: "The pomegranate, which is the fruit of the Paradise of the Essence. . . in the Station of Union. . . is the direct consciousness of the Essence (ash-shuhud adh-dhātī)" (27-28).

The consequence of imbibing this spiritual wine or must is, as we might expect, not only knowledge of the divinity but also eestatic drunkenness. Once more, the mystical traditions of East and West converge. The "gentle drunkenness" (CB 25:8; VO 697), whose relatively prolonged duration is underscored by St John, occupies a very specific place on the mystical path of 'Ala' al-Dawla Semnāni: number 87 of the ninth stage of degree of eestasy (Bakhtiar 96). In his Kashf al-Mahjub, Al-Hujwiri makes a distinction: "there are two kinds of intoxication: /) with the wine of affections (Mawaddat) and 2) with the cup of love (Maḥabbat)" (117). In his "Spiritual Canticle" St John celebrates drunkenness with fewer theoretical details but also without indirection: After drinking in the Bridegroom's (or Beloved's) "interior wine cellar," "when I walked out / over that wide plain / I no longer knew anything / and I lost the cattle [i.e., "livestock" and therefore prob. "sheep"] that once I followed." It is remarkable how close those lines are to Rumi's Diwan-c-Shams Tabrizi: "I have no task but drunkenness and clamour." And yet St John finds this spiritual drunkenness an important task. He acquires through it a most prudent and advisable lucidity, for it implies a forgetfulness of and oblivion to the world: "that drink of God's most high wisdom which it [the soul] drank there makes it forget all things of the world, [which] in comparison with that taste is purest ignorance" (CB 26:13; VOp. 701). In his Kashf al-Mahjub. Al-Hujwiri had expressed the same insight in virtually the same words: drunkenness is "the lover's closing his eyes to the things of the world, in order to see the Creator in his Heart."

Yet as we noted earlier, the literature that the Sufis produce shows them to be generally more sophisticated and detailed in their elaboration of these technical conceits than St John is.

Thus, we find in the Sufis the extreme delicacy (not found in St John) of distinguishing between two types of mystical states: the mystical state of drunkenness (sukr) and the mystical state wherein one is sober (sahw). Al-Hujwirī (11th c.) reviewed the long debate over which of the two states should be preferred. Al-Bisṭāmī and his followers preferred drunkenness, while Al-Hujwīrī, following Junayd (who in turn is following his teacher), opts initially for sobriety. The arguments by which the distinction is made are of great subtlety, and they lead us to a curious question: Would St John of the Cross be classified among the "drunkards," like Al-Bisṭāmī? In an unexpected and moving apotheosis, Al-Hujwīrī discovers that at the highest level of ecstasy, the apparent difference between the two states is obliterated:

In short, where true mystics tread, sobriety and intoxication are the effect of difference (*ikhtilaf*) and when the Sultan of Truth displays His beauty, both sobriety and intoxication appear to be intruders (*tufayli*), because the boundaries of both are joined, and the end of the one is the beginning of the other. . . . In union all separations are negated, as the poet says:

When the morning-star of wine rises, The drunken and the sober are as one (180).

But let us return to the ecstatic drunkenness celebrated by St John of the Cross and most of the Muslim mystics. A drunkard speaks incoherently; likewise, a mystical drunkard will speak delirious words that somehow translate the untranslatable aspects of his spiritual experience. Once again, the Christian saint would appear to follow in the footsteps of the Sufis mystics who preceded him. From the martyr Hallāj⁵ to the late Spanish-American Sufi sect of the Shādhilites, there is an insistence that the true mystic is not the master of his own language:

If the drinking persists and continues until the veins and joints of the lover are swollen with the mysterious lights of God, then comes the saturation, which sometimes causes [the drinker] even to lose consciousness of all things sensible and intelligible, and the subject becomes no longer aware of

what others say or what he himself says, and this is drunkenness (Asin, Shādhilis 298).

The problem of incoherence becomes more acute when the spiritual delirium of these drunkards is translated into poetry, for it often becomes unintelligible, like that of Ibn 'Arabi or Ibn al-Farid. (We should note that in the Middle Ages the Sufis were producing a poetry which today we would consider "surrealistic.") The enigmatic lines of Ibn 'Arabi's Tarjumān, like St John's, often elude rational understanding, and the author, Ibn 'Arabi himself, meditating upon the difficulties of human language in translating the Godhead, admits that many passages are mysterious even to him. For his delirious (or rapturous) verses—that "non-sense" that St John so staunchly defended in his own behalf (in the prologue to the "Spiritual Canticle" he tells us that his images "seem more nonsense than words set into reason") - the Sufi mystic employs the technical term shath, and the fact is that such verses are a very common literary phenomenon. In his Kitāb al-Lum'a, Al-Sarrāj (10th century) explains the origin of the term:

Just as a river in flood overflows its banks (shaṭaḥa 'l-ma' fi'l-nahr) so the Sufi, when his ecstasy grows strong, cannot contain himself and finds relief in strange and obscure utterances, technically known as shaṭḥ (Nicholson, Kitāb 100).

Delirium is a universal phenomenon, but St John of the Cross would appear somehow to be familiar with the specific image associated with that Arabic word shath ("that which is excessive or exceeds its proper bounds; excess," according to the Arabic-English Dictionary), which signifies "that which overflows its normal banks":

Who could write that which He allows loving souls to understand? No one can, not even the souls themselves can; for that is the reason that figures, comparisons, and similes overflow something of what they feel and out of the abundance of the spirit pour secrets and mysteries that appear to be nonsense (VO 626).

(b) The dark night of the soul.

The symbol of the dark night of the soul, St John's most famous and most complex figure, left the distinguished St John scholar Jean Baruzi perplexed. Baruzi could never discover the sources that might have inspired this trope, and so he asserted St John's originality: "Aucun tradition n'avait besoin d'être invoquée pour que nous puissons suivre le poete" (147). Baruzi explained that the "night"—a metaphorical night —would be the way that particular spiritual moment of mystical experience would naturally have imposed itself on St John's intuition and his language."

The clues that St John himself offers to this figure of speech are quite enigmatic. In *Dark Night* I:viii, after dividing the mystical state into a "sensual night" and a "spiritual night," he announces that he will speak briefly about the "sensual night" or (more precisely) "night of sense": "since more is written of it, as of a thing that is more common; and we shall pass on to treat *more fully* of the spiritual night, since very little has been said of this, either in speech [plática] or in writing, and very little is known of it, even by experience" (Peers, Dark Night 61).

It is hard to say what concrete sources St John might be thinking of here, hard to know whether he is recalling authors who either allude to the "bitter and terrible" spiritual stage or "dwelling" [morada] whose specific technical name is "night" or just describe the same experience that St John has called dark night. What is certainly the case is that given the subtle distinction that St John establishes between the "night of sense" and the "night of spirit," and given also his indirect but clear allusion to both oral and written sources, we are allowed, I think, to suspect that St John is acknowledging a spiritual tradition for his symbol.

This tradition is not easy to document, but certain partial antecedents for this enigmatic night have been found. A number (some close, some not so close to St John's figure) have been proposed by critics. Dámaso Alonzo (La poesía de San Juan de la Cruz. Desde esta ladera) points out the sketchy symbolic outlines of the night in Sebastián de Córdoba and the stylistic

formulation) that seem to be "recalled" by St John. In his book St. John of the Cross: The Poet and the Mystic, Colin Peter Thompson explains that the "dark night" is associable in the last analysis with the divine caligo or "luminous darkness" of the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, although Thompson admits that the symbol is much more elaborate in St John and that there are fundamental differences between the two writers: "[St John's] dark night is an intimate personal experience compounded of many features, whereas Dionysius is concerned primarily with the metaphysical gulf which lies between the human and the divine" (8).

Other critics agree to simply accept the differences: "the mystics... speak of the darkness of the night of purgation, and the dark night of the soul, but the Divine Darkness is in a different category from these."

Indeed, despite the fact that St John quotes the Pseudo-Dionysius directly, and despite his undeniable general familiarity with the Areopagite's doctrines, with the Divine Darkness and "lightning-bolt of darkness"—that darkness which is an excess of light and which implies the transcendental knowledge of God that one cannot achieve through discursive reason—the problem of the apparent *artistic* originality of St John's "dark night of the soul" is still apparently unresolved.

Perhaps we can feel that we are somewhat closer to St John when we read St Gregory's *Moralia*, in which St Gregory does not limit himself, as the Pseudo-Dionysius does, to images of darkness and light, but rather includes interpretations of the sporadic mentions of "night" in Job and the Psalms (Psalms 42:8 and 16:7 [King James] and Job 3:3 and 3:23, for example) in terms of a spiritual experience, a spiritual process. It must be pointed out that the symbol of the dark night in St Gregory's biblical commentaries is a variable thing, whose semantic content changes from one moment to the next—but the same can be said of St John of the Cross. St Gregory sometimes understands the biblical night as an "excess of light" whose

power blots out the natural light of the intellect (and here we are very close to the Pseudo-Dionysius), sometimes as the dark night of this corporeal life, sometimes again as the *tribulationis noctem* which (we fully agree with Fr. Lawrence Sullivan's assessment) are quite close to those same tribulations in St John: "The *Nox* of Psalm 41:9 [New Catholic Bible; 42:8, King James] is... applied by Gregory (II 284) to a period in the spiritual life of all souls wherein they feel the withdrawal of God's protection, the loss of former consolation, spiritual weakness and emptiness and overwhelming sadness and darkness. This is a passive purification of the soul" (Sullivan 62-3).

Without in the slightest denying these probable Christian influences, we are forced, I think, to concede that St John's complex night overflows the boundaries of its supposed sources. We should recall—without entering into the small details that have so occupied the critics—that St John semantically expands and unfolds his symbolic "night," glossing it variously as a "movement which the soul makes toward God," a "deprivation of the savor in the appetite of things," a "faith," and "straits and sorrows," among many other senses. Sometimes we are close to the Pseudo-Dionysius: the night darkens the spirit but so as to give it light, for it empties the soul of the Created World in order that the soul may enjoy the Heavenly (NIII: 9:1; VO 580). So plural are the meanings of the symbol in St John that he seems to want two distinct treatises-the Ascent of Mount Carmel and The Dark Night of the Soul—to simultaneously explain his poem "On a dark night." And yet at least some of the modalities of his complex symbolic night (such as "straitness" versus "breadth" understood as alternate spiritual states) are simply not to be found among the possible sources adduced by critics up to now. Once again: when we turn to Islamic literature, many of the enigmas of St John's most famous symbol are resolved.

Asin Palacios brilliantly initiated the explorations into this literature. In his essay "Un precursor hispano-musulmán de San Juan de la Cruz" and his posthumous book *Shādhilīs y alumbrados*, Asin (somewhat timidly and, as we all know, under heavy attack from the critics of his time—when not utterly

ignored by them) associated St John's "dark night" of the soul with that of Ibn 'Abbad of Ronda and Abu 'l-Hasan al-Shadhili. Asin was the first to allow the possibility of a common source that would help to explain certain coincidences between Islamic mysticism and its Christian counterpart—such coincidences as the "dark night of the soul" conceived as a stage on a spiritual journey. Although the notion of Islam's being influenced by Western, Christian monasticism, an idea defended by Asín in his Islam cristianizado, is still controversial, we should recognise that some Sufis may in fact have been influenced by such authors as the Pseudo-Dionysius. But still, even supposing that medieval Muslim mystics might have received the rudiments of the symbol of the "dark night" from primitive Christianity, they elaborated upon it obsessively for hundreds of years, making it their own and endowing it with complex nuances that are not only immediately recognisable as Islamic but also-as Asin himself admits-impossible to trace to neoplatonic sources in the West. And it is some of these "untraceable" nuances of the dark night that we find in the writings of St John of the Cross, who would appear to have received the symbol-which could conceivably be of ancient Christian origin-in its now-Islamicized incarnation.

In his early essay, Asin studied the dark night as the mystical image employed by such latter-day Sufis as the Shādhilites of the eighteenth century; he did not explore the widespread occurrence and complexity of the symbol in Muslim mystics of earlier times. As we explore the symbol, however, we will find in those earlier writers and religious men several different modalities of the symbol, and those modalities are also to be found, as we have noted, in St John. And in almost all these variants from the earlier centuries we find a presage of the spiritual night that St John of the Cross later moulded as no one in the sixteenth century had done.

As early as the twelfth century, Rumi celebrated his spiritual night in impassioned verses: "Into my heart's night / Along a narrow way / I groped, and lo: The light, / and infinite land of day" (Arberry, Sufism117).

Abū al-Muwāhib al-Shādhilī makes much the same ecstatic exclamation in his Maxims of Illumination:

Oh night of love and happiness at home
Its joy drove our steeds to dancing gaits in merriment... (48)
Obscurity is not disgraceful to the man of perfection.
For the "night of Power" [Koran, s. 97]
is concealed while of all the nights 'tis the best (Jabra Jurgi 59).

The night is not, however, always a phenomenon to be joyously celebrated by the Muslims; often it is seen in terms of grief, pain, and anguish. Thus the author of the *Book of Certainty* points out "the complete absence of the Lore of Certainty [that] corresponds to the darkest of nights" (67) and Lāhiji (conceiving the night much as St Gregory does) feels it to be the night of our *condition humaine*: "Assumer la condition humaine, c'est se trouver dans cette nuit, ou plutôt, c'est être cette nuit" (Corbin, *Trilogie* 38).

One of the most complex theorists of Sufism, the thirteenthcentury Najm ad-din al-Kubrā, whose treatise Fawā'iḥ al-Jāmāl wa-Fawātih al-Jalāl (which I have translated into Arabic) Henri Corbin discusses in his book L'homme de lumitre dans le soutisme irannian, makes the distinction (and by so doing reminds us of the subtlety of St John's formulation) between the "Nuit lumineuse de la sur-conscience et la Nuit ténébreuse de l'inconscience. La Ténèbre divine... la 'Nuit des symboles' au sein de laquelle l'âme progresse, ce n'est nullement la Ténèbre" (20-21). Sa'di, on the other hand, says that he-exactly like St John-can "appreciate the prolongation of the long, dark night" (Smith 113) as a hard but necessary spiritual stage, and in a formulation still closer to St John Shabastari's famous Secret Rose Garden contains a line that is known to every Sufi: "Nuit lumineuse, midi obscur!" (Corbin, Trilogie 117) (This is the counterpart of St John's "brighter than the light of midday."10) Shabastari's line has been the object of countless commentaries, among them that by Lāhījī, which is as complex and profound as St John's itself:

Comment énoncerai-je ce qu'il en est d'un cas si subtil? Nuit lumineuse, Midi obscur! (v. 125), s'écrie encore le poète de la Roserai du Mystère. Son commentateur le sait: pour qui a expérimenté cet état mystique, una allusion suffit. . . . Et Lâhîjî s'enchante de cette Nuit lumineuse (hab-e roshan) qui est Midi obscur, mystique aurore bóreale. . . . C'est bien une Nuit, puisque lumière noire et abscondité de la pure Essence, nuit de puisqu'elle est en même temps la théophanie de l'absconditum, en la multitude infinie de ses formes théophaniques... Midi, milieu du Jour. . . c'est-à-dire plein jour de lumières suprasensibles. . . que les mystiques perçoivent par leur organe de lumière, leur l'oeil intérieur. . : et pourtant Midi obscur, puisque la multitude de ces formes théophaniques son aussi les 70,000 voiles de lumière et de ténèbres qui occultant la pure Essence. . . . Nuit de la pure Essence, sans couleur ni détermination, inaccessible au sujet connaissant. . . et pourtant Nuit lumineuse, puisqu'elle est celle que fait être ce sujet en se faisant voir par lui, celle qui le fait voir en le faisant être midi obscur des formes théophaniques, certes, puisque livrées a elle-mêmes elles seraint ténèbres et non-êtres, et que dans leur manifesation même, "elles se montrent cachées!" (Corbin, Trilogie 177)

This "divine night of the unknowable" of Suhrawardi (ibid.) and Avicena (ibid., 20) marks distinct dwellings or stages (moradas) on the pathway to God. For Semnani, it is the sixth stage, the stage of "aswad nūrāni" or "black light"; for the critic Corbin the "luminous night" is "l'étape initiatique la plus périlleuse" (151). For both Lāhiji and Najm Rāzi, the night implies the ecstatic culmination of the mystical experience—the seventh and final stage, which is that of black light and which is "envahissante, anéantissante" (161), just as it is for St John. (We are close here, too, to the "lightning-bolt of darkness" of the Pseudo-Dionysius; we should note how the Sufis appear to gradually adapt and reinterpret the ideas of the earlier mystic in terms of a spiritual process, and how this brings them closer to St John.) Niffari, from the early tenth century, six hundred years before St John of the Cross, and with a theoretical intention that is clear enough to remind us inevitably of St John, also sees his personal "dark night" as a milestone on the pathway that leads to ultimate ecstasy:

Il me posa dans la station de la Nuit, puis Il me dit: quand te survient la Nuit tiens-toi devant Moi et saisis en ta main la Nescience (gahl): par elle tu detourneras de Moi la science des cieux et de la terre, et en la detournant, tu verras Ma descente (Mawāqif) (Nwyia, Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh 105).

The Persian poet Rūmi envisions how in concrete terms the mystic should embrace and accept this "night" which will lead him to precisely that intuition of the essential oneness of God:

Take the Leyla 'Night' (layl) on your breast, o Majnun.11

The night is the secret chamber of tawhid [oneness of God], and the day idolatry (shirk) and multiplicity. . . (Schimmel, Triumphal Sun 346).

In the thirteenth century, Ibn 'Arabī repeated the theoretical assertion made by so many of his fellow Sufis (the assertion that was somehow to be picked up by St John of the Cross in the Renaissance): the "night" marks a stage or dwelling on the mystical road, and this stage is very close to the longed-for stage of Union, Oneness. It is the station of nearness (TAA 146) that is closest to the "risings of the dawn" or final possession of God. For Ibn 'Arabi, as for so many other Sufis, and St John as well, the ecstatic night is illuminated by lightning-bolts, abrupt manifestations of the divine essence. Often the parallels between St John and the Eastern mystics are quite close: in his thirteenthcentury Tā'iyyāt al Kubrā (The Greater Poem Rhyming in T), Ibn al-Farid makes poetry out of a trope which St John will employ in the sixteenth—the night of the senses: "And thou, illumined, knowest by His light / Thou find'st His actions in the sense's night" (Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions 277).

So important is this symbolic night for the Sufis that the author of *The Book of Certainty* associates the name of the most famous female lover in Islamic literature, the Muslim Beatrice or Juliet, Layla, with the spiritual dark night. Little wonder "Layla" means "night" in Arabic: "in Arabic stories and lyrics the beloved is so often named Layla (Night) for the night is above all a symbol of the Passive Perfection of Beauty. . . . [The]

lover's desire may . . . be taken to represent . . . his aspiration to the Truth Itself" (63-64).

Given this almost inevitable equivalence, we should not be surprised that even among the Spanish Moriscos of the sixteenth century, a group whose culture was being slowly strangled, we should hear the last echoes of this special spiritual night, with the night still clearly understood as a stage of spiritual or moral suffering, as we see in these lines from a *zajal* to Muhammad, a version of which in *aljamiado* has been transcribed by Julián Ribera and Asin Palacios¹³:

Quien quiera buena ventura Alcançar grada de altura Porponga en la noche escura l'aççala sobre Mahommad. Let him who wishes good fortune and to reach a stage of highness propose in the dark night a prayer to Mohammad.

Curiously, even the words that rhyme with "noche oscura" in the poems ("buena ventura" in the anonymous zajal, "dichosa ventura" in the famous lyrics of St John) are the same.

We have seen that the Sufis, in their widespread employment and elaboration of the symbol of the "dark night," would appear to foreshadow the sudden reappearance of the elusive "dark night" of St John of the Cross into the Spain of the Siglo de Oro-in fact make the appearance of the figure in St John seem not so strange or original as Western criticism has so long thought it to be. But the parallels or "coincidences" between the two employments go further yet. Asin Palacios (and it is only fair to repeat his words) has already explored how as part of St John's explanation of or glosses on the dark night, the poet uses a precise terminology that would seem to repeat very closely the terminology used by the Shādhilites hundreds of years before: The Shādhilites associated bast or expansion of spirit, which is an emotion of spiritual consolation and sweetness, with the day, and the gabd or "straitness/contraction" of spirit, the state of anguish or desolation, with the night, and particularly with the dark night of the soul (Asin Palacios, "Un precursor" 262, 272)

wherein God plunges the mystic into despair so as to separate him from all that is other than Him. Surprisingly (because it seems so counter-intuitive), St John prefers the night or *qabd* to the day, as the Shādhilites did, and Asin discovered that St John repeats in precise detail the nuances that the two technical terms possess in Arabic:

The technical term *qabd*, which as we have seen is the axis on which all Shadhili theory turns, derives from the Arabic root *qabada*, which has the following direct or metaphoric senses: "to take," "to bind," "to squeeze or make tight," "to pick up" or "grasp," "to contract or shrink," "to feel disgust," "to be sad," "to experience anguish," "to have a tightness at the heart." The term, then, functions in Arabic texts with the same rich variety of ideas that St John of the Cross expresses with the following Spanish words, repeated over and over in *The Dark Night of the Sout*. "aprieto" ["straits"], "apretura" ["tightness"], "prisión" ["prison"], "oprimir" ["oppress"], "poner en estrecho" ["constrain, put in a tight spot"], "tortura" ["torture"], "angustia" ["anguish"], "pena" ["sorrow"].

Its opposite, the term *bast*, which in Arabic has the direct meaning "to extend," "to widen," "to dilate or stretch," "to open the hand," and, metaphorically, "to become happy," "to be comfortable," "to enjoy or take delight in," "to feel a sense of well-being," "to be glad," is also a synonym of the Spanish word *anchura*, "breadth," which with its two values, direct and figurative, is also used by St John of the Cross, though less frequently than "straitness" (Asin, *Shādhilis* 117-118).

And in attempting to anticipate his critics' possible objection that there may have been a common early-Christian source for both the Shādhilites' and St John's use of these terms, Asin notes, referring mainly to qabq and bast, that "[eliminating] . . . the technical terms and the metaphorical images common to both schools because deriving from the same Christian and neoplatonic tradition, there still remains a not inconsiderable residue of common symbols and words that lack

precedent in that tradition and that are exclusive to the Shādhilite school and the mysticism of St John of the Cross" (270-1).

The close parallels between St John and the Shādhilites do not end even there, for St John's "dark night" contains within itself and communicates the precise triple figuration of the Sufi qabd: the "straits of the soul" because of the soul's purgation both passive and active; "spiritual desolation"; a "dark night" in whose darkness God reveals Himself to the soul more often than during the day of illumination or breadth.

Asin limits his study to the case of the Shādhilites, but it is important to note that the presence of the terms qabd and bast in Islam is much, much older. Massingnon points out that they are part of the Qur'anic lexicon, for they are in surah II, 246 of the Book ("God is close, but He is open-handed also"). We might ponder the literary significance of being able to document the technical vocabulary of St John of the Cross in the Qur'an of the Muslims, of the fact that the Qur'an may be one of St John's literary "contexts"... But there is yet more: several Sufi commentators of different times and traditions repeat and comment upon these technical terms, among them, Al-Ghazzālī (cf. Asin, Espiritualidad III:165), Ibn 'Arabi (Tarjumān 56), Qushayri (cf. Nwyia, Ibn 'Atā' Allāh 261-262), Al-Sarrāj, Ibn al-Fāriḍ (cf. Pareja, Religiosidad musulmana 320). For the theorist Semnāni, qabd and bast correspond to stages 85 and 86 of the ninth register or list of the mystical path (Bakhtiar 96-97), while for the more poetic Kūbrā (Fawā'iḥ al-Jāmāl wa-Fawātiḥ al-Jalāl 43) "straitness and breadth are the heart's savor [or delight]," (algabd wa 'l- bast dhawq fi 'l- qalb').

Annemarie Schimmel points out that the predilection for the state of *qabd* comes to Ibn 'Abbād of Ronda from 'Junayd as well as by the school of Abū Madyan' (*Mystical Dimensions* 253). Junayd defended his strange preference in this way: "when He [God] presses me through fear He makes me disappear from myself, but when He expands me through hope He gives me back to myself" (*ibid.*, p. 129). In the eleventh century, other mystics, such as Al-Hujwīri, alluded to the debates between the

shaykhs (masters or teachers) over which of the two states, *qabd* and *bast*, was preferable. When all is said and done, St John of the Cross's preference for straitness brings him closer to Junayd, Ibn 'Abbād, Abū 'l-Ḥasan al Shādhalī, and even St Gregory, who in the *Moralia* briefly makes the association between day and spiritual peace, night and suffering. 15

In the light of all the above, it does not seem reckless to suggest that the curious parts into which St John divides his mystical night—the three clearly delimited moments "beginning of night," "midnight," and "end of night" or "period preceding the dawn" (S II: 2:1; VO 395)—may also be derived from Muslim or Arabic sources. In Arabic, the term 'atamah means "first third of the night" (Cowan, Arabic-English Dictionary) and some Muslim mystics such as Dhu 'l-Nūn make mention of a tripartite night. St John and Ibn 'Arabi are very similar in this also: for both, "the last third of the Night" (Tarjumān 95) implies the nearness of the dawn of divine knowledge. ¹⁶

Such stubborn insistence on this secret and initiatory night among the Sufis could perhaps have its origin in-or at least bear some relation to—the legend of the night-journey or isra. which Muhammad, "de nocte et nullo vidente" in the words of Raimundo Martín (Asín, Escatalogía 583), makes to the seventh heaven. The origin of the legend is, once again, Qur'anic. Although sura XVII:1 refers very specifically to the experience of Muhammad the Prophet, the Sufis (as both Massignon [Passion 312] and Asín point out), "appropriate the legend and have the audacity to arrogate to themselves the role of protagonists" (Asin, Escatalogía 76). Annemarie Schimmel agrees: "The Night-Journey, the ascension to heaven to which the Koran (Sura 17/1) alludes [,] ... has been interpreted from at least the days of Bayazid Bestami as the prototype of the mystic's flight into the immediate Divine presence and thus as a symbol for the highest spiritual experience" (Triumphal Sun 285). In the Book of Certainty, we see precisely how Sufis would comment upon and transform the Qur'anic verses into personal spiritual experience:

Verily we sent it down in the Night of Power. / And how canst thou tell the Night of Power? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. / The Angels and the Spirit descend therein from the source of all decrees by the leave of their Lord. Peace it is until the break of dawn. (Qur'an, XCVII).

[The] Chapter of Power, which if interpreted with reference to the microcosm may be taken as a hymn of the perfect soul's marriage with the Spirit, the "Night of Power" being the soul of the Saint, into which alone descends the Spirit (62).

Such mystical and allegorical commentaries on the mi'rāj or ascent by Muhammad into heaven as this one-we should recall also Ibn 'Arabi's Book of the Night-Journey to the Majesty of the Most Generous (Asin, Escatalogia 77) and perhaps Suhrawardi's Treatise on the Night-Journey (Nasr, Three Muslim Sages 59)-form a consistent tradition which once again strengthens the symbol of the dark night within Islam. Specific details of this tradition bring to mind St John. Bakhtiar's description (84) of this divine "Night of Might" of the Sufis might almost be a comment on the poem in which the soul of St John goes out on a dark night "without being observed": "The ascent of the Sufi occurs in what is known as the Night of Power, when the Heavens open. . . . [His] soul is as the darkness of night [like St John: "in the darkness. . . without [other] light or guide"], [his] Heart, now full, totally reflects the sun [in the midst of the darkness, St John's heart gives off light in the same way: "without light or guide, save that which burned in my heart. / This light guided me More surely than the light of noonday."] which brings tranquillity, until the break of dawn." St John, too, in his night "more lovely than the dawn," at last sinks into a limitless peace: "I remained, lost in oblivion, . . . all ceased, and I abandoned myself" (VO, p. 363).

The work in which the Prophet's mi'rāj is described (a work translated into Latin and the Romance languages under King Alfonso X the Learntd [cf. Muñoz Sendino, Escala, and Metlitzki, Matter of Araby), is of course titled the Liber Scale

Machometi (ms. Lat. 6064, fols. 105v/126v, Paris). Might there be distant echoes in this ascent of Muhammad to the ascent in the poem of St John of the Cross?-though of course this is a fairly common spiritual leitmotif which St John himself associates with St Bernard and St Thomas (cf. above, note ?). Whatever the case, it is simply impossible that the word ascent, within the specific context of a secret and nocturnal "rising-up" of the spirit into the heavens, not remind one of the Muslim mi'rāj. St John of the Cross traces the general lines of the legend when he equates his own night-ascent with the "secret contemplation" during which "the soul ascends and climbs up to [lit. "rises to scale, know and possess"] a knowledge and possession of the good things and treasures of heaven" (NII:18:1 (Dark Night 164); VO 601). Of heaven—curiously, St John here would seem closer to the legend of Muhammad's ascent into heaven than to the Sufis who transformed the myth into mysticism.

This mystical night of St John of the Cross and the Sufis becomes, last of all, the desired dawn of the beginnings—still hazy—of divine knowledge. In her essay titled "San Juan de la Cruz y Algazel: paralelos," María Teresa Narváez notes that Asín Palacios seems to have missed the close parallel between Al-Ghazzālī and St John of the Cross in this aspect of the trope. Asín's comments on Al-Ghazzālī's use of the image are as follows:

Sometimes in his *Ihyā* 'adapting the conventional technical terminology of the Sufis, [Al-Ghazzāli] calls the emerging lights and splendors of divine intuition "levantes" or "auroras" (*Tawāli*') [sunrises or dawns]. [He says that] the brilliance of these splendors, though still slight, is nonetheless enough to blot out on the horizon of consciousness those things that are not God, just as the Sun with its still-pale splendor blots out the light of the stars (*Espiritualidad* 279).

But let us look at how closely St John follows Al-Ghazzālī's version of the image when St John glosses his lines "la noche sosegada/en par de los levantes del aurora" ("night sunk in a profound/hush, with the stir of dawn about the skies" in the Nims version) St John's words on this image make the schematic dawn à la divine in Sebastián de Córdoba pale by comparison:

the obscurity of the night and reveal the light of day, so this spirit, calmed and quiet in God, is raised from the darkness of natural knowledge to the *morning light* of the supernatural knowledge of God [which is] not bright but rather (as the saying is) dark. . . Like night *en par de los levantes* [at the stirring of the dawn], all is neither night nor day, but, as they say, "between two lights" (CB 15; VO 670, quoted in Narvåez 87-88).

Even the peace and tranquillity of this morning-state upon which St John lays such insistence was foreshadowed by the Sufis: "The break of dawn is the moment when the peace is annihilated in the Light of the Absolute, leaving only the Absolute Peace of Unity" (Bakhtiar 84). Thus St John of the Cross, after the dark night of his soul which culminates in the light that is brighter than midday, becomes one with God and leaves his cares "forgotten among the lilies."

(c) Inward illumination. The living flame of love and the "lamps of fire."

Let us now turn our attention to another of St John of the Cross's most important symbols: inward illumination. It is mainly in his poem "Llama de amor viva," or "The Living Flame of Love," which has not received a great deal of attention from scholars, that St John celebrates light, the flames in which his ecstatic soul burns, and the mysterious "lamps of fire" that illuminate his soul at the instant of its transformation into God. As a symbol light is, of course, universal; we see it in the Pseudo-Dionysius' Celestial Hierarchies, and Mircea Eliade calls our attention to the many cultures that have adopted it as their own: Judaism, Hellenism, gnosticism, syncretism, Christianity in general. ¹⁷ But in St John of the Cross, many of the details of the symbol seem, once again, to be Sufi.

From its earliest beginnings Islamic mysticism was obsessed with the trope of illumination-perhaps, as Edward Jabra Jurji (12) and Annemarie Schimmel suggest, because Islam frequently merged the ideas of Plotinus and Plato with those of Zoroaster and other ancient Persian sages. Suhrawardi, called almagtūl (the murdered or "executed," d. 1191), is also called "Sheikh al-Ishrāq," master or teacher of the philosophy of illumination, due to his many writings on the subject: some fifty treatises in Arabic and Persian (showing influences from Avicenna, Hellenism, and important ancient Irani and Eastern elements), among which one might mention his Hikmat al-ishraq ("The Philosophy of Illumination") and Hayākil an-nūr ("The Altars of Light"). His followers insisted so emphatically upon this interior light that they earned for themselves the epithet ishraqivvun, literally "illuminated" or "enlightened" (in the radical sense of the word: inwardly lighted: alumbrados), precisely like that persecuted sect in sixteenth-century Spain. 18 For St John of the Cross, the accusation that he was an alumbrado was very dangerous, and indeed weighed heavily against him with the Inquisition, but among his Islamic counterparts the epithet was neither dangerous nor pejorative nor at all uncommon. Ibn 'Arabi uses it, in fact, to refer to one of his authorities: "One of the illuminati told me" (TAA 84). We find the same respect accorded the epithet in Al-Ghazzālī, who, referring to a Sufi teacher, says in the Ihyā (IV, 176-197): "A man, one of those whom the uncreated light illumines with its splendors. . . " (cf. Asin, Espiritualidad II:363). The motif of illumination is common throughout Islamic mysticism, which gave it several technical names, among them zawā'id (excess of light or spiritual illumination in the heart [Al-Hujwiri, 384]). Critics have always acknowledged the importance of illumination in Sufi literature: Domingo de Santa Teresa saw among the Shādhilites "an exaggerated dependence on interior illumination, on the divine brightness" (17) while Annemarie Schimmel, more positively, alludes to the "highly developed light metaphysics" of Al-Ghazzālī's Niche of Lights (Mystical Dimensions 96).

Highly developed and highly detailed: in his Ihyā, Al-Ghazzāli assigns illumination to the third degree of tawhid or oneness with God: "au troisième [degré] on. . . contemple [l'Unité de Dieu] par illumination intrieure" (381) while for the later Abū 'l-Hasan al Shādhalī it is the fourth degree of spiritual ascension, in which "God illuminates the soul with the light of original intellect in the midst of the lights of mystical certainty."19 But the eleventh-century mystic Hujwiri, ever concerned with exactitude, makes a subtle distinction between the light of illumination and the fire that may cast that light: "There is a difference between one who is burned by His Majesty in the fire of love and one who is illuminated by His beauty in the light of contemplation" (Kashf al-Mahjub, in Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions 6). And although in many passages St John of the Cross spoke of the interior light with which the "Father of Brightness" (Iac. 1:17; VO 836) illuminates his spirit, he insisted a great deal more on the "living fire of love" which is the soul at the moment of its transformation into God. This is the same metaphor the impassioned Sufis employed throughout the Middle Ages, hundreds of years before the emblem of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary burning with flames of love became popular—a phenomenon which occurred, according to the Dictionnaire de Spiritualité (vol. 2, Paris, 1953) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This distinction, and St John's poem on the "flame" and his highly detailed commentaries on that poem, perceived within the context of the European Renaissance as so original, look less and less strange or "foreign" to us within the contexts of literary Islam. Avicenna, for example, was able to recognize the fifth hal of the ecstatic state because of the brilliant flames (not light) of direct knowledge of Allah (cf. Pareja 378)—a fire that inflames "his soul at its very deepest center" and which the philosopher calls, technically, "qalb." Invariably precise in his treatment of symbols, Kubrā establishes the difference between the fire of the devil or demon and the spiritual fire of dhikr (repeated prayer, memory of God, withdrawal inward), which the mystic will surely recognize "comme un flamboient ardent et pur, animé

d'un mouvement ascendant et rapide" (Corbin, *L'homme* 113-114; Kubrā p. 8). 'Aṭṭār celebrates that same flame poetically: "What is *wajd*? (ecstasy) / to become fire without the presence of the sun" (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 48-49).

While Fr Crisógono finds that St John's "Living Fire of Love" and the glosses on that poem remind him of Bosen's line "O fire of living love!", and while Demaso Alonso would hear echoes of the "Boscán à la divine", of Sebastin of Córdoba, my own view is that we can find parallels in Sufi mysticism that are perhaps even more significant. Nor are they hard to document. The most noteworthy of the tropes found in Sufism is undoubtedly that of the lamps of fire-an image that Baruzi, perhaps seeing as excessively enigmatic, calls "assez pauvre" (360). But this is the lamp that, with few exceptions, mystically illuminates the center of the soul of that Sufi who has begun to follow the mystical path. Bāyazīd celebrates "having within oneself the lamp of eternity" (Nicholson 79); Rūzbehān of Shīrāz (1209) notes the "nombreuses lampes qui répandent une vive lumitre" within his soul (Corbin, L'homme 79); Al-Ghazzālī insists upon the splendor and brightness of "the light of the lamp that burns in his heart" (Asin, Espiritualidad 371); while Ibn 'Arabi teaches that the heart is the dwelling-place of God and that the gnostic should "illumine it with the lamps of the celestial and divine virtues until its light hath penetrated into every corner" (Asin, El Islam 423). The mystical lamps become (one must use the word) a commonplace of Sufism, reappearing over and over again among religious writers, thinkers, and teachers of Islam in many lands and many periods. This tradition would appear to have had its origin in the many commentaries on the famous Qur'anic surah of the lamp (24:35):

God is the LIGHT of the Heavens and of the Earth. His Light is like a niche in which [there] is a lamp—the lamp encased in glass—the glass, as it were, a glistening star. From a blessed tree is it lighted, the olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would well nigh shine out, even though fire touched it not! It is light upon light. God guideth whom

He will to His light, and God setteth forth parables to men, for God knoweth all things (Rodwell's translation).

In his work entitled Faşl fī-l-maḥabbah ("Treatise Upon Love"), Al-Muḥāsibī, born in Basra in 781, interpreted this sūrah in a "mystical" way: God lights an inextinguishable lamp that illuminates the most secret "caverns" or orifices of the gnostic's heart: "When God kindles that lamp in the heart of His servant, it burns fiercely in the crevices of his heart [and] he is lighted by it" (Arberry, Sufīsm 50). Another who applied this sura to his private spiritual experiences was Al-Ghazzālī, who in The Niche of Lights underscored, as St John of the Cross did also, the autonomous nature of this interior lamp: "self-luminous and with no external source" (Bakhtiar 20).

These symbolic lamps, tended for such a long time by the Muslims,21 would seem somehow to be mirrored in the image St John lifts from the Song of Songs-"quia fortis est un mors dilectio, dura sicut infernus æmulatio, lampades ejus, lampades ignis atque flammarum,"22 though St John drains away the literal Biblical meaning and reinterprets those "lampades" or flames of blazing fire in terms very similar to those we have just looked at. And there is yet another surprise: St John of the Cross coincides detail for detail with several of the Muslim mystics in his interpretation of these spiritual lamps: for Al-Ghazzālī they signify the "archetypes or Divine Names and Qualities" (Niche for Lights, cf. Bakhtiar 20), and for the Shādhilites, through Ibn 'Ubbād of Ronda's Sharh al-Ḥikam (1, 69), "the lights of the [divine] attributes" (Asin, Šādhilīes 266). That is precisely the way St John understands his own lamps of fire. And further still: as chronologically and geographically distant from St John of the Cross as he is, Nūrī of Baghdad in the ninth century, in his Maqāmāt al Qulūb ("Dwellings of the Heart"), makes clear what the divine attributes are that can be understood as "residing" in the lamps of fire:

[God] has suspended from the main door [of the house of the heart] one lamp from among the lamps of His grace. . . and has lighted it with the oil of His justice and makes it to shine with the light of His mercy.²³

These attributes of the lamp (or the light it produces) are virtually the same as in St John's glosses to his poem:

[The] splendor that this lamp of God gives [to the soul] insofar as it is goodness. . . . [and,] neither more nor less, it is the lamp of justice, and of strength, and of mercy, and of all the other attributes which together are represented to the soul in God (L, 3:3; VO, 872).

The words of Laleh Bakhtiar in her analysis of the Sufi symbol of the lamp of fire would appear to apply equally to St John of the Cross. For Bakhtiar, the lamp of fire is "related to the intelligence for it is this faculty which recognizes the Archetypes or Divine Names or Qualities" (20). St John, however, and as usual, supports his explanation of the symbol with that Biblical passage referred to above: "Knows well the soul the truth of that said by the Spouse in the Song of Songs, when he said that the lamps [coals] of love were lamps of fire and flame (8:6)" (L 3:3; VO 873). Here, St John's reading of the literal words of the Bible is somewhat forced; the result is to give them, as on so many other occasions, an interpretation concordant with the Symbolism of Islamic mysticism. Might this sincere yet culturally hybrid Christian be, at least partially and perhaps unwittingly, "islamicizing" the Scriptures?

He does islamicize at least his own literature, for the many detailed parallels continue. One of these parallels is the lamp as certain knowledge of God. For the Sufis, the spiritual lamps or lights are the dwelling-place of consciousness: mystical certainty, the fourth stage in Abū-l-Ḥasan al Shādhalī's *Tabaqāt*, *Sha'rānī*, 11, 10-11) and for Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī the degree of *Anwār al-yaqīn* or "lights of certainty." For St John of the Cross, too, the knowledge of God's attributes leads to the total knowledge of God: "Oh what delights! in which it is to such a degree *known*" (*L* 3:17; *VO* 880). The process ends, in St John's words, with "the transformation of the soul into God[, which] is totally unspeakable [ineffable]" (*L*, 3:8; *VO*, 876). For Suhrawardī too, this is the final transformation of the soul into God, the *haqq al-yaqīn* or "point at which the lover is immersed into the light of contemplation... and is transformed, and this is

the Supreme degree of oneness (Pareja 396). In order for this wonder to occur, the fire and the lamps have purified the soul of all that is not God: St John, if one is to judge by his own commentaries, would fully agree with the vivid interpretation that Kubrā gives the purifying action of the fire of dhikr (remembrance of God/withdrawal inward): it flames up in the soul, proclaiming "anā, wa lā ghayrī" ("I, and nothing else") and joins its flame to those of the mystic's kindled heart, and all is then "nurun 'alā nur" (Kubrā, II:4): light upon light, as the Qur'an says. That is, "Bride into the Bridegroom transformed."

In both St John of the Cross and the Sufis, the soul has been prepared for this transformative union because it has been purified or cleansed beforehand of all its impurities. St John alludes metaphorically to these impurities again and again, though schematically: "if we were to speak on purpose of the ugly, dirty figure which the appetites present to the soul, we would find no thing, however covered with cobwebs and vermin it may be, . . . nor any other filthy, dirty thing that might exist or that one might imagine in this life, to which we might compare it" (NI: 9:3; VO 383). But in spite of the avowed impossibility of comparison, more than once St John, like St Theresa, compares this spiritual sensuality with "animals" (L, 3:73; VO. 911). And once again it is the imaginative Kubrā who offers a vivid portrayal of the allegorical motif, giving the impression that he is amplifying upon the more sober St John yet without deviating from his line of thought. The light from the lamp of fire illuminates his soul and Kubrā points out the vermin or animals that the soul is full of24 and needs to expel in order to reach "quietude."

Dhikr (withdrawal inward) is like a lamp that is lighted within a dark house. ... By its light, [the soul] understands that the house is filled with impurities[:]²⁵ such as the impurity of the dog, of a panther, of a leopard, of an ass, of a bull, of an elephant, and of every objectionable creature in existence (chapter 54, p. 25).

Union with God is manifested for both St John and the Muslim illuminists or Ishrāqīs by one further element: the veils that cover and separate the Divinity from the mystic's soul are stripped away. As both Asín Palacios and W. H. T. Gairdner (44) point out, this symbol of the veil of the phenomenological and human which separates us from God is given only sketchy portrayal by the neoplatonists (the Pseudo-Dionysius, for example, in The Celestial Hierarchies) and such writers as Garcilaso and Fray Luis de León. But the Muslims' insistence on the symbol, and the symbol's widespread and elaborate employment in poems and treatises, 'allow us to associate it here with Islam, especially because of the specific context in which it appears: as part of the most widespread symbol of spiritual illumination. At least one Islamicist seems to consider it a uniquely Sufi metaphor: "In Sufi parlance, phenomenal existence is conceived by a veil, which conceals the truth from man's view," comments T. H. Weir (xxxii), though we could not say with how much awareness of the distant antecedents in Alexandria. For Alexandrian antecedents there are: the symbol of the veil, which is admittedly ancient in Islam, appears in the "traditions" or "hadiths" as the famous formulation that follows:

Allah hath Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness: were He to withdraw the curtain, then would the splendours of His Face surely consume everyone who apprehended Him with his sight (Gairdner 44).

Mystics as diverse as Semnānī, who sets the unveiling of God at dwelling number 81 of the ninth stage of the mystical path (Bakhtiar 96), Kubrā (pp. 20, 62), Ibn Iraqī (Smith, Sufī Path), Al-Hujwīrī (291), Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh (Hikam, 90), Jāmī (Smith 52), Ibn 'Arabī (TAA 95, 51), and Aḥmad Al-Ghazzālī (TAA 108)—all employ the symbol, each adding his own complexit to it. We are reminded by Maria Teresa Narvaez (85) that Aḥmad Al-Ghazzālī's brother, the more famous Muḥammad Al-Ghazzālī, is very close to St John of the Cross: God cleanses the soul "of worldly filth and [pulls back] the veils which hide Him, so that He may be seen in the heart as though one were gazing upon Him with the eyes (qtd. in Asin, Espiritualidad II:515-516). "Break through the cloth of this sweet encounter!" says St John in the "Living Flame." And in his commentary, he

describes in detail, in a most Sufi-like manner, what this "cloth" is:

Take away from before [the soul] some of the many veils and curtains that the soul has before it, so that it may see what He looks like, and then there shines through and is glimpsed, somewhat darkly (because not all the veils are taken away) that face of His that is filled with grace (L 4:8; VO 920).

Not only veils but *curtains* that prevent the soul's perfect union with God: St John parallels the Muslims very closely: in Arabic *hijāb* is "veil" or "curtain" (Pareja 321; *Arabic-English Dictionary* 156) and poets such as Ibn al-Fāriḍ allude to this latter meaning: "Thou shalt find all that appears to thee / . . . but in the veils of occultation wrapt: When he removes / the curtain, thou beholdest none but Him" (Smith *Sufī Path* 132). In a more popular version, curtains and veils also separate Muhammad from God in the legend of the *mir'āj* (XIX, 21).

The parallels continue: in the process of purification that culminates in illumination, both St John and the Sufis polish the mirror of their soul to the point where it is so burnished that it can reflect the light of God: "the mirror [of the] heart has been so polished with divers classes of mortification. . . whose effect is the polishing that must be accomplished so that the forms of mystical realities can manifest themselves with all their brightness in the heart." These words are from Abū al-Mawāhib al-Shādhalī of Cairo's (*Tabaqāt*, Sha'rānī, II, 70), but the image is repeated over and over by Rūmī, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh, Ibn 'Arabī, Al-Ghazzālī, and even the ancient Bīṣṭāmī (d. 874), Hakim Tirmidhī (d. 898), and Hasan Baṣrī (d. 728). St John sounds like them all, and his soul, "through the brightness that comes supernaturally," becomes a "bright mirror" (*N* II: 24:4; *VO* 459).

In another view of the symbol, Al-Sha'rāni explores the mysterious depths of the soul that is enkindled with love: it is subdivided into seven concentric states, each deeper than the one before (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 174). St John of the

Cross echoes this figure by declaring in his "Living Flame" that his soul is concentric (I, 13). The Pseudo-Dionysius had used such a figure even earlier, but St John and the Sufis coincide in the smaller details of the figure. In the glosses to the "Spiritual Canticle," St John remarks that there are precisely seven of these degrees or stages of the soul's concentricity:

This wine-cellar that here the soul speaks of is the last and narrowest degree of love in which the soul can reside in this life; and it is for that reason that it is called the inward wine-cellar, that is, the most inward. From which it follows that there are others which are not so inward, which are the degrees of love from which one ascends unto this last, and we may say that these degrees or wine-cellars of love are seven [in number] (CB 26:4; VO 700).

While for St Theresa, as we all know, it is the interior castles of the soul that are seven in number, for St John of the Cross it is cellars, with the most inward quite specifically a wine-cellar. Would his imagination have been under the influence of some recollection of the symbol of the eestatic wine—which is also, apparently, Sufi? In Kubrā's fertile imagination, the concentricities of the soul take the form of seven wells which the interior soul, inflamed with love, must climb out of until it reaches the ultimate light of truth. Here is the passage in which he describes this ascent:

Thou shouldst know that existence is not limited to a single act. There is no act of being [or of existence] that is not underlain by another act of being [or of existence] which is more important and more sublime than the preceding one, until we come to the divine Being. For each of these acts or levels of existence, which we see throughout the mystical path, there is a well. These acts of being or levels of existence are seven [in number]... [Once] thou hast ascended through the seven wells of the divers categories of existence, behold, thou arrivest at the Heaven of the Deity and the Power of God. . and His light is so bright that human spirits may only barely stand it, while yet they become enamoured of it with mystical love (8: 7)

The soul as an interior well is not an image that is Kubrā's alone, however curious it may seem to us. It has a long Muslim genealogy—we should recall, for example, Najm Rāzī, a thirteenth-century Sufi who also used it (cf. Corbin, L'homme 156-157). But few get as much mileage out of the simile as the late-Persian treatise-writer Kubrā does. In one passage from his Fawā'ih al-Jamāl wa-Fawātih al-Jalāl (chapter 17, p. 8), we come upon a very interesting and highly significant play on words with the Arabic root q-l-b (قلب) whose multiple meanings Kubrā fully and explicitly exploits: qalaba ("to turn around, to transmute, to reflect something, to be transformed, to change"); qalb ("transmutation"); qalb in its more usual sense of "essence, heart, center, middle"; and, last, the variant qalib ("well") (all, Arabic-English Dictionary). Kubrā points out, then, for the illuminated heart of the mystic, the shifting possibilities: it can reflect God, it can become transmuted or transformed in Him, it can be the most profound essence and centre of the soul, and it can be (at least metaphorically) a well. The wit or ingenuity of this master of style is doubly important because it coincides in a surprisingly precise way with St John of the Cross. For as though he were aware of the possibilities of the Arabic root, in the "Living Flame" St John also equates the deepest centre of his soul, which is able to reflect God and transform itself into Him, with a well: "O happy soul!... which also art the well of living waters." Like Kubrā, St John is insistent in his use of the image, repeating it more than once and supporting it with the Biblical passage on Jeremiah's "fountain of living waters" (L 3:7-8; VO 875; Jer 2:13). Kubrā had supported his own conceit with the Qur'anic passage on Joseph (12:10-19). There is another very interesting, and rather strange, parallel: in employing the image of the soul as a well or cistern in the midst of a process of illumination, both mystics-like so many previous Sufis-link and intermingle the "living waters of that spiritual well with the flames of transformation in God." Kubrā's soul-as-a-well "se métamorphose en puits de lumière" (Corbin, L'homme 121). In St John of the Cross, water and fire are equated to a miracle, one

which is mirrored in the miraculous transformation of Bridegroom into Bride:

Thus these lamps of fire are living waters of the spirit. . . . [For although] they were lamps of fire, they were also pure and limpid waters. . . And thus, although it is fire, it is also water; for this fire is figured forth by the fire of the sacrifice which Jeremiah hid at the cistern, which when hidden was water, and when pulled from the well for the sacrifice was fire (2 March 1, 20-22; 2:1-22)²⁶. . . called *flames* rather than water, saying *O lamps of fire!* All that which can in that song be said, is less than that which is, because the transformation of the soul into God is ineffable (*L*, 3:8; *VO*, p. 875-876).

Another trope for the process of illumination that both St John and the Sufis insist on is the metaphor of the sudden stroke of lightning or lightning-bolt that indicates the abrupt and fleeting manifestation of God. Although in this case the parallel seems quite widespread (Mircea Eliade remarks that "the rapidity of mystical illumination has been compared in many religions to lightning" [The Two . . . , p. 22]), among Muslims, including the alchemists (cf. Jung 317), it becomes an obligatory technical equation. Ibn 'Arabi assures us of the stability of his image, in Arabic lā'ih, literally "lightning": "The author of these poems always uses the term 'lightning' to denote a centre of manifestation of the Divine Essence" (T.A.A. 92). Again, Semnānī gives it a precise numerical location along the mystical path: strokes of lightning occupy number 69 of the ninth stage along the road (Bakhtiar 96). Many other Muslims employ the term, but we shall only look closely at the case of Al-Ghazzālī who, in his Ihyā remarks:

[The] lights of truth shall shine brightly in his heart. . . . In the beginning they shall be as fleeting bolts of lightning, which flash and flash again and remain a short while or a longer . . . and there shall be divers illuminations, or always the same one (in Pareja 294).

In words remarkably resembling those of Al-Ghazzāli, St John of the Cross also presents the sudden flash of mystical experience under the metaphor of a flash of lightning:

And it is, sometimes, as though an extraordinarily bright door had opened, and through it [the soul] should see [a light] like a flash of lightning, when upon a dark night things suddenly become bright and clear and one can see them clearly and distinctly and then they are once again in darkness (NII: 24:5; VO 459).

And that is the figure of the mystical stroke of lightning. We will not insist overmuch on a similar image that St John shares with the Muslims-the "stroke of darkness" (Dark Night II:5:3; VO p. 572)—because here the antecedent common to both (possibly the Pseudo-Dionysius) is quite clear. It is, however, useful to note that this "lightning-bolt of darkness" is part of a metaphysics of light and darkness which, while already quite complex in the early Fathers of the Church, took on unexpected dimensions of complication and wit among the Sufis (and especially Persian Sufis), as Toshihiko Izutzu has demonstrated in his essay "The Paradox of Light and Darkness in The Garden of Mystery of Shabastari." Even the architects of Islamic mosques played with the alternations of light and shadow, and we will discover in St John of the Cross-at a much later date than the Pseudo-Dionysius-that same play of chiaroscuro, for which St John even invents a term: "obumbraciones" or "hacimiento de sombra" (L 3:12; VO p. 878). St John's curious elaboration of this kaleidoscopic spiritual phenomenon would appear to locate him quite close to Muslim mysticism and Arabic aesthetics, which, in patent defiance of Aristotelian logic, delights in the impossible union of contraries:

But although these virtues and attributes of God may be lighted lamps that are burning brightly, being so near the soul. . . they yet cannot fail to touch [the soul] with their shadows, which are also brightly lighted and burning bright, in the figure of the lamps which create them, and there these shadows shall be splendours. (L 3:14; VO 878).

The "Living Flame of Love" (which we might consider to include the glosses on that poem), in which St John describes the process of his final illumination, has always been one of the poet's most enigmatic works, and one of those least addressed by literary criticism. Reference to Muslim illuminationist literature, however, helps us decipher its mystery and recognise some of its possible sources-Sufi sources to which St John of the Cross would appear, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, to have had some access. While we'do not question the Christian orthodoxy or intentions of St John, we must recognise that even though he was an undeniable child of the West, in paralleling the Sufis so closely, and even in so frequently realigning his Biblical citations and "supports" with the axis of the technical Symbolism of Islam, he also was, in more than one sense, a cultural child of the East. Or better, a child of genius of that Spain of three bloodlines that Américo Castro explored—the poet sings his Christian sentiments with Muslim metaphors. And his "Living Flame of Love," an unquestionably orthodox yet culturally hybrid poem, would appear to celebrate the morada or "dwelling" of illuminative union from the point of view of an ishrāgi or Muslim Illuminationists. Or further yet: from the point of view of a very erudite ishrāqī, well versed in the matter and Symbolism of Illumination.

d. Water, or the inner spring or fountain of mystical life.

Yet this "initiate" of Islamic symbolism that St John of the Cross would appear to have been holds yet further surprises for us. Another of his favourite symbols is water as the inner spring or fountain of the soul, a symbol he incorporates into his poetry in stanza 12 of the "Spiritual Canticle" ("¡Oh cristalina fuente, / si en esos tus semblantes plateados, / formases de repente / los ojos deseados, / que tengo en mis entrañas dibujados!") and in the poem titled "Cantar de la alma que se huelga de conocer a Dios por fe," which begins "Que bien sé yo la fonte que mana y corre / aunque es de noche." The universality of water as a spiritual metaphor is clear, from the Bible (John 4:14) to alchemical terminology (Jung 104), as is the spring or fountain, the "immemorial symbol of eternal life" as Maria Rosa Lida

calls it. In exploring the particular modalities that the symbol assumes in St John of the Cross, once again we find traits that would appear to be clearly Muslim. Some of them have already been pointed out by Asín Palacios: both St John and St Teresa, for instance, employ the Islamic (and especially Shādhilite)27 image of diligent and laborious prayer or meditation seen in terms of the arduous transport of spiritual water through channels and aqueducts, an effort that contrasts with the spontaneity of the autonomous bubbling-forth of the spring of a higher degree of contemplation: "[When it] gives itself to prayer, the soul is now like one to whom water has been brought, so that he drinks peacefully, without labour, and is no longer forced to draw [the water] through the aqueducts (also: 'the buckets of a water wheel') of past meditations and forms and figures," as St John said in The Ascent (II: 14:2; VO 421). (This is very similar to St Teresa's water-figure in the Autobiography (XI) and the Interior Castle (IV: 2:3).

The symbol of the spring or fountain in St John of the Cross has been the object of numerous critical studies, though critics have had difficulty tracing its sources. David Rubio does not think the sources are Biblical:

None of the 56 metaphors of the "spring" or "fountain" of the Vulgate, and none of the numerous metaphors of the same object in Western mysticism can in any way be tied to the concept of the "spring" or "fountain" in St John of the Cross (18).

Ludwig Pfandl associates St John's use of the spring or fountain with the spring "della prouva dei leali amanti" of the chivalric romance *Plati.* (108). Dámaso Alonso, on the other hand, rejects, for reasons mainly bibliographical in nature, any possible influence by the *Caballero Platir* and favors instead Garcilaso's Eclogue II as transmitted through the "divinification" of Sebastián de Córdoba. María Rosa Lida's review of Alonso's book minimizes the importance of Sebastián de Córdoba and emphasizes instead St John's close similarity to the spring of the *Platir* (despite the problematic nature of its possible influence) and the spring of PrimaleTn. Lida takes an

essential element of the symbol to be the fact that St John's spring or fountain reflects another's face, precisely as it does in these chivalric romances, Garcilaso's Eclogue I, Sannazaro's Arcadia, and even an epigram by Paulo el Silenciario.

But without rejecting these possible Greco-Latin and European antecedents (which might to some degree have left their mark on St John), we must insist that they do not entirely clear up the problem of St John's particular spring. Sebastián de Córdoba does take Garcilaso's poem and recast it à la divine, so that the spring takes on a "religious" or allegorical cast, but he does not give it the details that would bring it into congruence with the symbol as found in St John. Although other authors (Garcilaso himself, for instance) are closer in some essential aspects of the spring (the fact that it reflects another's face), their images lack the mystical dimension that is so obvious in St John of the Cross. And besides—St John's spring reflects the eyes of the Bridegroom, not his face.

The mystical literature of Islam will not solve all the thorny problems of St John's spring or fountain, but it will provide some answers that I believe to be fundamental. First of all, the spring in Islamic literature is conceived of from the beginning à la divine. Ramon Lull, so clearly grounded in things Arabic, speaks of a crystalline mirror that reflects the degree of contemplation which the soul has of God (cf. Hatzfeld) and in Ibn 'Arabī's Futūhāt (II, 447) the spring is a mirage (sarāb) that the thirsty mystic thinks he sees but, realizing his error, discovers instead to be God and himself (cf. Asín, Islam cristianizado 497). We should recall that the "semblantes plateados" or "silvery semblances [or mien]" of the spring reflect the eyes which St John/ the female narrator/ the Bride has "engraved [or drawn] within [his/her] entrails." That is: the eyes reflect him/herself and God/ the Bridegroom.

Let us pause for a moment to look at the poem "Qué bien sé yo la fonte. . . ," which was composed in prison in Toledo ca. 1577-1578 and is one of the most shatteringly beautiful poems of St John's *oeuvre*. In this poem, the poet explains his "fonte" or

fountain to the reader, and when we compare these details with Bakhtiar's commentary on the *Book of Certainty* we see that St John of the Cross and the anonymous Sufi author coincide virtually phrase for phrase. Below, we offer a side-by-side reading of the two figures:

Bakhtiar:

The mystic enters the Garden of the Spirit and finds a fountain, water which gushes forth. . . ["flowing" in the Book of Certainty]. . . .

[The] fountain is the Fountain of Knowledge

Which is illuminated by the Spirit. It is the contemplative Truth of Certainty, the knowledge of Illumination, . . .

Knowledge of the Oneness of all Divine Qualities. . . .

The Fountain of Knowledge appears like veils of light, not darkness, behind each of which shines the Light of Essence Itself (Bakhtiar

St John of the Cross:

"Fonte que mana y corre":
"fount which issues forth
and flows."...

"Qué bien sé yo," "how well I know," is the poet's constant refrain.

St John said of his fountain or spring, which is also curiously "lighted," that "its brightness is never dimmed, and I know that all light from it is come."

St John insists on Oneness, although he refers to the unity that underlies the mystery of the Trinity: "Well I know that three in one single living water / live, and one from the other is derived."

In the "silvery semblances" of the spring in the "Spiritual Canticle," which St John understands as "faith," one may glimpse God "even

27). through veils"; "beneath this faith lies the substance of faith, stripped of the veil of this silver. . . . So that faith is given us and joins us to God Himself, but covered with a silvering of raith" (VO 657).

"Although it is night," St John insists upon the mystical certainty that he feels in the presence of this spring or fountain. He repeats the verb to know no fewer than eleven times in the poem, and almost invariably emphatically: "qué bien sé yo," "how well I myself do know." "Certainty," indeed, is the principal semantic referent of the Sufi symbol of the spring or fountain. Al-Ghazzālī, to take just one example, says (Gairdner, Niche for Lights 77) in a commentary on Sūra 13:19 of the Qur'an, "the water here is knowledge." Nūri of Baghdad had the same insight as early as the ninth century: in Treatise VII of his Magāmāt al Qulūb (135), in which he gives long descriptions of the mystical water of the soul, he declares that the water that flows in the gnostic's heart implies knowledge ('ulūm) of the secrets of an eternal God (and here we should recall St John: "that eternal fount is hidden" [VO 930]). For Nūri the divine water symbolises not only knowledge of God, but the certainty of that knowledge.

But St John adds yet another element to that certainty: "qué bien sé yo por fe la fonte frida" (VO 931). The "crystalline spring" of the "Spiritual Canticle" thus signifies faith as well, as the poet explains in the glosses to the poem (CB 12:3; VO 657). That most delicate conjunction of faith and certainty occurs also among the Sufis. The author of the Book of Certainty describes the "Fountain of the Lore of Certainty" in precisely those terms: "This degree of certainty being none other than faith (imān)" (145). Another passage states that in Sufism the second degree of faith is the "Eye of Certainty" ('aynu'l-'yaqin) (13). This terminology might seem very abstruse and strange, and yet we see that it takes us closer to that complex spring or fountain of St

John of the Cross than do the European sources quoted by critics to date...

Within the fountain of the "Spiritual Canticle" (and this no doubt reinforces in some critics' mind the association with Garcilaso's Eclogue II: "Sabes que me quitaste, fuente clara / los ojos de la cara?": "Do you know that you have taken from me, bright spring/ the eyes of my face?"), St John sees mirrored "the desired eyes" of the Bridegroom-curiously, mysteriously, the eyes, not the face. In the "Spiritual Canticle" this lovely lira on the spring immediately precedes the moment at which the lovers are joined. The same thing occurs in Kubrā: "le double cercle des deux yeux" appears "au stade final de pțlerinage mystique" (Corbin, L'homme 127). As Shabastari reminds us, these eyes can wound the mystic who is about to enter absolute union: "the eye has no power to stand the dazzling light of the sun. It can only see the sun as reflected in the water" (in Izutsu, 298). It is perhaps for that reason that St John asks first to contemplate those allegorical eyes in his "crystalline spring"-only thus, and echoing his Sufi colleagues in the mystical experience, can he bear the experience. In the light of these close parallels, then, the stanza's mystery would appear to be gradually coming clear. When in the next stanza the poet's soul "flies off" toward God, it "can hardly receive Him without losing its life" (CB 13:12; VO 660) and the poet/ Bride exclaims: "Turn them [the eyes] away, Lover!" How close St John of the Cross is to Ibn 'Arabi, who in his comment on the enigmatic line from the Tarjumān, "She kills with her glances," explains that the line refers "to the station of passing away in contemplation" (fanā fī'l-mushāhadah).

The unbearable pain of ecstasy prefigured in a pair of divine eyes whose glance can hardly be borne brings St John yet once again into parallel with his religious counterparts in the East. Both cases ask for the eyes of God in order to be able to see God: "When you looked at me/ Your grace in me your eyes impressed / . . . / and at that, my own eyes / became worthy of adoring what they saw in you" (VO 628), exclaims St John, echoing so many Muslims such as Ibn 'Arabī: "When my Lover appears, what eye shall I look upon him with? With his, not my

own, because no one sees him save Himself alone" (in Nicholson 198).

But there is a powerful reason for the recurrence of the figure of the other person's eyes reflected in a spring, that trope which marks for Sufis the beginning of the alchemy of Union through Love. The unquestionable reason for the fact that we find in the mystical literature of Islam (and not of Europe) so many examples in which at the precise moment of mystical transformation the fount of ultimate spiritual knowledge reflects a pair of mysterious eyes, is that in Arabic the word 'ayn has the simultaneous meanings "fountain" or "spring," "eye," "identity" (or "substance" or "individuality") and "the same." (There are other meanings as well.) All the Sufis seem to have done is translate the various simultaneous semantic meanings of the three-letter word-root into linear poetry, in a way that is extraordinarily profound in its mystical implications and at the same time constant throughout Arabic contemplative literature. What is astonishing is that St John of the Cross should parallel Sufi masters so closely-indeed, perfectly. Although practitioners of the dolce stil nuovo such as Petrarch and Achilini had suggested that the intermingling of souls that occurred at the moment of love (and lovemaking) was achieved through the eyes, which are the windows of the soul, they had never set these eyes within a fountain, spring, or pool, and especially not one with mystical overtones. The Arabic root 'ayn establishes an equation (i.e., between the fount or spring, the eyes, and "identity") which is inescapable to anyone who knows Arabic yet which seems eccentric, "odd," to a Westerner unfamiliar with the linguistic terms that the root brings into association.²⁹

As though he were an initiate into the secrets of the Arabic language and had direct knowledge of this semantic field (or as though he had "miraculously" stumbled upon it for himself), St John of the Cross asks the reader to understand that the fount which reveals to the Bride the eyes of the Bridegroom symbolizes the total transformation of one into the other. Thus, St John says in his commentary to this stanza, "it is true to say that the Bridegroom lives in the Bride, and the Bride in the

Bridegroom, and such likeness does love bring about in the transformation of the Lovers that one can say that each is the other and that both are one. . . Each ceases to be each and changes into the other; and thus, each one lives in the other, and the one lives in the other, and the one is the other, and both are one, by the transformation of love" (CB 12:7; VO 658). To signal the absolute unity of the transformed essence of these lovers, St John could apparently think of nothing so apt as that the Bride see the eyes of the Bridegroom reflected in the pool, and not his face. If St John, like his Sufi counterparts, understands that the eyes are semantically equated with the pool into which the Bride gazes, and that this fount and these eyes are in turn equated with identity, then we should find it strange that he not elaborate the literary trope within these lines of close, mysterious transformative equivalence. All are made perfectly equal in this verbal alchemy: the eyes, the fount or spring, the unity or oneness or identity of the lovers who are transformed into one another in the silvery surface of the water of the pool that serves as mirror. What is astonishing, as we say, is that this stanza written by St John of the Cross, the most enigmatic of Spanish poets, ceases to be eccentric or unnecessarily mysterious when we read it with the knowledge of that three-letter Arabic root. I myself am astounded to admit that a Sufi would understand this odd mystical narcissism of the "Spiritual Canticle" 's spring better than a Western Christian reader, however religious he or she might be.

 The heart as the mirror of God: the qalb, translucid and everchanging vessel.

Immediately after seeing the eyes of the Bridegroom reflected in the spring of silvery mien, the female protagonist of the "Spiritual Canticle" sings joyfully, in lines that are possibly the finest love poetry in the Spanish language, of having found the ineffable Love—and the delicious union that is intrinsic to it—that she had been seeking:

Mi Amado, las montañas, los valles solitarios nemorosos, las insulas extrañas, My Beloved, the mountains, the bosky solitary valleys, the strange isles,

los ríos sonorosos, the sounding rivers,
el silbo de los aires amorosos, the whisper of the loving
breezes,
la noche sosegada the night as serene
en par de los levantes del aurora, as the rising light of dawn,
la música callada the bushed music

la música callada, the hushed music, la soledad sonora, the sounding solitude,

la cena que recrea y enamora. the feast that recreates and invites to love.

Once again the poetry, in lines of immense profundity, seems to want to reveal secrets-suggestions of St John of the Cross's experience of the infinite, an experience terribly difficult to put into words because it is outside language and human reason. But once again we find in Islamic mysticism the symbolic coordinates that will help us understand the poet's most intimate mystical thoughts and feelings. At the point of mystical union, when the poem's symbolic pool is revealed to be the locus of oneness between Bride and Bridegroom, and thus the locus of divine manifestation, the Bride who at the beginning of the poem had sought her Bridegroom through a hazy landscape that her swift foot really barely trod (so little "realized" was the scene), now suddenly discovers that the Bridegroom is not in that landscape, but rather is it: the mountains, valleys, rivers, breezes. And unexpectedly the anguished question "Where?" with which the poem had begun ("Where have you hidden, Beloved, and left me with my moan?") begins to be answered with a myriad of spaces in glorious, kaleidoscopic succession. The Bridegroom, curiously, does not have a face, as those traditional lovers of European love poetry would have had (we should recall Petrarch and Ronsard). but is conceived rather in the metaphoric terms of a vertiginous cascade of spaces and even unexpected times and situations (night, music, solitude, a feast or dinner) which suggest the collapsing of the contraries height and depth, sound and silence, the solid and the ethereal.

In the poem's ecstatic union of Bride and Bridegroom, everything seems to merge: "Mi Amado las montañas / los valles

solitarios nemorosos / las ínsulas extrañas. . . . " The metaphorization by means of which the Bridegroom has been linked-in fact verblessly equated-with those spaces is completely unknown in the European poetry of the Renaissance; indeed, so strange is this mode of imaging that the Spanish critic Carlos Bousoño, in a most fortunate essay for our topic here, calls it "visionary" and "contemporary." In the metaphor, what is associatively brought together is the sensations or impressions that are produced by the two linked elements: in the Bride's perception, St John tells us in his glosses, the Bridegroom is "like" the mountains because the impression produced by the mountains (height, majesty, pleasant fragrance) is similar to the impression produced by the Bridegroom: "The mountains are lofty, abundant, broad, and lovely, filled with flowers and scents. These mountains are my Beloved for me" (CB 14-15:7; VO 665). Likewise, the valleys are associated with the sensations of delight, coolness, and rest; the "strange isles," with the notion of mystery; the sounding rivers, with the sensation of being washed over by them and hearing that profound roar that blots out all external sound; and so on, through the celebratory stanzas.

These equations are achieved not by means of parallel elements that are recognizable by logic, but rather through non-rational, non-logical associations, just as in such Semitic poems as the Song of Songs and such drunk-with-love Sufi texts as Ibn 'Arabi's *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq* (*The Interpreter of Desires*) or Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Khamriyyah* (Wine Song).

And St John the "visionary" reveals even further mystical equations. The Bride asked at the beginning of the poem about where—in what space—the Bridegroom had hidden himself from her. Now she has discovered that He is those spaces that she wandered through in search of Him, and discovers also that this unexpected identity of her Beloved's is completed—by a true prodigy of love and wondrous literary insight—in her realisation of this fact: in a word, in her herself. "These mountains are my Beloved for me," the poet-commentator insists in the glosses that are meant to clarify the poem's obscurities: "All these things (mountains, rivers, valleys) is her Beloved in

him/itself and is so for her" (CB 14-15:5; VO 664, emphasis ours).30 The act of intuition is indeed wondrous: in the high intermingling of love, God has transformed her into Himself, yet it is she who in employing the metaphorical mirror gives the Bridegroom a new identity: He is that whole myriad of marvellous spaces and music and nights and times because He is so in her realisation or perception of Him; she contains, so to speak, within herself all that delicious, extraordinarily free and changing identity. Times and space's are not simply cancelled or collapsed, as they are in all ecstatic moments, but converge in the unified identity of the two Lovers. The once-perplexed Bride at last knows where her Bridegroom had hidden Himself. The answer is repeated yet again, overwhelming in its pure simplicity: "In me."31 And the seeking, agonising Bride of the "Spiritual Canticle" realises that she, like 'Attar's thirty birds that so assiduously sought the Simurg throughout the world, was herself the Simurg that she had sought through the sheepfolds. through the hillside, and through the woods and undergrowth that are journeyed through in the first stanzas of the poem. She could not find her Beloved there because she was seeking Him where she would never find him: outside herself.

Of course God is, or contains within Himself, all of these elements with which the Bride identifies Him-mountains, valleys, rivers. In this transformative state the soul understands the secret concatenation of causes that articulate the harmony of the Universe—an understanding that far transcends simple pantheism, into which St John of the Cross never falls. God transforms the soul into His virtues and attributes. He is-or manifests-His attributes in the soul, which acts as a mirror of Him. Although the poem's protagonist saw her Beloved reflected in the pool or mirror of herself, now the Beloved is reflected in the pool or mirror of the soul, which is also Him: both are the mirror of the other, and reflect back and forth its/their ipsiety in an unending succession of unendingly self-reflecting mirrors, as though one were set before the other. Or to say this in another way: God observes Himself in His Bride, while she contemplates Him in herself because she is, or perfectly reflects, all these

simultaneous transformations of ineffable attributes that come together in her own substance. It is no coincidence, given what we have been discussing thus far, that the consummation of the union that the "Spiritual Canticle" celebrates began in a metaphorical mirror—the water of the spring. God shall be reflected in the mirror of the soul as though in pure translucid water which at this moment of supreme identification is able to reflect Him in His glory.

This mirror is a well-polished one: St John of the Cross (and St Teresa, who used the trope in her own work) adopted an ancient leit-motif which the Sufis of the Middle Ages had been using and refining for centuries. The soul, loosed of its bonds and given up wholly to God, is, metaphorically, a spotless mirror that can reflect the Godhead. Henri Corbin saw this in the case of Ibn 'Arabi, who felt that he knew God in the exact proportion to which the Names and Attributes of God had their epiphany in him: "Dieu se décrit á nous-mêmes par nous-mêmes;" "par cette sympatheia s'actualise l'aspiration reciproque fondée en la communauté de leur essence" (Corbin, Imagination créatrice 95, 88). The soul, whose powers are filled only with the infinite, becomes, as we have seen, a polished mirror, transparent water, in order to be able to reflect, as though in a glowing kaleidoscope, all these divine attributes. The swift succession of attributes in this wonderfully pure mirror of the soul is only apparent, however, since in God, free of time and space, the manifestation occurs simultaneously and instantaneously.

St John of the Cross makes clear that this spring or fount in which the union begins to be celebrated is "the heart, [which] here signifies the soul" (CA, 12:7; VO, p. 658). In Western mysticism this trope of a heart as the symbolic vessel or receptacle of crystalline waters that reflect the changing and visionary images of the divine manifestations within the soul, is a strange one. But once again, the Sufis come to the aid of our understanding of the apparently enigmatic symbols of St John of the Cross. Ibn 'Arabī would have very profoundly understood, and would have seconded, what St John wants to say at this point in the poem, for he knew a great deal about this inner heart that

was also the mirror of changing images: in Arabic, the word qalb, as we have noted, simultaneously means "heart" and "perpetual, constant change," among other things. As one might expect, Muslim mystics took full advantage of this coincidence in the multivalent roots of Arabic, and put them to work in their poetry. Thus, in the most famous and most complex lines of his Tarjumān al-Ashwāq, Ibn 'Arabī says the following:

My heart is capable of any form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,

And the idols' temple and the pilgrim's Ka'abah and the tablets of the Torah and the book of the Qur'an.

I follow the religion of love: where so ever the camels of love go, that is my religion and my faith.

It is Michael Sells who has seen, with extraordinarily keen sight, that Ibn 'Arabi's "drunken" lines speak not simply (as many Arabists have it) of tolerance for all revealed religions—for God may be found in all of them—but also, and much more profoundly, of the high dwelling-place of the ecstatic heart that is receptive of any form ("Garden Among the Flames" 311, n. 37). Or, to say it another way, receptive of any divine manifestation that may occur in it. These are Sells' words:

The heart that is receptive of every form is in a state of perpetual transformation (taqallub, a play on the two meanings of the root q-l-b, heart and change). The heart moulds itself to, receives, and becomes each form of the perpetually changing forms in which the Truth reveals itself to itself. . . . [To] achieve a heart that is receptive of every form requires a continual process of effacement of the individual self in the universal (293).

Ibn 'Arabi is quite conscious of these truths, since in the original Arabic of his poem, the line "my heart is capable [or has become the vessel] of any form," the poet is playing with the possibilities of the word qalb (قلب): his heart (i.e., the mirror of his soul) is in a state of perpetual transformation as it "successively" reflects the manifestations of God: "For Ibn 'Arabi, al-haqq (the Truth) manifests itself to itself through every

form or image but is confined to none. The forms of manifestation are constantly changing" (290-291). St John of the Cross tells us exactly the same thing when he makes explicit that the kaleidoscopic stanzas of the "Spiritual Canticle" ("My Beloved, the mountains. . .") represent the continual manifestation of God in the mirror of the soul. This heart-mirror should obviously be capable of reflecting any divine form, without fixing any one within itself, since (and we quote St John himself here) "not even the angels can see enough of it, nor ever will." It always "brings newness to them, and always they marvel more" (CB, 14-15:8). Thus the soul of the true contemplative, as Sells once more notes, "is not so much an entity or object as an event, the process of perspective shift, of fana', the polishing of the divine mirror" (299). There is, then, no reason to seize upon any one of these states or manifestations, even the highest of them, because, as St John tells us, only God can finally know them truly and infinitely.

I believe that this is the reason the poet lavished such indeterminate joy on his poetic kaleidoscope: God is spaces, times, music, sounding solitude, and not simply one of these things, but all, and infinite numbers more, because surely from St John's feverish cataloguing celebration we can infer that the joy of the reception of these attributes never ends. Once again Michael Sells: "From the divine perspective the eternal manifestation always has occurred and always is occurring. From the human perspective it is eternal but also a moment in time, an eternal moment that cannot be held on to but must be continually re-enacted" (132). It would appear that with these words Sells is explaining not only the Tarjumān's stanzas of transformative union, but those of the "Spiritual Canticle" as well, and for good reason it would appear so: both mystics have a heart—a galb—which is colourless and of utter purity, like water,32 and endowed, for that very reason, with a protean ability to reflect in its "silvery mien," as in an unending mirror, the continuous manifestations which the Deity makes of its own Essence to Itself in the fortunate soul that is able to assume any form.

The ascent of the mount.

One of St John's most famous-if not most fully elaborated—symbols is the ascent of the mount (Mount Carmel in his case), which signifies the soul's ascent to the mystical peak. Few symbols are as "Jungian" as the cosmic mountain whose echoes reverberate in St John: from the ziggurats of Mesopotamia to the temple of Borobudur in Java (Eliade, Patterns 376), what we have is a symbolic architecture that makes possible a ritual and yet concrete ascent of profound spiritual significance. As one might expect, mystical literature has adopted this symbolic motif, which can be documented over and over in European literature: in the Neunfelsenbuch (Book of the Nine Rocks) of the fourteenth-century German mystic Rulman Merwin; in Jean Gerson; in Diego de Estella's Meditaciones del amor de Dios, in the Blessed Nicholas Factor: in Francisco de Osuna's Tercer abecedario espiritual ("Third Spiritual Primer"); and, above all, in the case of Bernardino de Laredo, whose Subida del Monte Sión (Ascent of Mount Zion) would seem to serve as a prelude to the Ascent of St John of the Cross (cf. Santiago Barroso).

It should come as no surprise that for several reasons, the symbol also receives considerable attention in Muslim mysticism. The mountain at whose summit the mystic struggles to arrive is part of a visionary geography of impossible but highly articulated maps that Henri Corbin has discussed in profound detail: in Suhrawardi's *Récit de l'éxil*, for example, the "orientation est celle d'une géographie visionaire s'orientant sur le 'climat de l'Âme'" (Corbin, *L'homme* 70). From the *Libro de la escala de Mahoma* (*Book of Muhammad's Stairway*) (cf. Muñoz Sendino, 225-226) to Ibn 'Arabi's *Tarjumān*, we find the theoretical elaboration of the spiritual mountain. Kūbra insisted a great deal on it, and gave it an often-employed technical name: it was the mountain *Kāf*.

We turn our attention to this universal symbol in order to note that in some details of his own particular use of it, St John of the Cross reminds us once again of his Sufi predecessors.

Bernardino de Laredo's spiritual *Ascent* is to Mount Zion, which is one of the mounts that St John also names (*S*, III: 42:5, *VO* 533), and so it might at first appear to be a Christian elaboration of the allegory, but we are surprised to find that hundreds of years earlier, Muslim mysticism had employed the image of an ascent to that same Mount Zion or Sinai (we should recall that the Qur'ān inherits a great deal of the Scriptures and that Mount Zion/Sinai is also sacred to Islam).

In a work titled Ba'ze az ta'wilāt-e Golshan-e-Rāz (in Corbin's translation Quelques-unes des exégeses spirituelles de la Roseraie du Mystère: Trilogía 96), which is a commentary on Shabastari's Rose Garden of the Mysteries, an obscure Ismā'ili treatise-writer speaks particularly of his ascent to Mount Zion or Sinai. More important yet is the case of Suhrawardī:

Le symbol du Sinaï, nous le recontrons deja. . . dans Sohrawardi [Récit de l'exil occidental]. La même, la figure que le pèlerin découvre au sommet du Sinaï mystique, typifie a la fois sa propre Nature parfaite (al-Tibi al-Tāmm. .). . . . Avec cette ascension au "Sinaï de son être", le mystique achève l'expérience de son escathologie personelle du présent. En révivant l'état de Moïse au sommet de la montagne, c'est le "Moïse de son être" qui est volatilisé (Corbin, L'homme 111-112).

For us, the most interesting parallel between St John of the Cross and the Muslim mystics who elaborated this cosmic ascent in their works over the course of centuries is that both cases have recourse to drawings, etchings, or paintings that help provide the reader with doctrinal illustration and explanation of how this arduous ascent may be achieved. Julián Rivera associates the graphic representations of the mystical path, quite common in Ramon Lull, more with Lull's Sufi predecessors than with the European emblematic tradition:

That didactic method which is taken to be an innovation introduced [by Lull] and by which everything is vulgarised . . . with graphic representations, schemata, concentric circles. . . , squares, so that it might enter through the eyes into the intelligence of the masses, was a method

peculiar to and characteristic of the Muslim Sufis contemporaneous with Lull (170-171).

If we compare the two traditions, we find that it is true that Lull, who did not read Latin and who wrote in Arabic, seems to derive more from the "Sufi hermits" he directly quotes in his Libre d'amic e amat than from the European emblemists that Frances Yates has studied. Bakhtiar reproduces a concrete example of that long Muslim tradition, a Persian rendering of the cosmic mountain Kāf that forms part of a manuscript containing an anthology of fourteenth-century Persian poems. (See Fig. 1.) Although it is polychrome, and much more highly decorated than the famous illustration of the Ascent of Mount Carmel that was drawn first by St John (VO p. 362) and then re-elaborated more "artistically" by his followers (see Figs. 2 & 3), the fundamental idea shared by the two illustrations is not hard to see. In the Persian case, the rendering, covered with explanations (especially in the top part of the drawing), serves as illustration for mystical poems dealing with the ascent of the spiritual mountain. Is this linking of a graphic representation, a poem, and a prose gloss a distant antecedent of St John's procedure as he speaks of his own mystical ascent? Both St John of the Cross and the Sufis employ this tripartite technique. And some details of the Muslims' symbolic mountain are quite similar to St John's. Frithof Schuon describes the Sufi's ascent to his own soul in these terms:

What separates man from divine Reality is the slightest of barriers. God is infinitely close to man, but man is infinitely far from God. The barrier, for man, is a mountain. . . which he must remove with his own hand. He digs away the earth, but in vain, the mountain remains; man goes on digging in the Name of God. And the mountain vanishes. It was never there (Stations of Wisdom, in Bakhtiar 57).

St John of the Cross says of the summit of his mountain that "in this place there is no longer any path," and he discovers that there never was. In the depths of his soul is God: St John has performed a circular and non-existent journey: "from God to God."

But the path is no less arduous for all that. Bakhtiar insists: "One needs a guide to climb: one can climb a mountain by many paths, but one needs to follow one made by experienced people" (28). We should recall St John's obsession with the spiritual teacher, who should be that person that is right for each soul-an obsession that Asin traced to the Muslims. We should also note that they are plural paths, some twisting and therefore leading nowhere: these also appear in St John's schema, as we see in the drawing. Bakhtiar continues: "The higher one moves spiritually, the more vision one gains. . . . [One] passes from form to formlessness" (28). Al-Ghazzālī insists upon the same process: "The fourth stage is to gaze at the union of an all-comprehensive, all-absorbing One, losing sight ever of the duality of one's own self. This is the highest stage" (Nawab Ali 104). Because of his insistence on this nothing which is the pathway to arrive at the all at the summit of the mountain, St John once again shows himself to be a brother of the mystics of the East: "to come to be all / wish not to be something in nothing," says the poem that accompanies the drawing. St John also sees annihilation (that oft-mentioned fana of the Sufis) as necessary in the process of ascent: "one single thing is needed; which is to know how to truly negate oneself . . . and annihilate oneself in all" (N III: 16:1; VO 495).

The ascent to the mountain of one's own soul, which is achieved by self-annihilation, is, we must acknowledge, a universal motif of mysticism, and yet St John of the Cross and the Sufis (and even Bernardino de Laredo) precisely parallel one another in their metaphorical ascent of the Sinai of the soul, taking their direction in this singular adventure from mystical "maps."

g) The Solitary Bird.

St John of the Cross conceives the soul as a "solitary bird" (much like the "passer solitarius" of David's Psalm 102:7; in Vulgate 101:8), but he endows it with enigmatic properties that transform it into a symbol which has baffled critics such as Fr. Eulogio Pacho because of its total lack of Western antecedents.

And indeed such antecedents are virtually impossible to discover in Europe. Authors who in one way or another use the symbol of the soul as a bird (which is, of course, a trope so long-used that it has been documented even in ancient Egypt)—St Bonaventure, St Bernard, Hugh of St-Victor, Ramon Lull, the blessed Orozco, Laredo, and even such anonymous medieval texts as the Portuguese *Book of the Birds* and the *Ancren Riwle* (*The Nun's Rule*), by an unknown English anchorite of the thirteenth century—are not really very helpful when we attempt to penetrate the trope as presented by St John of the Cross. Nor are we particularly enlightened in this regard by such studies on the subject of literary birds as that by María Rosa Lida: the nightingale and the swallow of the Renaissance, with their clear Greco-Latin lineage, make St John's solitary bird all the more mysterious and singular.

All St John tells us of this mysterious bird is contained in two brief and almost identical portraits, one in the *Dichos de luz y Amor* (120, *VO* 967) and the other in the glosses to the "Spiritual Canticle" (*CB* 15:23; *VO* 670). The *Treatise on the Properties of the Solitary Bird*, which would have been so illuminating, is so far lost. We will, nonetheless, make an attempt to throw some light on St John's schematic bird of the soul. Once again, the most fertile fields in which to search seem to be Eastern and not Western. Muslims, like Christians, have for centuries employed the symbol, which we clearly see to have mystical connotations in the Qur'an, where Solomon exclaims: "O men, we have been taught the speech of birds, and are endued with everything. This is indeed a clear boon *from God.*" (27:16) Later Sufis such as Kubra, adapting the verse, exclaimed:

("praise to God, Who has given us the language of the birds"). This is "the language of self [which] contains knowledge of the higher state of being" (Bakhtiar 3, 7).

Throughout the Middle Ages, Muslim authors—Sanā'i, 'Aṭṭār, Bāyazid, al-Bisṭāmi—all produced treatises on the mystical bird. Particularly important are those that Suhrawardi, Avicenna, and Al-Ghazzāli each composed under the title Risalāt al-Tair, or the Treatise upon the Bird, although, as Seyyed

Hossein Nasr notes (51), Suhrawardi virtually translated into Persian the Arabic treatise written by Avicenna.

To decipher or put into perspective the mysteries of the "properties" of St John of the Cross's particular bird, let us look for a moment at some of St John's parallels with these Sufis.33 St John closely echoes the Persian Al-Bistāmī (d. 877), who described himself as "a bird whose body was of Oneness," and who flies "in singularity" [(Attar, Muslim. . . , n.p.)]]; St John's bird is "solitary" and will not suffer "the company of another creature" (Dichos 120; VO 967). The wings of al-Bistami's bird are "of eternity" (Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions 49); Rumi's symbolic bird flies far away from all things material and perishable (Nicholson 86); St John's "shall rise above all things transitory" (Dichos 120). Al-Bistāmi's bird raises its head toward the Lord [[(Attar, ibjd.)]]; St John's "puts its beak into the air of the Holy Spirit" (Dichos 120). Ḥallāj exclaims, "I fly with my wings to my Beloved" (Tawāsin 34); in St John's flight, "the spirit. . . sets itself in highest contemplation" (VO 670). And both finally acquire a knowledge that transcends all reason; Ḥallāj's soul, like that metaphorical bird, "fell into the sea of understanding and was drowned" (34), while St John's, because it is a bird on the rooftop, as in Psalm 102:7, rises so high that it "remains as though ignorant of all things, for it knows God only, without knowing how" (Ascent II: 15:11; VO 424).

Perhaps the most interesting parallel is between St John of the Cross and the contemplative bird of Suhrawardi. There is no doubt that it is the fifth quality or property of St John's solitary bird (the fourth property in the *Dichos*) that is most problematic: the bird "has no one color" (*Dichos* 120; VO 967). St John explains this by saying that "thus is the spirit perfect (VO 670) which has no specific quality in any thing" (VO 967). This is a curious image, a bird of no colour. To our surprise, though, Suhrawardi had attributed this same property—in identical words—to his own bird, four hundred years before St John of the Cross: "All colours are in him but he is colourless" (*Three Treatises* 29). The congruence here is so perfect and so curious

that it will be worth our while to quote the text in its Persian original:

In both cases, the absence of colour implies exactly the same thing: the letting-go of all things material, the absence of material things in the soul. This is a most remarkable parallel. We should recall, however, that this image of the spirit as a colourless entity or process is far from foreign to Islamic mystics. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the world's foremost scholars of Islamic mysticism in Persian, tells us that 'Attār's famous Mantig al-Tair also makes indirect allusion to this colourlessness in the bird known as the Simurg. When the thirty birds—each of a different colour—discover that they themselves are the Simurg, the beautiful rainbow of their diverse colours must of necessity be erased, so that they, too, in a moment of transformative ecstasy, become "of no determined colour." This is a commonplace of Persian mysticism: in one of his most beautiful verses, Hafiz also compares the spirit's letting-go to the freedom from colour:

(Nasr translates this into English as "I am the slave of the will of that person who under the azur's sphere has become free of the attachment to whatever possesses color.") Najm ad-dīn al- Kubrā repeats this image, with some variation, in his Fawā'iḥ al-Jamāl wa-Fawātiḥ al-Jalāl, imagining that the most profound centre of his soul (his qalb) is as colourless and fluctuating as water, and able precisely for that reason to reflect the infinite, always changing attributes of God.

h) Ascetic War.

The mystic's progress along the spiritual path under the representation of a struggle or combat against the forces of evil—the devil, sensual appetites, and vices—has a long history

as a moral or mystical allegory. In his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchies*, the Pseudo-Dionysius gives an early (but fundamentally different) outline of the detailed and even picturesque "warfare of the spirit," in the description of which the mystics of the Spanish Peninsula seem to have excelled (Lourenzo Justiniano [cf. Martins 175], Fray Luis de Granada, Fray Alonso de Madrid, Osuna), although there are also cases in other areas of Europe, such as Suso. St John of the Cross and St Teresa employed the trope of spiritual battle as few others ever did; it seems to have culminated (though by now with other nuances) in the work of St Ignatius Loyola.

Islam employed the trope of ascetic warfare or battle during the Middle Ages, and in virtually the same terms as the Peninsular mystics. "The Sufis," says Fr Félix Pareja, "often cite the Qur'ānic verse 'and those who fought ardently for us, we shall guide them along our path; for surely Allah is with those who do good'" (229). And the strict mystical application of the Qur'ānic verses and *hadiths* or traditions of the Prophet are easy enough to find. Al-Hujwiri's summary is perfect:

The Apostle said: "We have returned from the lesser holy war (al-jihād al-aṣghar) to the greatest war (al-jihād al-akbar). . . . What is the greatest war? He replied, "It is the struggle against one's self (mujāhadat al-nafs)" (Kashf al-Maḥjūb 200).

This, then, is the trope of a "javānmardī, c'est-a-dire de chevalerie spirituelle," according to Corbin (L'homme 195), whose brilliant insights into the trope include his suggestion that the initial Lam-Alif of the famous Muslim dictum "lā illāha illa Allāh" (there is no god but Allah) has the shape of a sword—J—and therefore both heralds and participates in that ascetic war. Through time, the image grew so familiar that Ibn Qaşi organized his followers into a sort of religious militia, in a fortified convent (or rapita) in Silves (Pareja 381), hundreds of years before the birth of St Ignatius Loyola. Almost all the most

important Sufis appear to be aware of the theory: Al-Ghazzālī in his *Iḥyā 'ulūm al-dīn (cf.* Pareja 293-4 and Nwyia, *Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh* 225), Kubrā in his *Fawāiḥ al Jamāl wa Fawātiḥ al-Jalāl (cf.* Corbin, *L'homme* 99), Ibn 'Arabī in his *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*.

The metaphor of spiritual combat is developed into what one might almost call a "conceit" in Islam: the "spiritual knight" wages battle against a siege on the castle of his soul, which is turreted and equipped with battlements and walled about by allegorical walls. It would appear sometimes almost to be a chivalric romance (such as those that St Teresa so delighted in reading) though à la divine, except that the knightly romances had not yet been written, in the ninth century if not before, when the Sufis were allegorising the interior castle of their soul. In the Ascent, St John of the Cross speaks of the "walls and battlements [or in Peers' translation, the fence and wall] of the heart" (SIII: 20:1; VO 502), but the enigmatic final lira of the "Spiritual Canticle" is actually constructed upon the allegory of this battle against the devil in the impregnable fortress of the mystic's spirit: "Que nadie lo miraba / Aminadab tampoco parecía / y el cerco sosegaba / y la caballería / a vista de las aguas descendía" ("Nor did Amminadib appear / whom no one looked upon / and the siege abated / and the cavalry / in sight of the waters descended.").

In his glosses, St John clears up, at least somewhat, the mystery of the words of the poem's ending, which gives the impression of being anticlimactic: "[Aminnadib] signifies the devil (speaking spiritually), the soul's adversary" (CB 40:3; VO 738). This is an odd equation; St John quotes a verse from the Song of Songs entirely out of context ("Or ever I was aware, my soul made like the chariots of Amminadib," Song 6:12), though Fr Sullivan thinks the "quotation" may come from an exegesis by St Gregory. The gloss gives the details of this spiritual battle: Amminadib "fought and always disturbed the soul with the innumerable armament of his artillery, so that the soul might not enter into this fortress, and hiding-place of the inward withdrawal with the Spouse" (CB 40:3; VO 738).

But the soul is now in contemplation and "the devil not only dares not arrive, but with great terror flees far away and dares not appear" (*ibid.*). That is why the siege—clearly an addition to the castle—"abates": "By which wall [or "fence"] is understood here.... the passions and appetites of the soul, / which [,] when they are not vanquished and muzzled closely[,] surround [the soul] and battle with it in one place and yet another" (*CB* 40:4; *VO* 738). Here, clearly, the passions and appetites (and the devil) have been vanquished. And the "cayalry"—another warlike image—which in descending "in view of the waters" adds so much mystery to the stanza, signifies simply the "corporeal senses of the sensitive part" (*CB* 40:5; *VO* 738) which descend and grow tranquil in view of the waters that are the good things or delights of the soul in the state of absolute union.

be, if we are not familiar with the allegory of the ascetic war, it may still remain quite mysterious and seem somewhat forced or strained. But the Islamic context begins to bring the battle-imagery into a more familiar perspective. Let us look for a moment at a passage from the *Kitāb-al-Tanwir fi isqāṭ al Tadbir*, by Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh of Alexandria (d. 1309):

[The] dwellings of mystical certainty and the light that floods them all resemble the walls or battlements that encircle the city and its castles. The walls are the lights and the castles are the dwelling-places of mystical certainty, which surround the city of the heart. For him whose heart is surrounded by the wall of certainty and whose dwelling-places, which are the walls of lights in the manner of castles, are whole and firm, Satan has no path by which to arrive at him nor in his house does Satan find habitation in which to rest (Asin *Shadhiles* 179).

Although the parallels do not always coincide precisely with St John's, the fundamental elements recur: the heart as a fortress or walled city, the walls. And above all, at this precise spiritual moment, Satan has no way of getting at the soul.

We insist on that point—the safety of the soul—because the flight of Satan at the end of the "Spiritual Canticle" might seem

illogical, since in earlier stanzas of the poem the ecstatic union had already been consummated and the devil could not possibly have been present at that time. However, and, as we noted earlier, almost anticlimactically, St John announces just at the end of his poem that Satan has been vanquished. If we look at Sufi referents, that "anticlimax" of the poem's may turn into a grand finale: The absolute absence from the soul of its fierce enemy the Devil marks for Muslim mystics the last and highest degree of ecstasy; it is the absolute guarantee of the spiritual heights to which the soul has climbed. The final *lira* of the poem would imply, then, a true poetic *and mystical* culmination. Let us look at how close St John of the Cross is to Ibn 'Abbād of Ronda's *Sharḥ al-Ḥikam* (II:78):

[The] subject has lost the consciousness of his own being and preserves only the consciousness of his presence with his Lord; and he who finds himself in that state is now one of those who are free of all evil and danger, because over them the accursed enemy no longer has any power whatsoever, and he who during his prayer is free of the power of the enemy need not work to combat him and reject him, and so his prayer is accompanied by the presence of God. . . . So that, the devout man having lost consciousness of himself and being now free of the temptation of his enemy, must feel the height of well-being and the apex of delight, bringing to realisation within himself with all truth that which is signified by the word consolation. . . . That is why the contemplative master Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Aziz of Mahdijja would often say: "Spiritual consolation does not exist for him who struggles with his passions, nor for him who battles Satan, but exists only for him who is free and serene from both dangers" (Asin, "El simil" 242-3).

We should note the emphasis on final tranquillity, serenity, consolation, and well being, which St John repeats in the three last lines of the "Spiritual Canticle" and their corresponding glosses. Al-Ghazzālī also insists on that state of serenity: "Satan shall flee in disappointment and without any further hope of perturbing . . . thy unitary intuition" (Asin, espiritualidad 3: 361). In the ninth century, and once more employing the metaphor of

ascetic warfare or combat that the soul wages from the battlements of its interior castles or fortresses, Nūri of Baghdad also sets Satan outside, where he barks in vain and cannot find a way in: "Satan. . . barks from without this castle as the dog barks" (Maqāmāt VIII, p. 136):

St John of the Cross, a valiant knight of the spirit, struggles more fiercely yet. He reminds us of some spiritual St George battling against an infernal beast, a seven-headed dragon:

Happy the soul that is able to do battle against that beast of the Apocalypse (12:3) with its seven heads, the opposite of these seven grades of love, against each one of which [heads] he wages war, and against each one of which he fights with his soul [as ally or weapon or protagonist] in each one of these mansions in which the soul is struggling and gaining each grade of love of God. Which, without doubt, if the soul faithfully do battle in each one and triumph, it shall merit going onward from grade to grade and from mansion to mansion until the last, leaving the beast's seven heads, with which it did fierce battle, cut off. . . . And thus the pain is great in many men who enter into spiritual battle against the beast yet are not yet ripe to cut off even its first head by denying the sensual things of the world; and once some men master themselves and do cut it off, still they cannot cut off the second, which is the visions of the sense that we have been speaking of. But what hurts even more is that some, having cut off not only the second and the first, but even the third which is that which concerns the sensitive inward senses, passing from the state of meditation, and even farther on-, just as they enter into the purity of spirit they are vanquished by this spiritual beast, and it once again rises up against them and even the first head takes on life again, and thus makes the last years of them worse than the first in their falling-back, taking another seven spirits with it worse than he (NII: 11:10; VO 416).34

But once again, the Sufis' "chivalric romance à la divine" includes the figure of a mystical valiant knight who does battle precisely against a dragon—sometimes, precisely a seven-headed one—whose graphic representation (with commentaries in Persian) we see in a miniature contained in a Persian

manuscript by Shāh Nāmeh (Fig. 4). In that same manuscript we see another illustration (Fig. 5), in which the spiritual knight, with a handsome steed and luxurious clothing, is presented in the midst of battle against malign spirits that block his mystical path. These *aljines* or genii (of Qur'ānic lineage) resemble monstrous animals or vermin that elude easy description: against such creatures, we might recall, St John and St Teresa also heroically battled.

i) The Soul as a Garden.

Another image that is quite extensively employed in European mysticism but that St John of the Cross and the Sufis employ in amazingly exact parallel and detail, is a park like place or flower-garden in representation of the soul in a state of oneness. This garden, the "unitive station" (al-maqām al-jāmi') in Ibn 'Arabi (TAA 65), is explored and codified more fully by Nūrī of Baghdad than any other author. Nūrī dedicated several chapters of his Magāmāt al-qulūb to a description of the wonders of the garden: its flowers, rain showers, fragrances, breezes.35 St John of the Cross also finds these delicate allegorical elements in his garden or "huerto" (CB 24:6; VO 677), which is at the same time his soul. The breeze that refreshes the poet's ecstatic spirit, inherited as it is no doubt from the Spanish versions of the Song of Songs, in the glosses takes on a mystical cast that is often recognisably Islamic. The south wind or Zephyr, which helps to open the flowers and spread their fragrance, "is the Holy Spirit. . which, when this divine air strikes the soul, inflames it all . . . and enlivens and awakes the will and raises the appetites which erstwhile were drooping and asleep to the love of God" (CB 17:2; VO 676). This is very much like the wind that blows through the soul of Sa'd: "It's natural for plants to be revived by the morning breeze, whereas minerals and dead bodies are not susceptible to the Zephyr's influence. (The meaning is that only those hearts which are alive to the meaning of spiritual love, can be quickened by the breath of Divine Inspiration" (Smith, Sufi Path 113; cf. also Schimmel, Triumphal Sun 203). For St John of the Cross, the fragrances that these divine winds raise from the flowers are God and soul in union: "the same soul. . . that. . .

gives fragrance of softness to the Bridegroom that in that soul lives" ... "the divine fragrances of God" (CB 18:9; VO 678). After defining this same equation between the perfume of the garden and spiritual Oneness, Nūri exclaims over the indescribable fragrance of the garden: "God-blessed be Hehas a garden upon the face of the earth. He who breathes the perfume of this garden no longer desires Paradise. And these gardens are the hearts of the gnostics" (Maqāmāt V: 134). In the garden we also find flowing water; the thirst of the Arab poet would have it no other way: "The Garden of the Soul. . . contains a fountain, flowing water," says Bakhtiar (30) of this water that Nuri gives such attention to in his poem. Interestingly, St John, for whom water was of course in much more plentiful supply than for the Arab poet, also includes flowing water in his garden, and explains it in divine terms: he discovers that his soul has "become a paradise divinely irrigated" (L 3:7; VO 873-4).

Nor of course can flowers themselves be lacking in this garden. St John, recalling fragrant passages from the Song of Songs, says that the Bridegroom comes to the soul (in the biblical sense of the phrase) "among the fragrance of these flowers" (CB 18:10; VO 678). In a more detailed passage in the glosses to the "Spiritual Canticle," these flowers are named and their qualities enumerated: the lily, the jasmine, roses—each flower lends a different dimension of knowledge of God, and under the tutelage of each in turn, the soul is gradually transformed. For Ibn 'Arabi the mystical dwelling-place we are speaking of is easy to define: "the flower...i.e., the station of Divine Revelation" (TAA 101). Likewise, for St John of the Cross, roses are specifically "the strange news of God" (CB 24:6; VO 694).

Here, then, all that is missing is the nightingale, which sips at the rose that is one of the most famous Sufi symbols, the manifestation of the glory of God which the mystical bird unceasingly sips at (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 306). But in fact we continue to follow close upon the mystical Symbolism of Islam, since for St John, too, the nightingale—"the sweet

Philomela"—sings the glorious melody of transformative union in the "Spiritual Canticle."

fana': The Lily of Letting-go.

There is a flower that St John praises in another poem, and which merits a few additional words. The "Dark Night" culminates in a final letting-go: "leaving my care / forgotten among the lilies." If we look for possible referents among Islamic poetry, we find that the grand finale of the poem is explained (imagistically, at least) in that tradition, and the selection of that specific (perhaps apparently cliched) flower comes to seem to us to have been more "artistic" and intentional. For lilies are precisely the flower of letting-go for Sufis who have attained the last stage of the mystical voyage, at which all language fails. In those men, the lily, "breathless with adoration" in the words of Annemarie Schimmel (Mystical Dimensions 308), glorifies God in silence with the ten necessarily mute tongues of its petals.

k) The Foxes of Sensuality; the Hair as "spiritual snare."

Lastly, some other symbols in common. St John of the Cross, as we have noted several times, obtains a good deal of his poetic vocabulary from the Scriptures (and especially from the Song of Songs), but when he raises that vocabulary to a symbolic and mystical level he does so quite often from a standpoint that is recognisable as within the *trobar clus* of Sufism. For instance, St John equates the foxes of the "Spiritual Canticle" with the sensual appetites of the soul (*CB* 16:5; *VO* 673), Islamicizing the biblical animal that the Bride of the Song of Songs asks be hunted—because for Sufis such as Mohamed ibn Ulyan, the little foxes or vixens are their *nafs* or carnal appetites, which they must repress throughout their spiritual journey:

In my novitiate, when I had become aware of the corruption of the lower soul and acquainted with its places of ambush, I always felt a violent hatred of it in my heart. One day something like a young fox came forth from my throat, and God caused me to understand that it was my lower soul (Al-Hujwiri, Kashf al-Maḥjūb 206).

Perhaps more curious yet is the symbol of the hair, which "flies at the neck" of the Bride in the "Spiritual Canticle" and serves as a "snare" to trap her Beloved. Here St John, as Francisco GarcRa Lorca has noted, seems to be following the Vulgate version of the Song of Songs ("Vulnerasti cor meum in uno crine tui," 4:9; "thou hast wounded my heart in a lock of thy hair") rather than the Spanish translation by Fray Luis ("robaste mi corazón con uno de los tus ojos, y con sartal de tu cuello": "you stole my heart with one of your eyes, and with a string [as of beads, etc.] of your neck"; cf. the King James version: "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse: thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck"). However, Fray Luis, commenting on another passage of the epithalamion (7:5: "Tu cabeza como el Carmelo: y los cabellos de tu cabeza como purpura de Rey atada en canales": "Your head [is] like Carmel: and the hairs of your head like King's crimson bound in channels"; but cf. the King James version: "Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple: the king is held in the galleries"), notes that the "king" is held within the Bride's hair as though in a bond:

by her inestimable beauty, the king, which is Solomon her Spouse, is prisoner (Garcia Lorca 183).

The image of the Bridegroom "held captive" by the Bride's locks is not unknown to other traditions that St John might have been familiar with. Damaso Alonso documents the figure in popular poetry and Emilio Orozco (203) finds it in Theocritus' Fifth Idyll (l. 90) ("A shining lock of hair curling along the neck"). Fr Crisógono y María Rosa Lida tell us that other, secular, lovers also employ the motif: we find the trope in Garcilaso's Canción IV, though somewhat generalized: "De los cabellos de oro fue tejida / la red que fabricó mi sentimiento. . . Pues soy por los cabellos arrastrado" ("Of her golden hair was woven / the net which my emotions made.... For I am by the hair dragged along"). And Petrarch had already used it, more than once: "dico le chiome bionde, e'l crespo laccio, / che si soavemente lega e stringe / l'alma" ("???") (Sonnet 198); "e

folgorare [of the eyes] i nodi [of the hair] ond' io son preso" ("???") (Sonnet 198). But it was the Sufis who hundreds of years earlier had turned to religio-mystical purposes the poetic motif of the curls or locks of hair that seduce and entrap and imprison, and which Europeans like Petrarch and Garcilaso only employed at the profane level. Would St John of the Cross, once again, be treading Islamic ground, receiving the image ready-worked to his purposes from Muslim poets and writers, who would appear to be much closer to his uses than were the writers and poets of the Renaissance and the Classics? St John gives some evidence of knowledge of the secret equivalence of the *zulf* or "lock of hair" (cf. Arberry, Sufism 113) that is the "hook" or "snare" by which so many Sufis, such as Ibn 'Arabi and Shabistari, snare he Deity or are ensnared:

If you ask me the long story / Of the Beloved's curl, / I cannot answer, for it contains a mystery / Which only true lovers understand, / And they, maddened by its beauty, / Are held captive as by a golden chain (Lederer 20).

The Sufis, with their characteristic verbal imagination, metaphorically transfigure this curl into the $l\bar{a}m$ (the letter L), which has the same shape: J.

Thus far we have been exploring the parallels between the mystical Symbolism of St John of the Cross and the Sufis: the abundance of these parallels and their exact correspondence allow us to see how seminal (and to a degree prescient) those early essays were in which Asín Palacios linked St John of the Cross to literary and mystical contexts within Islam. Asín was laying the groundwork for research that is still in a sense only beginning, and which has thrown and is still throwing new light on the works of St John of the Cross—a body of work which has traditionally been seen as so filled with mysteries. Let us now look at the case of St Teresa de Jesus.

St Teresa de Jesús

The spiritual symbolism of St Teresa de Jesús in many ways parallels the Symbolism of St John of the Cross, who worked

closely with St Teresa, as we all know, in the reformation of the Carmelite order. The two poets share several important symbols that would appear to have Islamic antecedents and both also employ a great deal of the same technical language. Let us look quickly at those images and phrases that we have explored in St John of the Cross:

a) "Contraction" and "Expansion"; Wine; the Interior Fount or Spring; the Soul as a Garden

Over and over, St Teresa insists on the Qur'anic technical vocabulary of "Contraction or straitness" (qabd) and "expansion or breadth" (bast). The torments of straitness are unmistakable: "because there are many things that embattle [the soul] with an inward straitness that is so sensible and unbearable, that I do not know what it may be compared with save those who suffer in hell"; "it is unspeakable because they are spiritual straitnesses and pains, to which one knows not how to put a name." But curiously, St Teresa does know how to "put a name" to this intense spiritual suffering: she calls it "straitness"—qabd—throughout the Interior Castle. The parallel with the qabd and bast of the Sufis is quite precise: for St Teresa the state that is the alternative to this straitness is, quite explicitly, "expansion." She would appear to interpret Psalm 118: 32 from the perspective of Muslim mysticism:

enlarged. .. [and as] this heavenly water begins to flow from this source of which I am speaking—that is, from our very depths—it proceeds to spread within us and cause an interior dilation and produce ineffable blessings, so that the soul itself cannot understand all that it receives there (Moradas IV:2 [Castle p. 82]; OC386).

In addition, the works of St Teresa are filled with passages celebrating the wine of ecstasy and the spiritual intoxication that washes over the soul. The verse "thy breasts more precious than wine" is "deciphered" according to this occult meaning that the Muslims established over the centuries:

[When] one is in this delight, so drunken and absorbed that one appears not to be within oneself, but rather in some way in a divine drunkenness, that one knows not what one wants, nor what to say, nor what to ask for. . . When one awakes from that dream and that celestial drunkenness, one is as though shaken and groggy, and feels a holy confusion (Meditación sobre los Cantares IV; OC 349).

One of the symbols in which St Teresa most closely parallels the Islamic tradition is that of water or the inward spring or fountain. Asin Palacios began to sketch out this parallel in Šādhilīes y alumbrados: for St Teresa, prayer and meditation are performed in two ways-one, laborious and difficult; the other, spontaneous and autonomous. She compares the two ways of praying with two basins that fill up with water in different ways. The first one is filled by means of "numerous conduits and through human skill; but the other has been constructed at the very source of the water and fills without making any noise. If the flow of water is abundant, as in the case we are speaking of, a great stream still runs from it after it has been filled; no skill is necessary here, and no conduits have to be made, for the water is flowing all the time" (Moradas IV: 3 [Castle 81]; OC 386). For St Teresa, the "conduits and human skill" are the arduous duties that we are bound to (the mortification and guided meditation) and by which we achieve nearness to God, while the freeflowing spring is God Himself, the knowledge of Whom "rushes forth" into our souls with no special effort on our part. This is exactly the same comparison that occurs over and over among the Muslim mystics and that we have also seen in St John of the Cross. Let us look at how closely St Teresa's image resembles the Shādhilite metaphor:

Just as the mystics of this school compare the soul with a mirror, they also compare it with a spring of water, and link the knowledge and intuitions that exist within the soul with the water that flows from the spring, and say that sometimes the spring is hidden in the earth, and only by digging can one extract water from it. And this simile which they employ, comparing the soul with the spring, is exact, for when the soul is lighted with the mystical truths that make it forget its

cares and the things of the world, from it there rushes forth the divine knowledge, just as the water rushes forth from the spring; on the other hand, sometimes one must dig down into the water with the hoe of ascetic combat and the shovel of mortification, until those waters gush forth again, as previously they gushed forth spontaneously, or better yet. (Asin Palacios, Šādhilies 272)

This soul swollen by spiritual waters is for St Teresa, as for St John of the Cross and so many followers of the Prophet, also a garden cooled by divine breezes, refreshed by the rain of God's mercy, and adorned with the flowers of the virtues. But one must tend it diligently, be a good gardener:

[With] the help of god we must attempt, like good gardeners, to make these plants grow [in the soul] and take care to water them so that they are not lost, but rather put forth flowers that give forth great fragrance, to give pleasure to our Lord, so that He will come many times to take delight in this garden and pass His time among these virtues (Vida 11; OC 59).

We have already seen that the Sufis were good "gardeners" of their souls throughout the Middle Ages. It is interesting to note that despite her bad memory, St Teresa recognizes that the image of the garden is not her own: "It now appears to me that I have read or heard this comparison, though as I have such a bad memory I do not know where, nor to what purpose, but it does now content me."

But there are yet more parallels between St Teresa, St John of the Cross, and the mystics of Islam: for St Teresa, as for those others, the soul is a *mirror* that one must polish (*Castle* VII: 2: 8, p. 217) and whose center or deepest depth receives the sudden illumination of a *lightning-bolt* of mystical enlightenment (*Castle* VI:9: 3, p. 185). We might go on piling up examples: the comparative study of the mystical symbolism of St Teresa, St John of the Cross, and the Muslims has yet to be done.

There are other symbols that St Teresa shares with the Muslims but that we have not seen in St John of the Cross. Let us turn now to these.

b) The Mystical Tree.

One of the most curious of the symbols shared by St Teresa and Muslim mysticism is the tree that grows in the "living" waters of the soul, which is the soul itself:

I want you to consider what will be this tree of life, planted in the living waters of life—namely, in God—... this spring of life in which the soul is as a tree planted [there].... [For] the spring sustains it and prevents it from drying up and causes it to produce good fruit (Castle, I:2: 1, pp. 33-4).

The symbol of the cosmic tree is shared by the most diverse cultures. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the Upanishads, for example, give us the image of the universe in the form of a tree whose branches extend throughout the world. Scandinavian and German mythologies repeat the idea, although Mircea Eliade believes that the image has an Eastern origin: the cosmic tree "has a special significance in the beliefs of the Nordic and central Asiatic and, more particularly, the Altai and Germanic peoples, but its origin is probably eastern (Mesopotamian)" (Eliade, *Patterns* 299 [*Traité* 255]). Some of these traditions link the tree with water, as St Teresa does. Revelations 22: 2 speaks of the tree of life that is planted in the river that flows from the throne of God in the Heavenly Jerusalem and gives all manner of fruit, ³⁸ and the idea is not very distant from numerous Indian, Persian, and Arab traditions.

The alchemists, however, interpret the cosmic tree in terms of their own spiritual experiences, and it becomes "the outward and visible sign of the realization of the self," according to Carl Jung (196). The Arab alchemist Abū 'l-Qāsim al-'Iraqī (thirteenth century) speaks of the symbolic tree of his soul which rises out of a spring in precisely that way. And with this we come nearer to St Teresa, who notes that the tree (which represents her soul and not the universe) will grow well or ill depending on the kind of spiritual waters that nourish it: the clean waters of grace or the filthy waters of sin. The parallels multiply when we look at the mystical literature of the Sufis, who over and over again repeat the image of the tree of the soul

that rises out of a spiritual spring, and do so in the same terms St Teresa employs. In other words, the mystics and alchemists of Islam give the tree—the symbol of the universe for so many cultures—a new and inward, mystical dimension. Let us look a little closer at these Islamic theories.

The ancient Book of Certainty sees the tree and the spring or river of the Garden of Eden as having their counterpart in the soul:

In the centre of the Garden of Eden there is said to be not only a fountain but also a tree, at whose foot the fountain flows. This is the Tree of Immortality, and it is an outward image of the inward Tree of Immortality, which grows in the Garden of the Heart (40).

The Persian Shabastari also praises this tree which, like St Teresa's, grows in the depth of his spirit and indeed is the spirit itself: "From water and earth springs up 'the soul's kernel' into a tree, Whose high branches are lifted up to heaven" (Lederer 32). Nūrī of Baghdad speaks to us repeatedly of the same tree, an image he explores in several chapters of his *Maqāmāt al-qulūb*. Here is a brief excerpt from Chapter I:

God planted [in the soul of the believer] a tree of mystical knowledge. . . [whose] roots penetrate the heart, while its branches rise up to heaven, reaching even to the Throne of God. . . . Then [God] has made a water [spring, etc.] that flows from the sea of right conduct flow from the river of His grace, and with it He waters [this tree] (op.cit., 131-2).

In close parallel to St Teresa, Nuri notes that the soul's tree of spiritual knowledge grows in step with our positive or negative spiritual growth (cf. his chapters XVII, "A Portrait of the tree of knowledge in the mystic's heart," and XIV, "A Portrait of the tree of desire"). The Islamic tradition of the tree of the soul is very strong: Ibn 'Arabi, among so many others, considers the cosmic tree in its double dimension: macrocosmic and microcosmic. Laleh Bakhtiar notes the following:

The Cosmic Tree, Tuba, in its macrocosmic form grows at the uppermost limits of the universe. In its microcosmic

form, its cultivation depends on the mystic. In its macrocosmic aspect, it is associated with the Cosmic Mountain on Top of which the Cosmic Tree grows. . . . [In] the microcosmic form. . . it is the symbol of wisdom which, through roots in meditation, bears fruit of the Spirit (57).

The symbol was so common among the Muslims that it found expression in the plastic arts of Persia, as in a piece of embroidery with flannel appliqué (Fig. 6). Somehow, the ancient Muslim image seems to have found its way to St Teresa in the Spanish sixteenth century.

c) The Silkworm.

Another symbol that is immediately associated with St Teresa is the silkworm. The soul is like a silkworm that weaves its own dwelling-place for union with God, and in doing so withdraws from all things created:

start spinning silk, making themselves very tight little cocoons, in which they bury themselves. Then, finally, the worm, which was large and ugly, comes right out of the cocoon a beautiful white butterfly. . . .

Here, then, daughters, you see what we can do, with God's favour. May His Majesty Himself be our mansion as He is in this Prayer of Union which, as it were, we ourselves spin. . . .

On, then, my daughters! Let us hasten to perform this task and spin this cocoon. Let us renounce our self-love and self-will, and our attachment to earthly things. (*Castle*, 5: 2, pp. 104, 105, 106).

Once again, this figure would appear to have Eastern origins. Several critics—Gaston Etchegoyen, González Palencia, etc.—concede that it was the Arabs who introduced the literary silkworm into Andalucia and adapted it to the peninsular climate. And yet the silkworm was employed as a mystical symbol in Islam in exactly the same sense as St Teresa's. Could St Teresa have had indirect access to these literary sources in which the symbol is such a clear trope, since she confesses to never having

been an eyewitness to the lifecycle of the silkworm? Be that as it may, in the thirteenth century the Persian poet and religious thinker Rūmi was one of the most famous users of the trope. We might cite, from among the multitude of examples that the poet left us, these lines in which he celebrates the way the leaves that the silkworm eats are transformed into silk, and in comparing us with those silkworms situates us, exactly as St Teresa was to do so many centuries later, outside all things created:

"When the worm eats leaves the leaf becomes silk we are the worms of love, for we are without the leaves (provision of sorrows, barg) of this world"

(Divan-e-kabir 1484/15652, in Schimmel, Triumphal Sun 111).

Rumi, who explores it at great length as a mystical symbol. Perhaps, then, it is in the East that are to be found the germs of this spiritual image that St Teresa, in Europe, made so much her own.

d) The Seven Concentric Castles of the Soul.

We will end our study with one of the most famous symbols of Peninsular mysticism: St Teresa's seven concentric castle of the soul, an image celebrated for its beauty and immediacy, and above all for its startling "originality."

St Teresa, whose memory for sources so often failed her, declared at the beginning of her treatise, in all innocence, that the delicate mystical schema she had formulated was the product of her own imagination, divinely inspired:⁴¹

While I was beseeching Our Lord to-day that he would speak through me, since I could find nothing to say and had no idea how to begin to carry out the obligation laid upon me by obedience, a thought occurred to me which I will now set down, in order to have some foundation on which to build. I began to think of the soul as it if were a castle made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions. 42

It does not strain credulity overmuch to believe St Teresa's protestations of originality and divine inspiration, for the image has a strange loveliness and an undeniable imaginative complexity about it: the soul is conceived as a castle made of fine crystal or diamond and constituted by seven dwellings or apartments which seem themselves to be seven concentric palaces or castles (cf. Interior Castle, I: 2, 207; VII: 2, 9 and 10, 337-38, and passim.). In the last palace or dwelling resides God, Whom the soul joins and with Whom it dwells; the soul thus escapes the ravages of the devil who, in the form of various horrible and venomous animals, is constantly attempting to penetrate the castles that demarcate the progressive restinghouses or dwellings arrived at on the mystical path. When we consider one further important detail, the symbolic schema would indeed appear to be original: it has been found terribly difficult to document, in all its particulars and constitutive elements, anywhere in the European mystical literature that antedates St Teresa.

This symbol has, in fact, led to one of the most intriguing problems of filiation in all of Spanish literature. Many more than one scholar, respectfully ignoring St Teresa's protestations of originality, has joined the search for the literary source or sources of the seven concentric castles of the soul. And the findings of critics such as Morel Fatio, Gaston Etchegoyen, Menéndez Pidal, and R. Hoornaert do mitigate our wonder at the trope to a degree, for they have documented the equation of the soul with a castle in spiritual writers before St Teresa. (It seems only fair, too, to note that C. G. Jung⁴³ and Mircea Eliade⁴⁴ have written at some length on the universality of the image.) And yet the antecedents seem rather distant and disappointing: in none of them do we find the mystical way or path structured as seven dwellings or castles, each clearly inside the other, their progressive interiority marking the stages or steps of the soul's ascension. Gaston Etchegoyen, the commentator who has probably most deeply delved into the phylogenetic aspect of the problem of the castles, has proposed that Bernardino de Laredo and Francisco de Osuna were Teresa's principal sources. These

writers, the works of both of whom were well known by St Teresa, do indeed conceive the inner soul as a castle, but their sketchy figures hardly explain the fullness of detail achieved by St Teresa. In his *Tercer abecedario espiritual* ("Third Spiritual Primer"), Osuna keeps to a schema that owes much to medieval allegories; in this conception, the traditional enemies (the world, the flesh, and the devil) try to breach the castle of the soul. The figure that Bernardino de Laredo sketches in his *Subida del Monte Sión* ("Ascent of Mount Zion") is more complex and intriguing, but finally even further from St Teresa's: the understanding is a sort of "civitas sancta" built in a square field. Its foundations are of crystal and its walls of precious stones, with a Paschal candle inside symbolising Christ. On their square field.

These are, then, the symbolic outlines which criticism has generally taken to be the best explanation for St Teresa's figure, but it is obvious that this simple scheme has really very little to do with the imaginative richness of her seven concentric castles.

Furthermore, we should note that conceptions of the spiritual castle, such as those found, as we have noted, in Osuna, Laredo, Denis the Carthusian (and even Ramon Lull), are yet more abundant in medieval and Renaissance literature than scholars have so far documented. St Bernard of Clairvaux [1090-1153] in the twelfth century, for example, over and over again compares the soul to a fortress besieged by spiritual enemies.47 Jean Gerson likewise speaks of assaults on the soul by the world, the flesh, and the devil. 48 Other theorists such as Hugh of St-Victor (De area Noe morali) and the anonymous author of the thirteenth-century Ancren Riwle ("The Nun's Rule") make more or less the same symbolic arguments. In a curious variant, Robert Grosseteste, in his thirteenth-century Anglo-French Château d'amour, equates the allegorical castle to the Virgin Mary's womb which receives Christ.49 He, like many other spiritual writers, avails himself of a Biblical passage which did not occur to St Teresa (or at least which she did not use): "Intravit Jesus in quodam castellum. . . " (Luke 10:38). The German mystic Meister Eckhart, who produces some of the most delicate and beautiful spiritual literature in medieval Europe, buttresses his own metaphorical castle—which in this case is also a metaphor for the Virginal womb which received Christ—with the same passage from Luke, and translates the Biblical "castellum" by "bürgelin"—"little burg" or "village," rather than strictly "castle," as the King James Bible in fact also does (cf. Selected Treatises and Sermons Translated from Latin and German).

The Portuguese, for their part-St Anthony of Lisbon (or Padua), Frei Paio da Coimbra, the author of the Boosco deleitoso-would seem virtually obsessed with the symbol of the castle of the soul, though they develop it with the same limitations as do their European contemporaries. The most interesting treatise-writer of all the Portuguese may be Dom Duarte, who in his Leal conselheiro ("Faithful Councillor") speaks of the "five houses of our heart," one inside another. The last chamber or house is the "oratorio," or "room of prayer,"50 and there is some justification for Mario Martins' belief that he sees some family resemblance between the Portuguese Dom and the Spanish St Teresa.51 In Spain, we should add the names of Juan de los Angeles and Diego de Estella. In Italy, Dante would appear to be close to St Teresa when he speaks of his "nobile castello / sette volte cerchiato d'altre mura" [literally, of course, "noble castle"; the John Ciardi translation is "great Citadel / circled by seven towering battlements"] (Inferno, IV, II. 106-7), but Dante's castle symbolises not the soul but rather the entrance to the Garden of Limbo.

Thus, castle-allegories among European spiritual writers are, as we see, quite widespread, but in fullness of imagistic detail they compare very unfavourably with the highly articulated Teresian schema. Determines sometimes mentioned in relation to St Teresa's famous symbol are even more remote and disappointing in this regard, such as the castles in chivalric books, the allegorical castles of courtly love of the cancioneril poetry of the fifteenth century. St Augustine's "mansions," and even some biblical passages only vaguely related to the trope. Finally, it seems an act of critical near-desperation when some scholars opt for an extra-literary solution to explain St Teresa's sudden inspiration. In 1919 Miguel de

Unamuno put forth the hypothesis that the walled city of Avila had served as a model for the Seven Castles, and Robert Ricart in 1965, at the end of an article whose initial incisive rigor promised better, chose to accept Unamuno's conclusion (cf. above, note?). More recently, in 1970, Trueman Dicken also decided to adopt a similar phylogenetic solution, except that now it is not Avila that is St Teresa's supposed source of inspiration, but rather the Mota Castle at Medina del Campo. Dicken strengthens his argument by minutely (and not, in our opinion, at all successfully) comparing this real castle with the seven imaginary castles of St Teresa's mysterious trope.

Given these critical attempts, so generally unsuccessful, any attempt to impugn the supposed literary originality of St Teresa would appear distinctly ill favoured, if not misguided. And yet that supposed originality was challenged, many years ago now, by the great Spanish Arabist Miguel Asin Palacios, in an essay that, surprisingly, few recent critics have taken into account. Originally published in 1946 in Al-Andalus (2, pp. 263-274), the essay's title was "El simil de los castillos y moradas del alma en la mística islámica y en Santa Teresa"; it has now been reprinted in my 1990 edition of Asin's work (179-216). In this essay, Asin documented the basic Teresian schema among the mystics, specifically in a little work titled Kitāb al Tajrīd ("The Book of Spiritual Nakedness") by Ahmad Al-Ghazzālī, the brother of the famed philosopher, wherein the soul is portrayed in terms of concentric circles. Here, Asin contended, the trope "acquires completeness and offers itself to us as a true precedent to the Teresian [figure] in a single passage, unfortunately anonymous, in the Nawādir, a curious compilation of stories and religious thoughts attributed to Ahmad al-Qalyūbi and written down towards the end of the sixteenth century" (266). The passage, which Asin himself translates from the Arabic into Spanish, is as follows:

God set for every son of Adam seven castles, within which is He and without which is Satan barking like a dog. When man lets a breach be opened in one of them, Satan enters by it. Man must, therefore, keep most careful vigil and guard

over them, but particularly the first castle of them, for so long as that one remains sound and whole and its foundations firm, there is no evil to be feared. The first of the castles, which is of whitest pearl, is the mortification of the sensitive soul. Inside it there is a castle of emerald, which is purity and sincerity of intention. Inside this there is a castle of brilliant, shining porcelain, which is obedience to God's commandments, both the positive and the negative. Within this castle there is a castle of rock, which is gratitude for Divine gifts and surrender to the Divine will. Within this castle there is a further one, of iron, which is leaving all in the hands of God. Within this, there is a castle of silver, which is mystical faith. Within this there is a castle of gold, which is the contemplation of God-glory and honor to Him! For God-praised be He! -hath said (Koran, XVI, 191), "Satan has no power over those who believe and place their trust in God" (267-8).

Indeed Asin had come upon a somewhat schematic but nevertheless precisely rendered precedent for St Teresa's image. Although we do not find in the Nawādir the exhaustive mystical elaboration that St Teresa gives the trope, nonetheless all the principal elements of an image that St Teresa believed to be the offspring of her own inspired imagination are there present. Yet the specific problem of the origin or origins of the castle-symbol was never totally solved by Asin Palacios, because the documentary evidence in his possession was a manuscript dating from the end of the sixteenth century (and therefore contemporary with or even following St Teresa), and Asin believed that the symbol had been perfected in Islam at about that date. It has been my good fortune, though, to be able to resolve some of the doubts about the origin of the symbol in St Teresa that were left by Asin, for I have come upon documentary evidence which was not available to him in his 1946 essay. This document is the ninth-century Maqāmāt al-qulūb ("Stations of the Hearts") by Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Nūrī of Baghdad. (Indeed, the document may be even earlier.) It does not seem incautious, then, given this document, to suspect that we are in the presence of a metaphoric motif recurrent in Islamic thought and writing.

The two examples which Asin and later I have been able to document—with so many centuries' difference between the manuscripts (between, that is, the ninth and sixteenth centuries)—argues, we can fairly assume, for a long literary tradition for this figure, replaying itself across the centuries.

Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Nūri's mystical tract is of particular interest because until now no other author among those documented to have used the castle-symbol (with the exception of the anonymous writer of the *Nawādir*) organised the symbol's elements so similarly to the way they are structured by St Teresa. Let us examine how precisely the Sufi master Nūrī foreshadows the *Nawādir* and draws—a full eight centuries before the mystical saint from Avila—the image that St Teresa considered personal and inspired. We have translated from the Arabic the chapter dealing with the symbol of the seven interior castles; its title is or "The Castles of the Believer's Heart":

Know thee that God-praised be He! -created in the heart of believers seven castles surrounded by walls. He commanded that believers dwell within these castles and He placed Satan without, barking at them as the dog barks. The first enclosed castle is of corundum [yaqut, a crystalline stone which may have several colours; here, probably "ruby" or "sapphire," perhaps "emerald," or perhaps even a clear crystalline stone that resembled a diamond], and [this castle] is mystical acquaintance with God-praised be He!-and about this castle there lies a castle of gold, which is faith in God-praised be He! -; and about this castle there lies a eastle of silver, which is faithfulness in word and deed; and about this castle there lies a castle of iron, which is surrender to the Divine will blessed be the Divinity! -; and about this castle there lies a castle of brass, which is carrying out the commandments of God praised be He! -; and about this castle there lies a castle of alum, which is keeping the commandments of God, both the positive and the negative; and about this castle there lies a castle of baked clay which is the mortification of the sensitive soul in every action. . . .

As the word of God-praised be He! states, "Against my servants thou shalt have no power" (Qur'an XII, 40).

The faithful man is thus within these castles; and him who is within the castle of corundum Satan has no manner of reaching, so long as the faithful man observe the rules of the mortification of the sensitive soul. But if he once fail to observe them and say "it is not necessary," then Satan wins the castle from him which is of baked clay; and covets the next. When the faithful man grows negligent in keeping the commandments of God both positive and negative, Satan wins from him the castle that is of alum; and covets the third. When the faithful man abandons surrender to the Divine will—praised be God!—then Satan takes from him the castle of brass; and covets the fourth, and so on until the last castle. 54

It is obvious that this symbolic schema is of the same family as the sixteenth-century Nawadir and that it also contains (though perhaps embryonically) all the principal elements of St Teresa's figure: the soul-or, better said, the soul's mystical path—is conceived of as seven successive dwellings or rooms represented by concentric castles. Satan lurks about the first castles, especially; awaiting his chance to seize them, while the faithful man who manages to penetrate to the most inward castle achieves union with God. There are specific parallels of great interest: St Teresa speaks of the "dwellings" or "mansions" (moradas) of the soul, no doubt remembering the verse from John 14:2, "In my father's house there are many mansions." However, as Miguel Asín Palacios has shown in his Šādhilīes y alumbrados, the concept of the dwelling as the permanent state of the soul (as opposed to a state more ephemeral or transitory) seems to derive from the Islamic concept of the stage on the path of perfection as magam, or "station/dwelling," which the Arabic word exactly signifies. This technical usage is uncommon in medieval Christian spirituality, but Sufis such as Nuri and Al-Hujwiri freely and frequently employed it hundreds of years before it acquired currency in the Carmelite school.

Nūrī compares the devil, the enemy of the soul, to a dog; St Teresa, to filthy beasts or vermin. The Saint would appear to be closer to the Shādhilite brotherhood of the thirteenth century, which concretised the enemies of the soul as a mob of beasts and

vermin which assault the interior castle. But it may be that the Baghdadian mystic Nūrī is not so distant from St Teresa after all, if we should recall the impact which any image of threatening impurity would have on a Muslim, accustomed to purifying rituals such as ablutions. In Islam the dog is the impure animal par excellence, a member of the faithful is not allowed to pray where a dog has passed. Thus Nūrī's "dog" translates, emotionally, into the "filthy beasts" or "vermin" with which St Teresa metaphorizes our impurities, or into the devil himself.

One obvious difference between St Teresa's castles and those of the Arabs is the precious materials with which they are constructed. Interestingly, St Teresa seems to have changed the polychrome castles of the Islamic symbol into diamantine, transparent palaces. The two authors do doubtless diverge here, but we should note that in constructing his castles Nūrī of Baghdad availed himself of building materials that would symbolically indicate the spiritual progress of the soul within itself, and so in that sense does not greatly differ from the mystical itinerary of St Teresa. Taken from outside to inside, the constitutive materials of the Arabic castles ascend in quality, as does the sublime path they represent: the castle of clay (a fragile, friable substance) symbolises the mortification of the sensitive soul (that is, the principles of the spiritual life). And from there we continually rise-through alum, brass, iron, silver, and gold—until we come to the most inward castle, union with God, which is of corundum (yāqūt) and which would appear to be, in a lovely artistic and symbolic culmination, the precious gem for which the precious metals serve as a mounting.

Although the schematic spiritual levels or stages of the Maqāmāt al-qulūb do not correspond perfectly to the extremely complex stages enunciated by St Teresa in her much longer treatise, it is noteworthy that in both cases there is a very clear ascending scale of spiritual perfection. And we must note that the first and seventh of both Teresa's and the Muslim's castles do coincide exactly: in the first the sensitive soul is mortified and in the seventh God is at last possessed. 55

But we do not in any way wish to imply by all this that the immediate source for St Teresa was Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Nūri. What we do propose is that the raw materials for the symbol of an interior castle, subdivided into seven concentric dwellings or apartments or castles, are imported from Islam. Muslims continued to elaborate on this motif throughout the Middle Ages; Nuri and the author of the Nawadir are but two isolated (though very significant) examples of the Islamic use of the symbol of the mystical castles. What the matter comes down to, indeed, is a true commonplace of Sufi literature: In his Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-din ("Revivification of the Religious Sciences"), Al-Ghazzālī repeatedly alludes to the spiritual castle whose gates must be defended against the attacks of the devil, and the celebrated thirteenth-century Murcian poet and mystic Ibn 'Arabi portrays his own esoteric illuminations as a citadel composed of a multitude of chambers and doors successively passed through as mystical knowledge grows (Futūḥāt [II, p. 768-774]). The Persian author Nizāmī in his Haft Paykar ("Seven Princesses") illustrates the mystical progress of the soul as seven castles (or of one castle with seven towers or cupolas which are in turn themselves castles), corresponding to the colours characteristics of the seven planets. In these seven castles reside seven princesses dressed in the seven colours associated with those planets. In the seventh castle, which is white or transparent, the mystical union with God metaphorically occurs. The metaphorical transfiguration of the soul into a castle is so dear to Islam that it has passed into the vernacular: in Arabic one often hears "muḥaṣṣana," which means something like "may the castle of God around you protect you."

St Teresa, then, did not introduce the figure of the concentric castles into the history of mystical literature. So great is the weight of documentary evidence linking St Teresa's seven concentric castles to that same figure in Islamic mystical literature, that we are obliged to ask ourselves whether this is not in fact a question of Islamic cultural filiation. This would be the most dramatic case of such a thing, perhaps, but as we have seen,

it is far from being the only such instance in Western mystical literature.

SUMMARY

We will not linger on the doctrinal motifs that St John of the Cross and St Teresa (among other spiritual writers of the Siglo de Oro, including the Illuminati) share with the Sufis, because these motifs have already been outlined by Asin Palacios or his disciples, and especially because many of them would require a doctrinal analysis that falls outside the scope of this study, which is intended to deal with a shared literary Symbolism or terminology. But we might recall in passing some very eloquent cases, simply to dramatise the fact that Muslim and Christian mysticism have more points in common than we have touched upon here. The pure love which neither fears hell nor yearns for heaven and which St John of the Cross and numerous other spiritual writers of the Siglo de Oro share with the anonymous author of the sonnet "No me mueve, mi Dios, para quererte," would appear to have some connection with the spiritual literature of Islam, as I have noted in another essay.56 Likewise, as Asin noted, other spiritual postures—the rejection of charisma and miracles; the emphasis on the appreciation of the divine favours (the school of the Divine Benefices that Bataillon discusses at length in his Erasmo y España was foreshadowed by Al-Ghazzālī); the virtue of the murāgabah (cf. Pareja 313; Nicholson, Poetas mRsticos 76; Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions 29), which is to act as though God, omnipresent, were watching the devout man's every action; the use of meditation without images hundreds of years before Erasmus; the prayer of quietude that leaves the soul muțma'innah or "pacified / at peace" (cf. Nwyia, Ibn 'Ațā' 255; Corbin, L'homme 104; Nasr, Three Muslim Sages 35); impeccability or shath (exchange, trade) by means of which so many Illuminati believed themselves to be sinless because God possessed them and acted through them (Nasr 115)—all these attitudes and postures seem to resemble Islamic attitudes that are prior to them chronologically.

Even the famous little saying attributed to St Teresa, "Nada te turbe. . . ", would appear to have been antedated by the Shādhilites: "He who hath God, lacks nothing," says Ibn 'Abbād, in a formulation not at all unlike St Teresa's. And contrariwise, lacking God, nothing avails one: "Once a dwelling has been reached, or a favour granted thee, neither desire nor ask to keep it, nor suffer in losing it, because only God suffices" (Ibn al-'Arif, in Asin, Obras escogidas, Vol. I, 269). And finally, although Asin has noted (Islam 158) that St Nilus and St John Climacus had already outlined the figure, there is the tremendous insistence by the Muslims on a motif that St Ignatius made famous, the perinde ac cadaver ["like unto a cadaver"], which was employed by Tustari (cf. Massignon, Essai sur le lexique 42), Al-Naqshabandi (cf. Arberry, Sufism 131), Ibn 'Arabi and Al-Ghazzālī. For Al-Ghazzālī this trope figured in the conception of the highest degree of trust or tawakkul (cf. Ihya' 385), which Pareja describes in the following terms:

The third degree [of tawakkul] consists in the soul's trusting in Allah in its acts of movement or repose, like the cadaver in the hands of him who washes it in order to wrap it in the shroud, with the sole difference that the living person sees himself as though dead, and moved by the omnipotence of Allah (308).⁵⁷

Let us recapitulate, then, the conclusions of this study. St John of the Cross and St Teresa did not introduce into European literature such mystical symbols as the *dark night*, the *lamps of fire*, and the *castles of the soul*, although their Christian elaboration of those symbols is touched with genius and has made those tropes famous in the spiritual literature of the West. St John of the Cross and St Teresa de JesŪs carried these figures to such heights of literary and spiritual beauty that the distant Eastern origins of the metaphors indeed pale. On other occasions, however, it is the mystical Symbolism of the two Carmelite reformers that appears sketchy in comparison with the exquisite (and extraordinarily complex) literary elaboration of their Islamic counterparts. In any case, St John of the Cross and St Teresa are never passively derivative, but rather constantly

creative with these possible Muslim sources, adapting, transforming, and melding them into their own Western Christian heritage, which is immeasurably enriched by them. 58

But the Sufi influences present in the work of St John and St Teresa are so abundant and so significant (as we have tried to indicate in this study) that they irrevocably mark their work. If we are unfamiliar with these Islamic tropes, the work of the two writers (and many more) becomes unnecessarily mysterious and often falsely original. We cannot, in intellectual honesty, not take into account the fact that St John of the Cross and St Teresa employ a technical language and a Symbolism that the Muslims had moulded into a complex spiritual literature hundreds of years before the Carmelite reformers were born. St John and St Teresa are no less Christian for that; they can be seen as more fertile and imaginative. In the face of certain features of their work, we should begin to speak not of a "Christianised Islam" as Asin once proposed, but rather of an "Islamicized Christianity." Thanks to the Islamic influences on Christianity, the religious literature of these writers of the Spanish Siglo de Oro, shot through with Muslim motifs, is one of the most mysterious, complex, and brilliant in all of Europe, and one of the most fertilely hybrid.

NOTES & REFERENCES

Cf. the present author's studies on this subject: San Juan de la Cruz y el Islam; Huellas de Islam en la literatura española. De Juan Ruiz a Juan Goytisolo (also trans. to Arabic and English: cf. bibliography); Luce Lopez-Baralt, ed., Miguel Asin Palacios, Šadhilies y alumbrados, Luce Lopez-Baralt and Eulogio Pacho, eds, San Juan de la Cruz, Obra completa, Un Kama Sutra español; Literatura hispano-semitica comparada (with Marta Elena Venier), double number of Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica; El sol a medianoche. La experiencia mistica, tradición y actualidad; Asedios a lo indecible. San Juan de la Cruz canta al éxtasis transformante (in press: Madrid: Trotta). In the volume I am now preparing, titled La literatura secreta de los últimos musulmanes de España, I include many articles on aljamiado-morisco literature, and in Nuevas huellas del Islam en la literatura española: de Juan Ruiz a Jorge Luis Borges (also to be published soon) I include my recent comparative studies nature on the literature of Spain and the Near East.

The present study is based on an earlier study, "Simbologia mística islámica en San Juan de la Cruz y en Santa Teresa de Jesús" (NRFH XXX (1981), 21-91), which I have corrected, expanded, and brought up to date. The present article compares the mystical Symbolism of Islam as it appears in the extensive Islamic literature with the surprising appearance of that Symbolism in the mystical belles lettres of Peninsular Spain, but does not deal at any length with the possible historical routes by which the Spanish mystics, and especially the Carmelite reformers St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa de Jesús, might have had access to the sophisticated contemplative culture of the Muslims. For essays specifically addressing the problem of the historical filiation between the two religious traditions (a problem which also occupied the great Hispano-Muslim critic Miguel Asin Palacios until his death), cf. the present author's articles and books San Juan de la Cruz y el Islam, the Introduction to the Obra completa of St. John of the Cross (bibliographic reference above), and "Acerca de la enseñanza del árabe en Salamanca en tiempos de San Juan de la Cruz o de cómo el maestro Cantalapiedra 'leía el arávigo por un libro que se llama la *Jurrumia*' " (in press, Colegio de México). In this last article I discuss a recent discovery: contrary to what both Marcel Bataillon and I have been maintaining for some time, Arabic was indeed taught at the University of Salamanca when St. John of the Cross studied there.

²A caveat needs to be inserted here about these Persian sources. Some parallels or congruences between the symbolism of Irani mystical literature and that of St. John and St. Teresa seem to me obvious, and I include them here. However, I do not believe that this is a case of direct influence, which would clearly be historically difficult; I think, rather, that the examples of Persian Sufi Symbolism that I have documented bear a cultural relationship to the Sufism of Spain and Africa, which is then that line of Sufism that exerted more proximal influence on St. John and Spanish mysticism in general. Muslim mysticism in the Persian language implies a literary tradition distinct in certain senses from the Muslim literary tradition in Arabic; there is not space here to enlarge upon these variants but I do want to note that they exist.

On the other hand, I have employed numerous examples from the Persian tradition (even when I take the Hispano-African and Arabic tradition in general to be the more eloquent one) because documentation of and critical studies on this tradition are much more abundant and accessible. All in all, the reader will note that there are cases in which St. John of the Cross or St. Teresa seems closer to certain symbols characteristic of Persian-language mysticism. It is hard to say whether this is a case of our not having discovered the same symbol among the Sufis of the Arab world or whether it simply does not exist there. If this should be the case, then it would be legitimate to argue that St. John of the Cross is indeed close to Persian/non-Arabic literary sources. The entire phenomenon of Sufi mystical Symbolism and its repercussions in the West needs much further study.

³San Juan de la Cruz, Vida y obras completas, CB 25:7 (p. 697). We cite the edition by Crisógono de Jesús et al., Vida y obras completas de San Juan de la Cruz, Madrid: BAC, 1964, which we will abbreviate as VO. In addition, we will abbreviate the titles of the individual works as follows: "Cántico espiritual," redaction B or Jaén codex: CB; Noche oscura: N, Subida del Monte Carmelo: S, Llama de amor viva: L. Where the works are divided into distinct books, chapters, etc. we so indicate. Where possible, we have quoted from the English translations

of the works; for those, short titles are given, and the reader is referred to the bibliography. We also refer the reader to our own edition of the Obra completa de San Juan de la Cruz (edited in collaboration with Eulogio Pacho), in the introduction to which we explore in detail some of the comparatist subjects that we engage in this article.

⁴M. Gloton's French version of the *Tarjuman al Ashwaq*, edited by Albin Michel (*L'Interprète de désirs*, Paris, 1996), has just been published.

Hallaj's ecstatic exclamation "ana 'I-haqq' ("I am the Truth"), is famous in the Islamic world, and it brought him if not execution at least severe theological censure. Cf. Louis Massignon, Essai sur les origines 283, and La Passion de Hallaj.

We say "metaphorical night" because there are many instances of evidence that St John meditated at night in the solitude of the outdoors. He also prayed with his face uplifted into the night, which he looked out upon from the window of his cell. Baruzi notes in this regard that "le poète mystique adherait au silence des espaces nocturnes ou s'abimait en une perception limitée, perception soudain exaltée et devenue comme un signe de l'univers" (288).

Evelyn Underhill (Mysticism 412) describes the spiritual state of the "dark night": "Psychologically. . . the 'dark night of the soul' is due to the double fact of the exhaustion of an old state, and the growth towards a new state of consciousness, it is a 'growing pain' in the organic process of the soul's attainment of the Absolute. . . . Parallel with the mental oscillations, upheavals and readjustments, through which an unstable psycho-physical type moves through new centres of consciousness, run the spiritual oscillations of a striving and ascending spiritual type. . . . (386) [The] travail of the Dark Night is all directed towards the essential mystic act of utter self-surrender; that fiat voluntas tua which marks the death of selfhood in interest of a new and deeper life." Significantly, Underhill titles the chapter describing this mystical dwelling of purificatory undoing "The Dark Night of the Soul." There seems no doubt that she borrows the term from St John of the Cross, for although many mystics go through the same spiritual process, none of those mentioned by Underhill employ the technical term "dark night."

*See Dionysius the Areopagite, The Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies, London, 1949, p. 11. The commentary "Darkness

soul, inasmuch as this said communication is far darker than those others. ... [and is] the complete accomplishment of the communication of God in the spirit, which is ordinarily wrought in great darkness of the soul, [and] there then follows its union with the Bride, which is the wisdom of God" (Ascent I:2:2-4). Tobias 6:18-22 reads as follows: "But thou, when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers to her. And on that night lay the liver of the fish on the fire, and the devil shall be driven away. But the second night thou shalt be admitted into the society of the holy Patriarchs. And the third night thou shalt obtain a blessing that sound children may be born of you. And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, ... that... thou mayest obtain a blessing in children."

- 17 CE also the study of the symbolism of illumination in Western religious figures (Dante, Jacopone di Todi, St Augustine, St Catherine of Genoa, etc.) in the chapter titled "The Illumination of the Self" in Evelyn Underhill's Mysticism.
- Curiously, this parallel escaped Asin and Antonio Márquez (Los alumbrados. Origenes y filosofia: 1525-1559.) The word "alumbrado" ("Illuminatus," "enlightened one") needs further study. In Spānish the term is now applied to a drunk (perhaps as a vague reminder of this often delirious sect of spiritual "drunkards"?); it is odd that Spanish often employs "Orientalizing" terms for drunkenness: a "curda" or Kurd, a "turca" or Turk.
- Mafajir, 97, 199, in Asin, Sadhiláes 259-260; cf. also the case of Ahmad al-Kharraz, in Smith, Sufi Path 121-122.
- In Sufism, the precise conception of the *qalb* or deepest centre of the heart is quite complex. Some Sufis conceive it to be an organ which is at once physical and spiritual and which is able to know God. This view also frequently subdivides the organ of spiritual communion into distinct degrees or profound centres in which distinct moments of the mystical process are experienced. Nūrī of Baghdad, for instance, subdivides the "heart" (or this ecstatic process) into four degrees, which culminate in the *lubb* or "deepest heart." Annemarie Schimmel comments that, however, "Sufis often add the element of *sirr*, the innermost heart in which the divine revelation is experienced" (*Mystical Dimensions* 192; *cf.* also Nicholson 97).

There is a poem by Rūmi (translated by W. Hastie) in which the symbols of the lamp and night that we have been dealing with here are glimpsed; these were doubtlessly recurrent images in the mystical literature of Islam: "All Unbelief is midnight, but Faith the Night-Lamp's glow; / Then see that no thief cometh to steal Thy Lamp when low, / Our hope is for the Sunlight, from which the Lamp did shine; / The Light from it kindles, still feeds its flame below; / But when the sun hath risen, both Night and Lamp go out; / And Unbelief and Faith then, the higher Vision know, / O Night! Why art thou dreaming? O Lamp! Why flickerest so? / The swift Sunhorses panting, from East their fire-foam throw, / Tis Night still in the shadow; the village Lamp burns dim; / But in Dawn's Splendour towering, the Peaks Heaven's Glory show" (Smith 93-94).

²² In the Spanish Bible this verse (Song of Songs 8:6) reads as follows: "Porque fuerte es como la muerte el amor; / Duros como el Seol los celos; / Sus brasas, brasas de fuego, fuerte llama"; the King James version reads "for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame"; and the New Catholic Bible reads as follows: "for stern as death is love, relentless as the nether world is devotion; its flames are a blazing fire."

Our translation into Spanish (translated here into English) is to be published soon in its entirety; it is based on Paul Nwyia's edition of the text (*Textes inédits* etc., p. 18). *Cf.* also *Exégèse* 327.

We should recall the special impact for a Muslim, accustomed to rites of purification such as ablutions, that the idea of "impurity" would have. If certain animals such as the dog "contaminate" or "pollute" a place, one must not pray there. St John, as we have seen, seems close to this acute sensitivity to corruption or pollution as manifested in Kubra. St John's "vermin," which produce a repugnance that is difficult to describe, would seem to fall within the emotional tradition of those impure animals described by the Muslim mystic.

The Arabic contains the conjunction wa "and," which renders the passage not altogether clear; we have substituted a colon for greater understanding.

Here, reference is to the Apocryphal book of Machabees (book 2), whose verse reads as follows (New Catholic Bible): "But when many years had passed, and it pleased God that Nehemias should be sent by the king of Persia, he sent some of the posterity of those priests that had

hid it, to seek for the fire; and as thy told us, they found no fire, but thick water, Then he bade them draw it up, and bring it to him. And the priest Nehemias commanded the sacrifices that were laid on, to be sprinkled with the same water, both the wood and the things that were laid upon it. And when this was done, and the time came that the sun shone out, which before was in a cloud, there was a great fire kindled, so that all wondered." The second verse (2:1-22) is too long to quote in its entirety here.

²⁷ Cf. also Al-Ghazzālī, Ihyā', 211-212, and Rūmī, who also speaks of the water of the soul transported by canals (Schimmel, Triumphal Sun 80, 85).

28 Cf. J. M. Cowan, Arabic-English Dictionary (663), which offers some of the main meanings of the root 'ayn, as noted in the text above. Michael Sells notes the extraordinary richness of the word in the Sufi master Ibn 'Arabi: " 'Ayn is one of the most difficult terms in all of Ibn 'Arabi's writings' (Polished Mirror 137). Sometimes 'ayn is translated by "determination, de-limitation, or unification of the undetermined, unlimited, non-entified real." (Here the term, which is equivalent, as we know, to "spring" and "eye," would appear to approach the concept of indeterminacy that we see in the spring in St John's poem "La fonte": "bien sé que suelo en ella no se halla, / y que ninguno puede vadealla, / aunque es de noche." Sells also translates the multivalent concept of 'ayn by "the same," as in the lines from the Fusus, 119: "But in reality Lordship is the same ['ayn] as the Self" (Garden Among the Flames 295, emphasis added). Sells has incorporated the two essays we have just quoted in his book Mystical Languages of Unsaying, these are the first journal publications.

We should recall, in addition, that in speaking in this section of the poem about the beginnings of transformative ecstasy, St John of the Cross might also being pointing toward the ancient image of the "eye of the soul." This trope, which Plato apparently introduced into the West, has been employed as a symbol by countless Western religious writers: St Augustine (in his *Confessions*), Origen, Meister Eckhardt, St Bonaventure, Ramon Lull. Ludwig Schrader has written an admirable essay on this subject (q.v.). J. García Palacios (220) adds yet other Spanish authors who use the symbol: Laredo, Estella, Gómez García. But the figure of the eye is also—in the singular—an organ of spiritual knowledge for the Muslims. In his *Ihya* 'ulum al-din, Al-Ghazzāli calls the eye the 'ayn al-qalb (the eye of the heart or of the soul), and

the anonymous author of the *Book of Certainty*, as we have noted earlier, calls it the 'ayna 'I-yaqin, or eye of certainty. Ibn 'Abbād of Ronda used the symbol in similar terms in his *Hikam* (243). Popular Hindu literature refers to the mystic as the possessor of a "third eye." Later we will have occasion to see that St John of the Cross appears to parallel the detailed elaboration of the trope among the Sufis more than he does his counterparts in religious writing and poetry in the West.

Finally, we should recall, as a curious coincidence perhaps, that Spanish still "remembers" the ancient Arabic-language association of "eye" and "spring" or "fount": a still spring issuing from the ground is still called an ojo de agua, an "eye of water."

- The Spanish syntax corresponds to the English given here: the apparently plural subject with a singular verb and singular predicate pronoun. Even the syntax, then, speaks of identity.
- St John of the Cross apparently was very given to the use of this figure, a symbolic space, to communicate the transformative ecstatic moment. In the "Coplas del mismo hechas sobre un extasis de harta contemplación," he insists upon this image, repeating the "where" and the "there" of the "Spiritual Canticle": "Entréme donde no supe, / y quedéme no sabiendo / toda ciencia trascendiendo. // Ya no supe donde estaba, / pero, cuando allí me vi, / sin saber donde me estaba, / grandes cosas entendi. // El que allí llega de vero / de sí mismo desfallece. . . . " (emphasis added).
- We will see in a moment that St John of the Cross attributes a similar and, once again, recognisably Sufi nature to the symbolic "solitary bird" of his soul in transformative ecstasy. The bird "has no determined colour" but possesses at the same time all colours, and for the mystic the strange quality of the colourless bird symbolically signifies the loosing of the soul from the bonds of all that is created.
- bird and that of the Sufis. St John speaks of the falcon or hunting bird which is his soul in the poem whose refrain is "Tras un amoroso lance / y no de esperanza falto / volé tan alto / que le di a la caza alcance" ("After a loving pass / and lacking not in hope / so high I flew / that I overtook the hunt"). This same equation of the soul and the hunting falcon was made by Rumi in his *Mantiq al-Tair* (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 307). It would appear that St John interprets the hunting motif of poems such as Diego Ramirez' "Indirecta a una dama" (in

Floresta de varia poesia), which Dámaso Alonso has quite rightly associated with St John, not only à la divine but also à la Soufi.

- ³⁴ Here, St John (s 2:11:10, VO 416) is quoting Like 11:26, "Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and sell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first," which is why this quotation contains italics.
- ³⁵ In Rumi, the breeze is also "a fitting symbol of the life-giving breath of the Beloved" (Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun* 86). Cf. also Macdougal and Ettinghausen, *The Islamic Garden*.
- For nats compared with an animal, cf. also Nicholson 67, and Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions 112, Triumphal Sun 197 & 70. St John of the Cross also interprets his sensuality as "livestock" or sheep: "I no longer keep livestock." Here he parallels Al-Sarrāj, who in the Kitāb al-Luma' compares the nats with livestock or sheep that the soul "shepherds."
- ³⁷Moradas del castillo interior, Madrid: BAC, 1976, pp. 406-407. Hereafter, pages in the Spanish edition of the text will be given as OC "page"; when quoting from the Standard English edition, the citation will also include the indication Castle "page."
- 38Ezekiel 47:7 also, though in a very vague way, links the tree with an allegorical river or "waters."
- ³⁰In chapter 48 of Muhammad's *Mi'raj*, Gabriel and Ridwan take Muhammad to a spacious place called *Sidratu 'I-muntaha*. There they find a huge tree, made of pearl, at whose feet "there arose a spring of clear water beyond all praising," which was perfect grace (in Munoz Sedino 220).
- ⁴⁰ You will have heard of the wonderful way in which silk is made—a way which no one could invent but God—and how it comes from a kind of seed which looks like tiny peppercorns (I have never seen this, but only heard of it, so if it is incorrect in any way, the fault is not mine) (*Castle*, V:2, p. 104).
- ⁴¹Fr Diego de Yepes insists that the symbol is the product of a direct inspiration from God, and cites the personal testimony of St Teresa with respect to the genesis of her famous treatise. Although Robert Ricart ("Le symbolisme du 'Château intérieur'") and Victor G. De la Concha (El arte literario de Santa Teresa) question whether this

statement is to be taken absolutely at face value, as absolutely "true," I think it useful to record it here because it would seem to confirm that full credence was given to the idea that the trope was original with St Teresa. Here are Fr Diego's words:

This holy Mother had been desirous of obtaining some insight into the beauty of a soul in grace. . . . Just at that time she was commanded to write a treatise on prayer, about which she knew a great deal from experience. On the eve of the festival of the Most Holy Trinity she was thinking what subject she should choose for this treatise, when God, Who disposes all things in due form and order, granted this desire of hers, and gave her a subject. He showed her a most beautiful crystal globe, made in the shape of a castle, and containing seven mansions [Trans: moradas, see note below], in the seventh and innermost of which was the King of Glory, in the greatest splendour, illumining and beautifying them all. The nearer one got to the centre, the stronger was the light; outside the palace limits everything was foul, dark and infested with toads, vipers and other venomous creatures. . . . It was about this vision that she told me on that day. . . [To this point, the Peers translation, p. 8 in Castle]. She took from those seven dwellings of the castle seven degrees of prayer, through which we enter into ourselves and grow nearer and nearer God, so that when at last we come to the depths of our soul and perfect knowledge of ourselves, we have then arrived at the center of the castle and the Seventh Dwelling, where God is, and we are joined to Him in perfect union (qtd. in Asin Palacios, "El simil" 266-67; this study of the castles served as a basis for our paper "De Nuri de Bagdad a Santa Teresa de Jesus, el símbolo de los siete castillos concéntricos del alma," read at the Seventh International Congress of Hispanicists, Venice, August 1980).

⁴² Interior Castle, I:1 (OC 365). This last word in the Peers translation, mansions, is translated from the Spanish moradas, which means most generally dwellings. Peers chooses "mansions" to echo with the Biblical phrase "In my father's house there are many mansions" (John 14:2). St Teresa, however, does not seem specifically to be echoing that verse here.

⁴³In his Alchemical Studies, Jung reproduces a drawing of a castle fortified with sixteen towers and with an interior moat. This schema perfectly coincides with the Eastern mandalas described in the Tao and

with the quest for deep consciousness, although it was drawn by one of Jung's patients (60).

44St Teresa's basic intuition is quite profound in the sense that it appears to correspond with a universal conception of the "sacred space" that we find present, spiritually, in the construction of temples and palaces throughout the world. Eliade describes the architectural configuration of these mandalas. "The same sense of a cosmogony is also apparent in the construction of the mandala as practised in the Tantric schools. The word means 'circle'; the Tibetan renderings of it are either 'centre' or 'what surrounds'. The thing itself is a series of circles which may or may not be concentric, inscribed in a square. . . . The initiation consists in the neophyte's penetration into the various zones or stages of the mandala. The rite may be looked on with equal justice as the equivalent of the pradaksina, the well-known ceremonial of going round a temple or sacred monument (stūpa), or as an initiation by way of ritual entry into a labyrinth. The assimilation of the temple with the mandala is obvious in the case of Borobudur" (Patterns 372-73 and passim. in Chap X, "Sacred Places: Temple, Palace, 'Centre of the World"). It would appear that we are even closer to St Teresa with the Babylonian ziggurats which manifested or embodied a mystical meaning: "Les celebres ziqqûrâts de Babyloine typificent la montagne cosmique aux sept étages, aux couleurs respectives des sept Cieux; par elles était possible, rituellement, l'ascension jusqu'a sommet, c'est-àdire jusqu'au point culminant qui est le nord cosmique" (Henri Corbin, L'homme 66). But in this case, Corbin notes that the subdivisions of the mystical path into seven degrees, corresponding to the seven heavens constitutes a typically Eastern symbol which was to find later elaboration in the spiritual literature of Islam. It will be interesting to recall this when we look at the mystical schemata of the seven concentric castles of the soul that we will see later in Nuri of Baghdad (9th century) and the anonymous author of the Nawadir (11th century).

⁴⁵Osuna says: "The heart [must be guarded] with all vigilance, as the castle which is beset is guarded, setting against the three harassers three lamps: against the flesh, ... set chastity; against the world, . . . set liberality and alms-giving; against the devil, . . . set caritas." There are three portals or gates of the castle through which the devil may enter, according to Osuna: through one enters deceit, through another fear, and through the third enters hunger. "And it is to be noted," Osuna continues, "that if the devil finds only one part or path of these three ill-

guarded, by that way he enters into the castle of the heart" (IV, III, pp. 198 and 202).

⁴⁶This is Laredo's enigmatic text, in which the image differs considerably from St Teresa's: "[The understanding is a field] perfectly foursquare; seek that it be fenced about with a fine crystal, which is a bright and precious stone. And on each one of the panels or sides of that square thou wilt erect three towers hewn in precious stonework, that is precious gems; thus of that towered wall make a walled city, and let it be civitas sancta, that heavenly Jerusalem of whose walls it is written that they are of precious stones (Revelation 21:18). . . . From the top of these towers must thou hang four shields of fine gold.... In the centre of this now-walled field. . . let there be lighted a rich Paschal candle, of cleanest wax and of purest wick, . . . crafted in such perfection..., that once the candle is lighted no space nor time will ever see it spent, or diminished, or its light fail. ... And when this candle is lighted, the wax is the most sacred body of Christ; the wick, His most happy spirit; and from its perfectly illuminated splendour thou mayest.... elevate thy understanding of the Holy Trinity in one most pure substance. ... And in this holy city neither sun nor moon is ever needed. . . for the brightness of God illuminates it. . . . The crystalline wall is the bright virginity which illumines the city; the divers gems. . . are the great nations of the fortunate; twelve towers, twelve Apostles, the four shields are the four Evangelists. . . Look again at the shimmering brightness and splendour of the gems. . . and the other materials, for it is thus that the blessings of our God are communicated to the fortunate. . . . And still we have another tower which is castle, is fortress, strong house, royal house, it is the apartment of the King, citadel of the city, it is nearer than the candle's, it is homage to God and it exceeds the other towers in such perfected eminence, that this meagre understanding can in no way reach it. . . . [Its] foundations rest on fine crystal as strong as diamond, which cannot be broken or breached, and of a thousand precious stones is its wall fortified, and of sapphire and emerald are its doors hewed. (Tobit [Apocrypha] 33:16). . . [This] our royal citadel is sanctified in the Church, . . . it is a temple of God, Jerusalem.... City of God. . . [Our] splendor is God, is blessed Jesus Christ, is that Paschal candle. . . splendor and brightness from its glory, the immense Divine Being" (Subida del Monte Sinai in Misticos franciscanos españoles II, pp. 270-274).

⁴⁷In his sermon *De la guarda constante del corazón* ("On the Constant Guard of the Heart"), we are told that we must defend this fortress against attacks "from above and from below, from before and from behind, from the right and from the left," while in his sermon *En la dedicación de la Iglesia* ("Upon the Dedication of the Church"), after describing such military defenses of his castle as continence and penitence, he identifies this castle, anticlimactically, with the castle of the Order of Clairvaux: "A most beautiful castle wilt thou have taken from Christ shouldst thou deliver to its enemies the castle of Clairvaux." Following is the text of Bernard's sermon "On the Constant Guard of the Heart" (*Sermones varios*, 82, *Obras Completas*, p. 1107):

We should cultivate and keep custody over the castle of the soul above all things, for from it comes eternal life. But this castle, located in the land of our enemies, is attacked from every side; from above and from below, from before and from behind, from the right and from the left. From below it is assailed by the concupiscence of the flesh, which struggles with the soul... From above there is God's imminent judgment. . . . From behind is the morbose delectation which is born from the memory of past sins; from before, the insistence of temptations; from the left, the perturbation of arrogant, murmuring brothers; from the right, the devotion of obedient brothers.

In his Sermones de santos ("Sermons on the Saints"), Sermon 2: "On the Ascension of the Virgin Mary, titled On the Manner of Cleaning, Adorning, and Furnishing the House," St Bernard expands the Biblical verse: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that [Jesus] entered into a certain village [in Spanish: castillo]: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house" (Luke10:38). Bernard continually shifts the meaning of the Spanish word "castillo" [lit. "castle" but in the King James version "village" (and therefore, "walled city")]: it is the world, the incarnation of Christ, Mary's bosom, the house or castle of our soul. For purposes of his allegory he also quotes Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The enemy [read: the devil] can conquer the "wall of continence. . . [and] the forebattlement of patience" of the

allegorical castle of the soul (707). But Jesus "entered into the [castle] and attacked the fort and sacked its spoils, . . . he broke open the brass doors and rendered the iron bolts into pieces, taking out the prisoner from the prison and from the shadow of death. He went out through the door which is confession..." (708).

⁴⁸... l'ostel de mon âme est durement assegié: ... par le monde, par la chair, par l'ennemie. .." (Sermon pour la Pentecôte: Mansionem (De la première chamberière, Oraison), from Six sermons français inédits de Jean Gerson, Paris, 1946, p. 74. ["The dwelling of my soul is hard besieged: by the world, by the flesh, by the enemy. .."]

49Here is an extract from that poem:

En beau lu fut il veraiment, / La ou Deu de le ciel descent. / En un Chastel bel et grant, / Bien fermé e anenant, / Kar c'est le chastel de ammur / De tuz solaz. de tuz sucur. / / Ou habiter ne poet nul mal. / Environ ad quatre tureles / En tut le mund ni ad si beles. / / Le castel est bel e bon, / Dehors depeint environ / De treis colurs diversement. / E si est vert le fundement, / Ki a la roche se joint. / / La colur ki est en mi liu / Si est inde e si est bliu, / la tierce colur par en som / Plus est vermeille ke n'est rose / / En mi la tur plus hautaine / Est surdant une fontaine / Dont issent quatre ruissel / Santé porreit recoverer / K'a cel ewe peüst puiser. / / En cele bele tur el bone / I ad de invoire une trone, / Ce est le chastel de delit / Cum la duce Virgine Marie / La roche k'est si bien polie, / C'est le cuer la duce Marie, / Ki onkes en mal ne mollist / / Et de si tres bele verdur / Ce est la fei de la virgine / / C'est cele ki tant est vermeille / / E c'est la seinte charité / / Les quatre tureles en haut / / Sunt quatre vertuz kardinals. / / La baille k'est en mi formé / Signifie sa chasteté. (Le Château d'amour, Paris, 1918, pp. 105-6, 111.)

These are the details of Dom Duarte's image: "In the center of the heart of every person there are five houses, disposed as the nobles are wont. In the first, all those who reside in the realm may enter, as may those foreigners who desire to come there. In the second chamber or antechamber, they are wont to have their dwellings, and some notable [persons] of the kingdom. In the third, which is the bedroom, the eldest and those most closely related to the house. The fourth, which is the inner room, where they are wont to dress, is for special persons. The fifth, which is the room of prayer [oratorio], is the place into which the nobles retire each day in order to pray, read holy books, and think upon

virtuous occupations. In each of these houses, we have those twelve passions of which I have written before: to wit, Love, Desire, Delectation, Hatred, Loathing, Sadness, Meekness, Hope and Boldness, Rage, Desperation, and Fear.... And it is at the end of these [passions] that we must have our beginning [that is, of a virtuous and holy life]: first we must order our heart, setting in the [first] room all things that [the other room] does not have. In the antechamber, improvement. And bodily health in the bedroom. In the inner room, deeds of honor. The study shall be especially kept for the service of our lord and the following of virtue" (Chapter LXXXI, "Das casas de nosso coraçom, e como lhe devem ser apropiadas certas fiis" ("On the Houses of Our Heart"), Leal conselheiro 303-4).

[He] belongs to the same tribe, though of a more humble family" (233). Martins' scholarly and erudite study a bounds in examples of Portuguese treatise-writers whose allegories employed the castle in similar terms: St Anthony of Lisbon (Sermones et Evangelia Dominicarum, of the thirteenth century); Frei Roberto (whose Château Perilleux circulated widely in Portuguese in the fifteenth century); and Frei Diego Rosario (in the sixteenth century), among others.

humanos y silva de experiencias ["Cure of Human Bodies and Miscellany of Experiences"], written by the physician Luis de Lobera de Avila and published in 1542, which is a compendium of human anatomy under the allegory of a fortified tower, and which does have certain general parallels with the symbol as used in St Teresa. We are grateful to our colleague Francisco Marquez Villanueva who lent us a copy of his study on this subject, "El simbolismo del castillo interior: sentido y génesis," which he read at the MLA meeting in Chicago in 1967 when it was still unpublished. Since then it has been expanded for the 1982 publication in the Actas del Congreso Internacional Teresiano, Salamanca, pp. 495-522.

⁵³St Teresa herself paraphrases the much-quoted passage John 14:2, "In my father's house are many mansions [or, in her case, 'dwellings']," but critics also sometimes refer to the text from I Peter (5:8), which speaks of the protection of the flock (as though a fortress) from the devil, but in a most superficial way: "quia adversus vester diabolus, tamquam leo rugens, circuit quorens quem devoret; cui resistite fortes in fide" ["Be sober, be watchful! For your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking someone to devour"; or, in the King

James Version, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"].

The original Arabic text is printed in Paul Nwyia: Textes inédits d'Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Nūri, Vol. XLIV, F.9, pp. 135-6. The text quoted here is on p. 135. Nwyia also discusses the Maqāmāt in his Exégèse coranique et langage mystique: Nouvel essai sur le lexique technique des mystiques musulmans, and it is curious that in that study he does not take into account the essay written by Asin Palacios (against whom Nwyia published such polemics) on the symbol of St Teresa's castles and their relation to Islam.

The idea of the concentricity of these seven successive castles is more than clear in St Teresa. In the following passage from her *Interior Castle* she describes the dwellings from the inside outward, exactly as Nūrī does: "You must not imagine these mansions as arranged in a row, one behind another, but fix your attention on the centre, the room or palace occupied by the King. Think of a palmito [Peers footnote: 'The palmito is a shrub, common in the south and east of Spain, with thick layers of leaves enclosing a succulent edible kernel.'], which has many outer rinds surrounding the savoury part within, all of which must be taken away before the centre can be eaten. Just so around this central room are many more" (*Castle*, I:2, 8, p. 37).

⁵⁶ Anonimia y posible filiacion espiritual islamica del soneto. . . ," NRFH2 (1975), pp. 243-268.

Did St John of the Cross somehow have indirect access to a poetic image so often used in secular Arabic poetry? This would be the flowering garden as a starry sky, which critics consider to be a motif characteristic of Arabic poetry and which has produced an entire genre called nauriyya (cf. Pérez, La poésie andalouse and Bargebuhr, The Alhambra). Among many examples that we might cite, there is Abu Firās, prince of the Hamdanid dynasty (d. 968): "The sky wept upon the drizzling of its tears / whereupon she [the meadow] began to smile showing stars of the sky [i.e., flowers, like a mouth showing teeth]" (Bargebuhr, 336). The image is so widespread that it is inherited by such Hispano-Jewish poets as Moshe ibn Ezra: "the trees with the stars of their / flowers to the sun serve as firmament" (Diez Macho 45). And there is also St John, who gives a somewhat unexpected twist to his gloss on the ver "joh prado de verduras!" when he understands it from the point of view of the nauriyya. "This is the consideration of the sky,

called "meadow of green" because the things that are in it are always of unwithering green, and neither perish nor wither with time, and in them as though [in] fresh green things do the just take pleasure and delight. In which consideration is also comprehended the entire difference of the lovely stars and other celestial planets" (CB, 4:4; VO, p. 642).

⁵⁸We wish once more to note that in other essays (our book *San Juan y el Islam* and the essay in collaboration with María Teresa Narváez cited in Note 1) we have concerned ourselves with the thorny problem of how the Carmelite mystics could have echoed these Islamic figures in the sixteenth century. But they were not the only ones to use these figures: the works of many medieval European spiritual writers appear to have been influenced by Islamic motifs; we have not gone into these for reasons of space.

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List of Illustration

- The Mountain of Kaf. (Reproduced from a Manuscript of Persian Poems (Behbahan, Fars Iran, XIV Century.)
- Carta autógrafa de San Juan de la Cruz del esquema original de la Subida del Monte (Ms 6296, B. N.)
- Reelaboración del esquema sanjuanistico de la Subida del Monte (apud Obras espirituales que eçaminan un alma a la perfecta union con Dios. Por el Fenerable P.F. Ivan de la Cruz, Barcelona, 1619).
- Estandiyar Killing the dragon in a Mystical allegory (Spencer Collection, Persian) MSS 2, Firdawsi, Shah Namah, 1614, Reproduced with permission from the Spencer Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.)
- Tahmuras vanquisher of The Ginns of his nafs. (Detail of a mss. of the Shah Namah. Firdawsi. Iran. Reproduced with permission from the Museum of Art, New York.)
- The mystical tree of the soul. Isphahan, Iran, Xviii century.

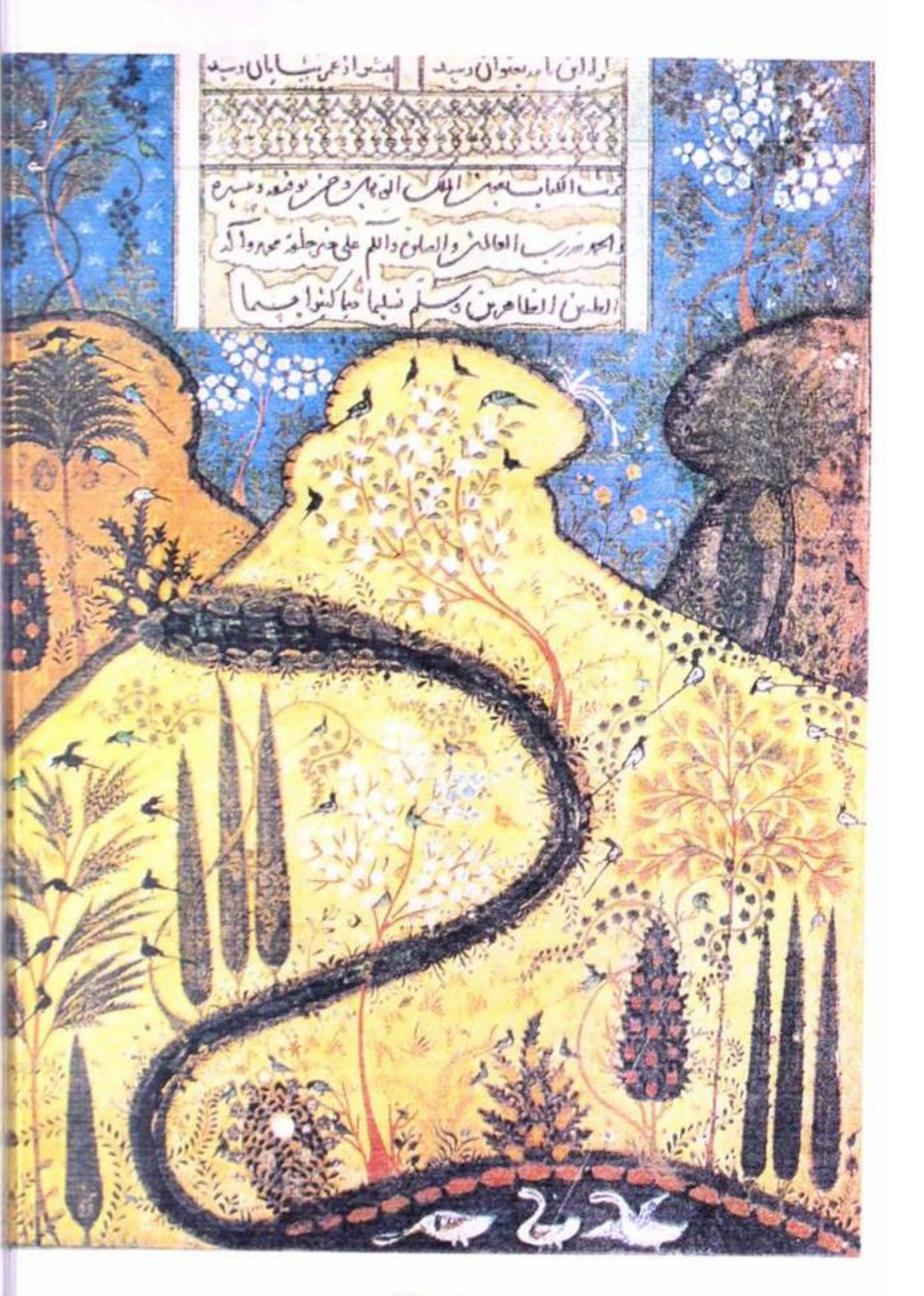


Fig. 1

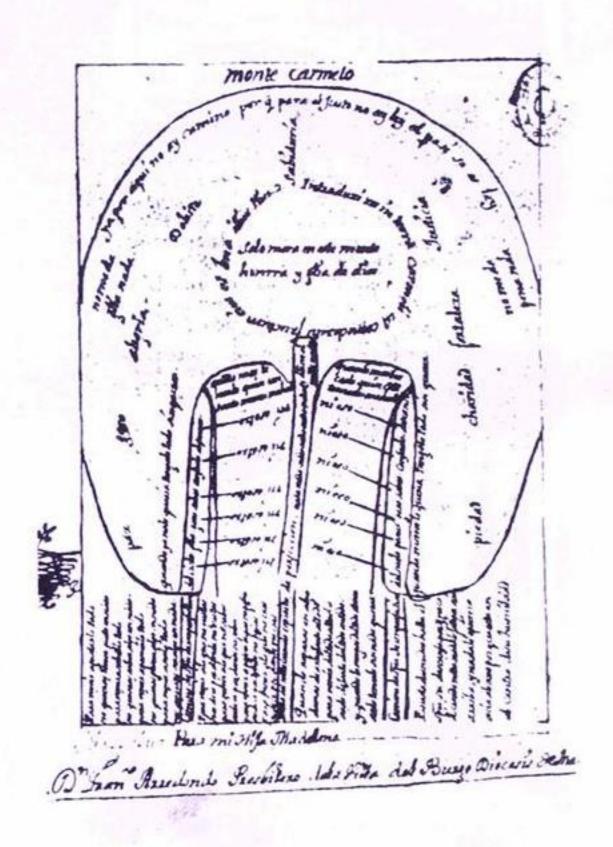


Fig . 2

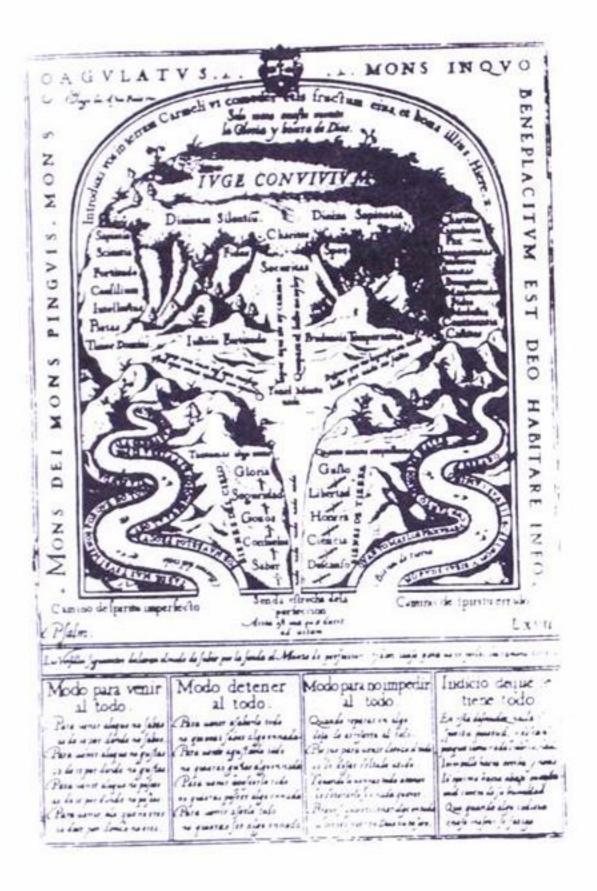


Fig. 3



Fig. 4





Fig. 6

