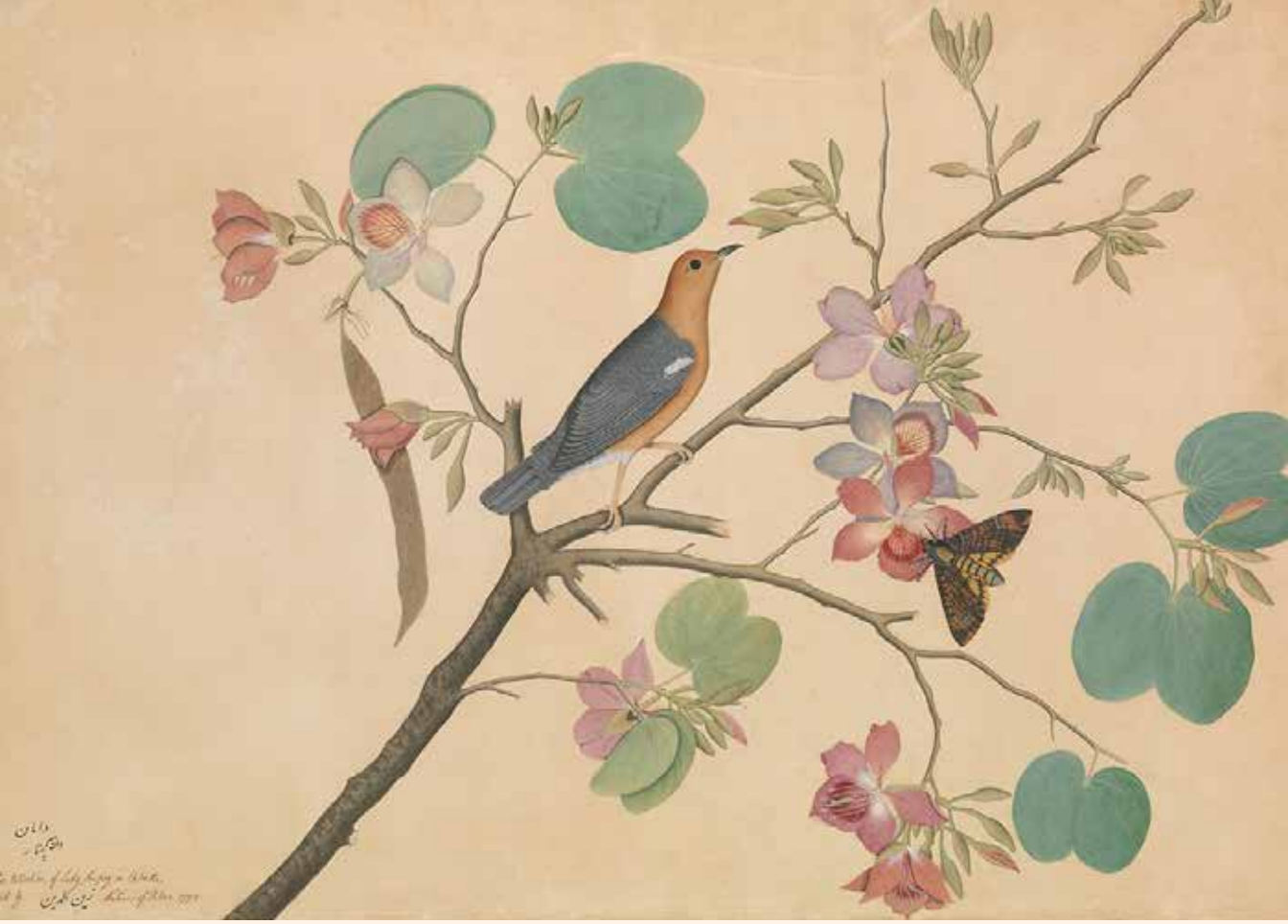


The Logic of the Birds

Poetry and Poetic Knowledge

OLUDAMINI OGUNNAIKE

For my father, the poet Babatunde Ogunnaike

ESSAY

There is magic in eloquence and wisdom in poetry — HADITH[1]

What is poetry? The song of the bird of the intellect
What is poetry? The similitude of the world of eternity — JĀMĪ

Since your love was kindled in my heart
Apart from your love, all that I have has burned
My heart put reason and study and books on the shelf
And was taught poetry and ghazals and quatrains
— RŪMĪ, *Dīvān-i Shams*, Ghazal 6161

When I speak of poetry I am not thinking of it as a genre. Poetry is an awareness of the world, a particular way of relating to reality. So poetry becomes a philosophy to guide a man throughout his life.
— ANDREI TARKOVSKY

An Orange-Headed Ground Thrush and a Death's-Head Moth on a Purple Ebony Orchid Branch, Shaikh Zain al-Din, 1778

What the Islamic tradition calls the "licit magic" (*siḥr ḥalāl*) of poetry seems to be almost universally recognized throughout human history around the world. The power of poetry—language shaped and patterned by rhythm, music, beauty—to produce profound effects both within human beings and without is prominent in all cultures with which I have some familiarity, save perhaps certain sad segments of modernized cultures, which (for reasons we will explore later) have tried to push poetry into obscurity. To give but one contemporary example, when asked to define poetry, a contemporary South Asian poet retorted, "That's like a fish trying to describe the sea"[2]; the questioner later noted that "the rhythmic word is widely regarded as *ruh ki giza* or food for the soul in Muslim South Asia."[3] Moreover, poets and writers as disparate as Aimé Césaire and Amīr Khusrau, Jāmī and Jacques Maritain, Shelley and Bullhe Shah, Audre Lorde and Aquinas, Liu Xie and Lal Ded, Bashō and Aḥmadu Bambā have advanced the idea of a distinct mode of *poetic knowledge* that animates and undergirds poetry and much more. Indeed, the biologist Edward O. Wilson called *Homo sapiens* "the poetic species" because our cognition depends so much on language, analogy, and association.[4] Communications theorist Eric McLuhan expanded upon this insight, noting that "words are modes of experience, and are themselves experiences; a language is an organ of perception (poetic knowledge)."[5] As the great Welsh poet Dylan Thomas said, "A good poem helps to change the shape and significance of the universe, helps to extend everyone's knowledge of himself and the world around him."[6] That is, poetry is not mere sing-song rhymes and pretty words but of the greatest intellectual significance. Little wonder, then, that poetry has been at the heart of Islamic and other traditional educational and cultural formations—for most of human history, poetry (whether oral, written, or both) has been central to the ways in which we define and understand ourselves and our world.

As the poet Charles Upton explains, "Poetry... is not entertainment. It is not self-expression. It is not propaganda.... Poetry is a way of knowing based on the cultivation of symbolic, or *anagogic*, consciousness, expressed through the medium of human language. The games it plays are not sporting events but serious hunting expeditions carried out in the face of collective mass starvation."[7] Or in the words of Audre Lorde, "Poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.... Poetry is not only dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives."[8] But what is this poetic knowledge behind the meters and rhymes? Why is it so important? Why is it that so many of the best poets of most languages are so-called mystics? And what does it mean that some of us have lost touch with this poetic knowledge?

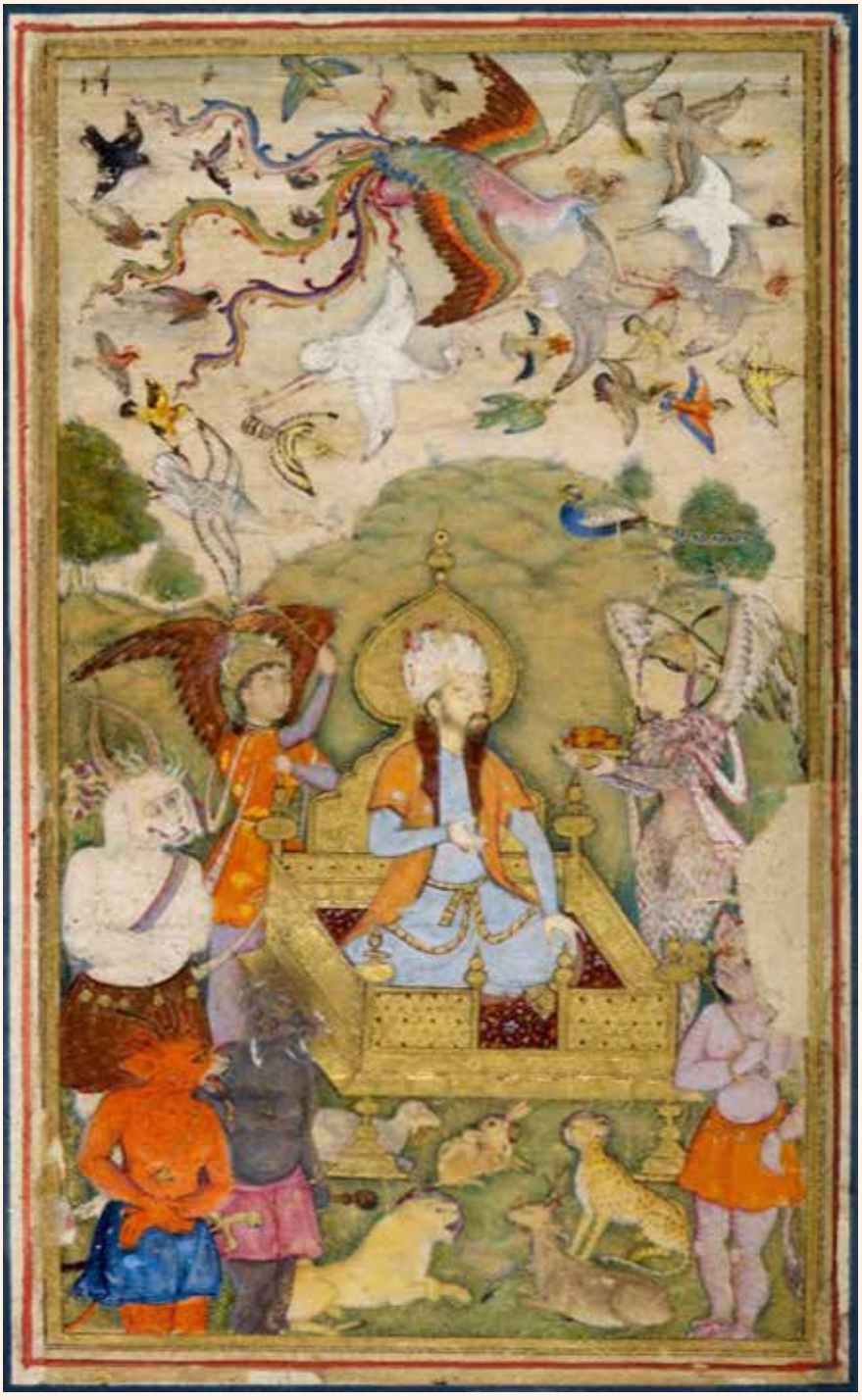
Many Islamic poets, particularly Sufi poets, advanced the idea of this "language" or "logic" of the birds as a kind of all-comprehensive mode of expression capable of communicating and synthesizing forms of knowledge that other media cannot.

The Qur'an, Poetry, Ineffability, and Wonder

Although the Qur'an explicitly declares itself not to be poetry, it is exceptionally poetic, as are most sacred texts and orature. If the Qur'an seems to take a dim view of poets and poetry in certain passages, it is precisely because of the remarkable power of poetry and poets in pre-Islamic Arabia, a power that could either compete with or support the new dispensation, which needed to differentiate itself from this poetic context. As in neighboring cultures, Arab poets were believed to be inspired by spirits, or jinn,[9] and their poetry was considered oracular—defining, embodying, and reproducing cultural ideals and structures—thereby making and breaking reputations and fortunes. Like the staff of Moses that swallowed those of the Pharaoh's magicians, the Qur'an had to "clear the ground" and differentiate its divine revelation through the Holy Spirit/archangel from the poetic inspiration of the jinn.[10] Parts of Plato's infamous attack on poetry in the *Republic* can be understood in a similar way, as an attempt to carve out space for a distinct worldview and conception of humanity, in a cultural context dominated by powerful poetic traditions whose relationship to the truth and virtue could be precarious.

In its critique of poetry, the Qur'an proclaims, "Shall I inform you upon whom the satans descend? They descend upon every sinful liar, they listen eagerly, but most of them are liars. And as for the poets, the errant follow them. Have you not seen that they wander in every valley and that they say what they do not do? Except those who believe and perform righteous deeds and remember God much, and help one another after having been wronged" (26:221–27). The Qur'an castigates the Arab poets for being "all over the place," for listening to lying spirits, for not living up to their speech, for not "being as good as their words"—for abusing the power of poetry. Instead of their craft bringing together truth, action, goodness, and people, their words separate them. But the last verse defines good poets inversely, as those who bring together[11] truth, action, people, and good speech, implicitly connecting poetry to invocation (*dhikr*), another spiritually efficacious use of rhythmic speech. Dhikr also names the recitation of the Qur'an, which Seyyed Hossein Nasr insightfully describes as "the spiritual force behind the poetry and music of all Islamic peoples."[12]

In these Islamic contexts,[13] the art of poetry is often referred to by the Qur'anic term "the language of the birds" (*manṭiq al-ṭayr*) from verse 27:16, in which Solomon says, "O people, we have been taught the language of the birds, and we have been given of all things. Truly, this is the clear (*mubīn*) bounty!" As Muslim scholars and poets throughout the ages have noted, the word *manṭiq* in this verse, commonly translated as "speech" or "language,"[14] also means "logic," expressing the close relationship between logic and poetry,[15] while the second half of the verse conveys the all-encompassing nature of the latter as a bounty of clarifying exposition (another meaning of the term *mubīn*) and wisdom, uniting all things. As sura Ṣād describes the poetry of the Psalms of David: "We compelled the mountains to hymn with him at nightfall and sunrise, and the birds gathered, each oft-turning to Him. And We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and decisive speech" (38:18–20). Here, the fixed and the earthly (the mountains, the pillars of



Artwork from a Mughal-era copy of the diwan of Hafez.

the macrocosm) and the flying and heavenly (the birds, symbolizing the angelic pillars of the metacosm) are united in the poetic act of the *khalīfa* (38:26), the vicegerent David (the microcosm), at the liminal times of nightfall and sunrise, uniting the day (manifestation) and the night (the unseen). This triad of meta-macro-microcosm or heaven-earth-human, plays an important role in framing the understanding of poetry and poetic knowledge in many contexts.

From this perspective, many Islamic poets, particularly Sufi poets, advanced the idea of this "language" or "logic" of the birds as a kind of all-comprehensive mode of expression capable of communicating and synthesizing forms of knowledge that other media cannot. The famous poet-scholar Amīr Khusrau of Delhi wrote, "Science is like water in a cask: draw ten sound conclusions, and its volume decreases. Poetry, however, is an ever-flowing spring—and should you delve into it even a hundred times, it cannot diminish."[16] One reason for this dynamic is that poetry cultivates wonder and awe. As Lara Harb writes,

> The evocation of wonder was the main goal of classical Arabic poetry according to classical Arabic literary theorists, such as al-Jurjani. Wonder is this unique experience that is located on the cusp between ignorance and knowledge. It is a response to the unknown, unexpected and unfamiliar that spurs one into a search for and discovery of knowledge. In this sense, wonder is the foundation of philosophical, scientific and metaphysical enquiry. It is due to wonder that human beings began to philosophise, as Aristotle declared in his *Metaphysics*.[17]

Al-Jurjānī explained how, through its linguistic and aesthetic techniques, poetry stops the train of ordinary thought and "defamiliarizes" the familiar, causing us to discover it afresh, to see it in a new light and savor the joy of discovery. He wrote, "The pleasure of the soul is based on being lifted from the hidden to the visible, being presented with the plain after the enigmatic, being moved from the known to the better and more intimately known."[18] In a similar vein, Charles Baudelaire defined poetic genius as the "capacity to recover childhood" and perceive a given thing "in all of its freshness, as the very symbol of reality."[19] Or as the English poet William Blake wrote, both describing and illustrating this poetic perception:

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour.[20]

In more prosaic terms, the same poet wrote, "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite."[21] True poetry participates in this "cleansing" of the perceptual faculties by sweeping aside the cobwebs occluding the hidden passages connecting all things, polishing phenomena to reflective translucence, granting us an experience of the One in everything and everything in each one—the universality of things in their particularity, and their particularity in their universality.[22] As James C. Taylor wrote in *Poetic Knowledge*, "Poetic experience indicates an encounter with reality that is nonanalytical, something that is perceived as beautiful, awful (awefull), spontaneous, mysterious. It is true that poetic experience has the surprise of metaphor found in poetry, but also found in common experience, when the mind,

through the senses and emotions, *sees* in delight, or even in terror, the significance of what is really there."[23]

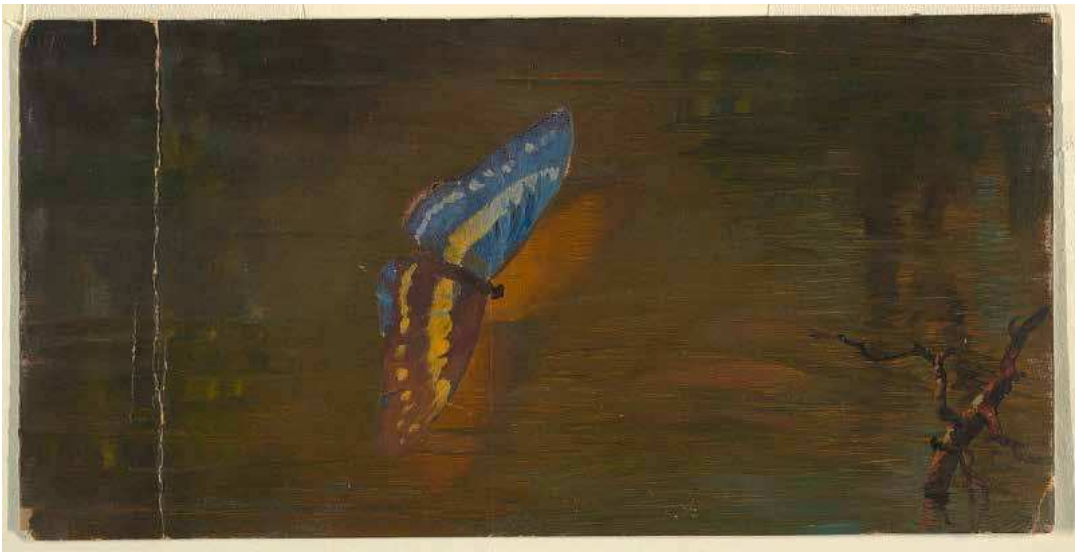
Moreover, this poetic wonder or awe is the response to that which cannot be fully encompassed or tied down by conceptual definition or analysis—it can be expressed and alluded to but exceeds explanation. As the great Egyptian Sufi poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ wrote, "In allusion, there is meaning not contained in plain expression."[24] This notion of "suggestion" or "resonance" (*dhvani*) was central to the influential poetics of the Kashmiri Shaivite philosopher Abhinavagupta, who argued that the indirect suggestion of aesthetic experience (*rasadhvani*, literally "the resonance of taste/flavor or juice/essence") is the "soul of poetry." Prefiguring Amīr Khusrau, he writes:

> Aesthetical experience takes place, as everyone can notice, by virtue, as it were, of the squeezing out of the poetical word. Persons aesthetically sensitive, indeed, read and taste many times over the same poem. In contradiction to practical means of perception, that, their task being accomplished, are no more of any use and must then be abandoned, a poem, indeed, does not lose its value after it has been comprehended. The words, in poetry, must therefore have an additional power, that of suggestion, and for this very reason the transition from the conventional meaning to the poetic one is unnoticeable.[25]

Using the example of the phrase "a village in/on the Ganges" (*gaṅgāyāṃ ghoṣaḥ*), Abhinavagupta explains that given that the literal sense is impossible (the villagers would drown), the phrase evokes a different mode of cognition, in which the artistic expression itself, its connotations and affective resonances, and not its denotation, become the primary object of an elevated aesthetic experience and enjoyment, in addition to the "decoded," more literal meaning of "a village on the banks of the Ganges river":

> "A village on the Ganges" suggests the beauty, peacefulness, and holiness of the village. These suggestions spring from the primary sense of the word "Ganges," not from the secondary, or shifted, sense of "bank," which we need in order to make sense of the expression. It is logic that demands the secondary sense. The suggestion, the poetry, springs directly from the primary.[26]

Thus, the faint or imperceptible suggestion (*dhvani*) of poetry subtly resonates with the memories of experiences and feelings in the mind of the reader the way certain smells or locations or half-heard songs can evoke memories and feelings without us being directly aware of them (e.g., the smell of a particular kind of cloth brings back memories of my childhood in Nigeria and my grandfather, and the word *teeth* can subtly evoke memories and feelings about particular smiles, barking dogs, or the dentist's office—but usually at the edges of my awareness). Once aesthetically evoked, these ordinary feelings or states of mind (*bhāva*) can saturate the consciousness of the listener and are transformed into the heightened aesthetic experience of *rasa*, the feeling or quality evoked and transfigured by artistic craft and aesthetic delight.[27] Abhinavagupta describes this experience of *rasa* as a kind of refinement or distillation of particular, everyday feelings and states by removing their limiting and individualizing barriers,



Butterfly over Water, Frederic Edwin Church, ca. 1865

producing an aesthetic experience that opens up onto universal consciousness of the divine Self.[28] For example, he argues that unlike ordinary pleasures—which are inevitably combined with self-interest (such as the desire for the continuance of the pleasure, or various other desires)—at its rapturous peak, the aesthetic "savoring" of *rasa* is its own goal, virtually escaping the individual self-interests and desires of the listener, whose particular memories and feelings are abstracted or elevated to the more universal level of *rasa*. As he writes, "A poem's having the efficacy (*bhāvakatva*) to create *rasas* is nothing more than a poem's power of making the *vibhāvas* [feelings], etc., universal."[29]

Like al-Jurjānī, Abhinavagupta describes in great detail the various linguistic and poetic features that produce this kind of heightened aesthetic experience, which he also associates with wonder, surprise, awe, and astonishment,[30] but he places greater emphasis on the psychological processes that create this elevated aesthetic experience through the unique power of evocative suggestion (*dhvani*), whose addition to the ordinary denotative functioning of language allows us to "squeeze the juice" out of words, savoring their expressions of the ineffable evoked in our consciousness. As one scholar summarizes Abhinavagupta's theory: "When language serves art, it neither negates nor dispenses with linguistic apprehension. Rather, it delivers more than language can: the ineffable essence of the subject who experiences love, compassion, grief, the comic, and more, including quietude."[31]

Similarly, the Arabic verb *shaʿara*—from which the word for poetry (*shiʿr*) is derived—names a kind of indirect, subtle perception, awareness, feeling, or intuition (*shuʿūr*). It also has the same root as *shaʿr*, which means "hair," and poets and etymologists have linked this to their shared qualities of fineness and subtlety—the indirect perception we have of things, such as the wind through the hairs on our body and the feeling of our "hair standing on end"—that can accompany this kind of obscure awareness and moving poetry.[32]

The following verses of Emily Dickinson beautifully convey and portray this dynamic of wonder, surprise, pleasure, ineffability, and the necessity of allusion:

> Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
> Success in Circuit lies
> Too bright for our infirm Delight
> The Truth's superb surprise
> As Lightning to the Children eased
> With explanation kind
> The Truth must dazzle gradually
> Or every man be blind—[33]

Thus the inexhaustibility of the ineffable finds a home in the allusions, aporias, ambiguities, epistrophes, paradoxes, and coincidence of opposites that characterize poetic speech[34] and prevent it from being frozen into a static set of definitions and referents; these subtleties, the indefiniteness of poetic suggestion, and its capacity to inspire awe are what make poetry an "ever-flowing spring" leading to the ocean and not a "cask of water." As Abhinavagupta writes, "By this road of *dhvani* (resonance) and of subordinated suggestion, which has been shown, the imagination of poets can be indefinitely extended... a further result is an infinite extension of the poet's imagination!"[35] As opposed to a simple picture or photograph, a true poem is more like an open window through which we can contemplate the ever-changing internal and external worlds, and through which these worlds meet, mingle, and transform each other. [36] In short, poetry leads beyond itself. Like music, poetry is perpetually vanishing into the silence that is its origin and destination. As Tu Wei-Ming wrote of Chinese poetry in the Wei-Chin (ca. fourth-century) period, "What the poet evokes, in the Wei-Chin sense of lyricism, far from being an unrestrained enthusiasm for a passing phenomenon, is a penetrating insight into the enduring pattern of things. The words, so long as they are pointers to the poetic vision of such a pattern, are a necessary instrument for disclosing the Tao. As soon as the Tao is revealed and the meaning understood, they must fade away so that the ineffable Tao can be experienced directly."[37] Or as Bashō wrote, both illustrating and expressing this dynamic:

> A cicada shell;
> it sang itself
> utterly away.[38]

Similarly, Abhinavagupta posits that the ninth *rasa* of "tranquil quietude" (*śanta rasa*) is a kind of "rasa of rasas," running through them all like the thread of a necklace, or like the white light within all colors, and he argues that all successful art should resolve itself into this *rasa*, which is the end goal of all poetry, of all aesthetic and human experience, as it is the fulfillment and thus the end of all desires; in this regard, he cites the following verses of the Mahābhārata:

> The joy of pleasure in the world
> and the greater joy of pleasures found
> in heaven
> are not worth a sixteenth of the joy
> that comes from the dying of desire.[39]

And likewise, the final stanza of San Juan de la Cruz's beautiful "Noche oscura del alma" (Dark night of the soul) reads:

> I abandoned and forgot myself,
> Laying my face on my Beloved;
> All things ceased; I went out from
> myself,
> Leaving my cares
> Forgotten among the lilies.[40]

Or consider the testimonies of Rumi's pen: "Love has come and covered my mouth:

'Throw away your poetry and come to the stars'"[41] and

> I think of poetic rhyme while my Beloved
> Tells me to think of Him and nothing else
> What are words that thou shouldst think about them
> What are words but thorns of the wall of the vineyard?
> I shall put aside expressions, words and sounds,
> So that without all three I shall carry out an intimate discourse with thee.[42]

And

> Whatever description or explanation I give of love
> when I reach love, I am ashamed of it
> Although the description of the tongue clarifies,
> love that is tongueless is of greater clarity
> As the pen hastened to write
> when it came to love, it split on itself.
> In describing love, reason becomes mired like an ass in mud.
> It is love alone, it is love alone
> which has explained love and being in love.[43]

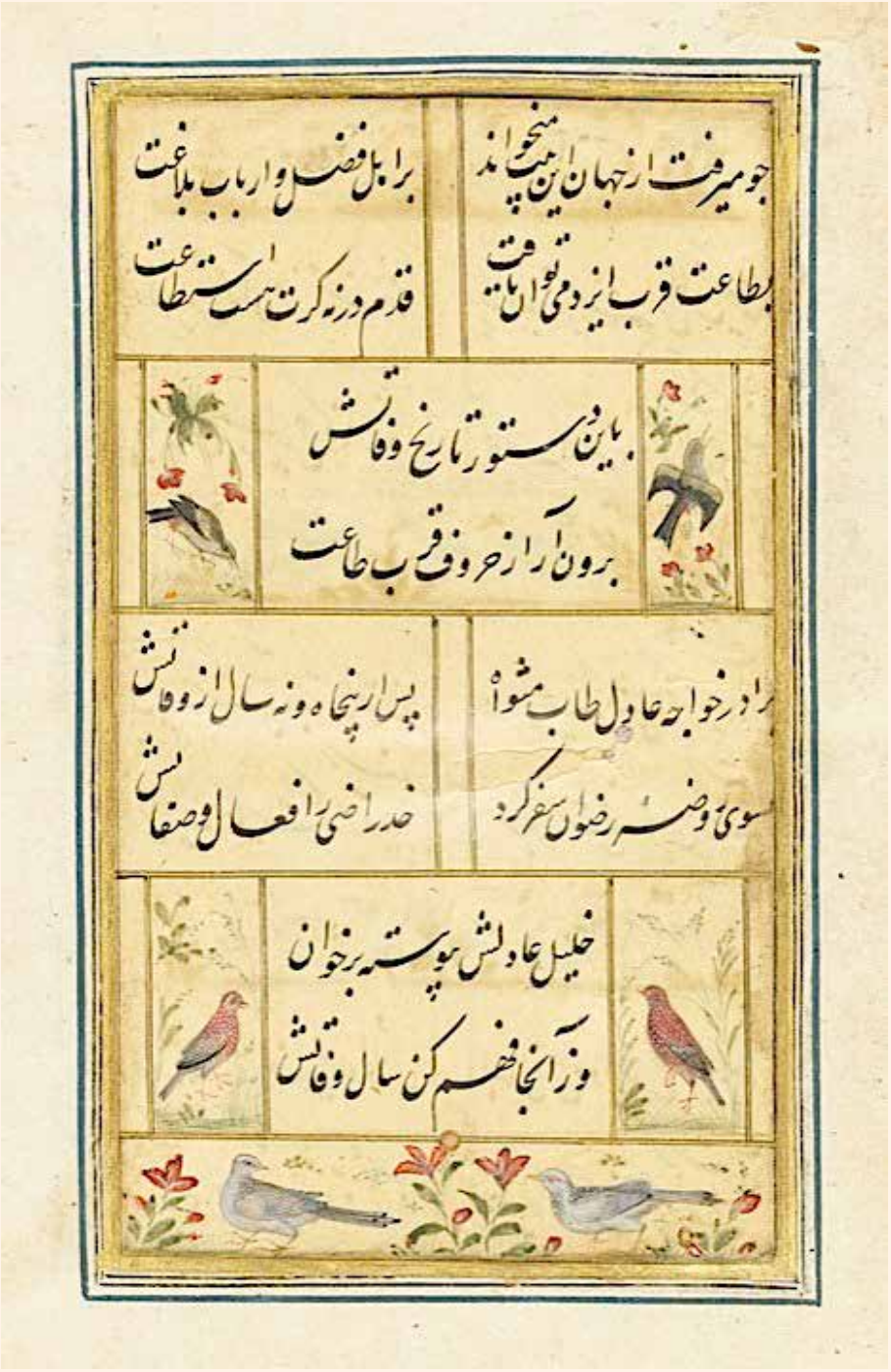
Or in one of my own poems:

> Words are just folds in
> the bedsheets, un-tight
> Reminding us of
> what we did last night
> Calling us back to
> our silent delights

But instead of passing over the ineffable in silence, Sufi and other traditional, spiritual poets have gone a different way than the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, and seem to have adopted the motto "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must sing."

Poetry: The Pattern of the Words and Worlds

As alluded to above, poetry is particularly effective at leading us beyond itself, transforming us and the world, due to its embodiment of the resonant harmonies between the realms of the cosmos, the human soul, and the transcendent Real, in the realm of human language. As Tu Wei-Ming explains, "The paradox that the Tao is ineffable but can be experienced directly is predicated on the belief that there is always an internal resonance between human beings and the natural order of things."[44] In Qur'anic terms, this can be seen in the symbolic ambiguity of the Qur'anic term *āyāt*—which means both the symbols of God "on the horizons and in our souls" (41:53) and the verses of the Qur'an—illustrating the doctrine of "the three books" of the human soul, the cosmos, and revelation/scripture that reflect and illuminate each other, conveying the divine message of the nature of the Real. Ibn al-ʿArabī' stated, "We emerged from speech. That is His word, 'Be!,' so we came to be. Silence is a state of nonexistence, and speech is a state of existence." Commenting on this, William Chittick writes, "Created things are the speech of God, and the words they speak are spoken through them, not by them."[45] If the entire cosmos is speech, and speech ordered by meter and rhyme is poetry,[46] then the ordered speech of the cosmos and our souls is a kind of existential poetry, and the poetry we recite is an echo of this creative act. As Ibn al-ʿArabī writes, "All of the world is endowed with rhythm, fastened by rhyme, on the Straight Path."[47] Synthe-



Page from the diwan of Hafez, calligrapher ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, ca. 1582

sizing these perspectives, Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains:

> According to the traditional doctrine, the inner reality of the cosmos, which unveils itself to the inner eye or to intellectual vision—for which the inner eye is the instrument of perception—is based upon a harmony which imposes itself even upon the corporeal domain. This harmony is, moreover, reflected in the world of language, which is itself a reflection of both the soul of man and of the cosmos.... Harmony is always present, but as its imprint upon the word or substance of language becomes more marked and profound, poetry comes into being, poetry which through its re-echoing of the fundamental Harmony of things is able to aid man to return to the higher states of being and consciousness."[48]

A similar perspective is found in Liu Xie's influential work on Chinese poetics, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, in which he posits pattern/order (*wen*) as the unifying constitutive principle underlying the various phenomena of the classic Chinese cosmological triad of heaven, earth, and humanity. Rafal Stepien explains:

> *Wen* is the manifestation of the Way in the world of appearances; it is thus not external decoration (*waishi*) but the externalization of an internal necessity....
>
> Having thus proposed *wen* as the ordering principle of heaven and earth in the very first sentences of his treatise, Liu Xie immediately goes on to position humanity as the third member of this cosmic triad. Humanity is nothing less than "the mind of heaven and earth" (*tiandi zhi xin*). How so? Because humanity is endowed with consciousness (*xingling*): the ability to discern the constitutive pattern or *wen* of things.... and, crucially, to give it expressive voice.[49]

After describing the emergence of *wen* from the undifferentiation of the supreme ultimate (*taiji*) and its appearance in the patterns of heaven (e.g., *tianwen*, astronomy, astrology) and earth (*diwen*, geography), Liu Xie turns to the emergence of the patterns of humanity: *renwen*, meaning culture, cultivation, learning, and literature. Starting from the legendary origins of the Chinese writing system from the observation of bird tracks—another account of the "language of the birds" that symbolically unites heaven, earth, and humanity in a natural process—Liu Xie explains, "When mind arises, language abides. When language abides, literature enlightens."[50] That is, just as mind naturally emerges from the process of manifestation as that which must recognize and be aware of *wen*, the pattern or nature of reality, language naturally emerges from mind, as the medium through which *wen* can be expressed. Stephen Owen explains, "Language is the fulfillment of the process, the knowing that makes known, and that fulfillment will be human *wen* [cultivation/literature]."[51]

Connecting this process to spiritual enlightenment, Liu Xie writes, "Therefore we know that through the sages the way transmits *wen*, and that the sages rely on *wen* to manifest the way," and Stepien comments, "This means that, by authoring works of *wen*, those engaged in literary craft embody, manifest, enlighten (*ming*) the way inherently at work in all nature."[52] That is, properly patterned literature, such as good poetry, both reflects and emerges from the very nature of reality. It is the full flowering of the "mind of heaven and

earth," the fruit containing the seed from which the entire cosmic tree emerged.[53] Liu Xie contrasts this true literature of the titular "carving dragons" (*dioalong*), which naturally expresses and completes the very pattern of the fabric of reality, with the pejorative "carving insects" (*diaochong*), the shallow artifice of "frippery poetastery,"[54] concluding his classic work with the following verse:

> If literature conveys the mind
> My mind has been delivered.[55]

Birds are also central to the mythical origin of Sanskrit poetry, according to which the first verse (*shloka*) was composed as the sage Vālmīki was happily watching a pair of mating cranes in the river, when suddenly, a hunter's arrow killed one of the birds, and thereupon its mate gave a piercing, mournful cry and died of grief. Moved by this tragic scene and spotting the hunter, Vālmīki extemporaneously proclaimed the first verse of Sanskrit poetry, which became the model for the structure of the Rāmāyaṇa:

> You will find no rest for the long years
> of Eternity
> For you killed a bird in love and
> unsuspecting.[56]

Later writers, such as Abhinavagupta, explain the process by which this first verse of the first poet came into being as the transmutation of the bird's grief and cry, in the clear heart of the sage through "a melting of his thought" into the universal form of *rasa*, which "then like the spilling over of a jar filled with liquid, like the pouring forth of one's emotion into a cry of lament, this [grief now transformed into the *rasa* of compassion] found its final form in a verse cast into fixed form of meter and into appropriate words."[57] That is, it took a visionary sage to perceive the universal, underlying structure of reality revealed in the particular event, and transform it in the "clear mirror" of his own heart (which was already structured according to the same universal pattern of reality) into the generalized *rasa*. This state could then be expressed in appropriate speech of poetry, whose patterns of suggestion or resonance (*dhvani*) evoke the same universal consciousness of aesthetic perception, of *rasa*. As Abhinavagupta's teacher wrote:

> It has been said that no non-seer can be deservingly called a poet, and one is a seer only by virtue of his vision. Vision is the power of disclosing intuitively the reality underlying the manifold materials in the world and their aspects. To be termed a "poet" in the authoritative texts it is enough to be possessed of this vision of reality. But in everyday speech the world accords that title to him alone who possesses vision as well as expression. Thus, though the first poet (Vālmīki) was highly gifted with enduring and clear vision, he was not hailed as a poet by people until he embodied it in a descriptive work.[58]

A similar understanding based on the Platonic and Aristotelian notion of mimesis (imitation/representation) of the forms of nature is echoed in Taylor's aforementioned *Poetic Knowledge*, where he writes, "Poetry, and poetic knowledge, discovers the invisible principles in real things without destroying the thing itself."[59] Similarly, one scholar describes Gerard Manley Hopkins's central notion of "an inscape," based on the Neoplatonic philosophy of Duns Scotus: "To Hopkins, an inscape was something more than a delightful sensory impression: it was an insight, by

divine grace, into the ultimate spiritual reality, seeing the pattern, air, melody, in things from, as it were, God's side."[60]

Hopkins's poetry has always strongly reminded me of traditional Yoruba poetry, whose general poetics (in the broad sense of the term, including all forms of art)[61] is most clearly encapsulated in the concept and genre of *oríkì*, which are "collections or strings of name-like attributive epithets, 'praises' which are neither narrative nor descriptive, but vocative. They are addressed to their subject or 'owner,' and are felt to encapsulate, and evoke in some way, that subject's essential powers and qualities."[62] *Oríkì* literally means to "call," "evoke," or even "provoke" the *orí* of a thing, which is at once its "head," "inner reality," "guardian spirit," and "destiny," chosen in heaven before it comes down to earth.[63] The numerous myths about *orí* describe it as a kind of nexus where each individual thing meets the supreme Being and Creator (*Olódùmàrè*/*Ọ̀ọ́ run*); one priestess describes orí as "that part of one's complex identity which is an imperishable part of God," and another sage characterized it as "the act of the self [*ẹ́mí*] when it is with the supreme deity (*Ọ̀ọ́ run*)."[64] Thus, the poetry of *oríkì* functions to call forth the universal, spiritual essence (*orí*) of a particular thing, which is also a particular power or quality of the universal sacred (*Olódùmàrè*/*Ọ̀ọ́ run*), manifested through the descent of the divine word (*òrò*).[65]

In these anthropocosmic conceptions of poetry, the poet imitates, or extends, and ultimately participates in the creative act of the Creator, patterning human language so as to sympathetically resonate with the related underlying patterns of the world and consciousness. Aimé Césaire describes this process:

> But one man… puts humanity back in the universal concert, one man unites the human flowering with universal flowering; that man is the poet.… In other words, poetry is full bloom. The blossoming of mankind to the dimensions of the world; giddy dilation. And it can be said that all true poetry, without ever abandoning its humanity, at the moment of the greatest mystery ceases to be strictly human so as to be truly cosmic. There we see resolved, and by the poetic state, two of the most anguishing antinomies that exist: the antinomy of one and other, the antinomy of Self and World.… He speaks and returns language to its purity. By purity I mean not subject to habit or thought but only to the cosmic thrust. The poet's word, the primal word: rupestral design in the stuff of sound. The poet's utterance, primal utterance, the universe played with and copied.[66]

Thus, in true poetry, the walls that separate subject and object, self and other, nature and culture, language and reality, the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) / ultimate reality / Self and creation (*al-khalq*) / conventional reality / self are porous (if they can be said to exist at all), leading to a distinct form of "poetic knowledge" that is clearly described by Bashō:

> Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine, or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Otherwise you impose yourself on the object and do not learn. Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object have become one—when you have plunged deep enough into the object to see something like a hidden glimmering there. However well-phrased your poetry may be, if

> However well-phrased your poetry may be, if your feeling is not natural—if the object and yourself are separate—then your poetry is not true poetry but merely your subjective counterfeit.[67]

Or, as Wallace Stevens writes in "The Snow Man":

> One must have a mind of winter
> To regard the frost and the boughs
> Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;[68]

This essay, supported by a grant from the Templeton Religion Trust, is an excerpt from a longer article published on the Renovatio website. Visit renovatio.zaytuna.edu to read the complete article.

Endnotes

1 Al-Adab al-Mufrad, "Chapter: Someone saying, 'There is magic in eloquence,'" accessed January 25, 2022, https://sunnah.com/adab:872.

2 Nosheen Ali, "From Hallaj to Heer: Poetic Knowledge and the Muslim Tradition," *Journal of Narrative Politics* 3, no. 1 (2016): 4, https://jnp.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/default/article/view/59/61.

3 Ali, "From Hallaj to Heer," 5.

4 Edward O. Wilson and Robert Hass, *The Poetic Species: A Conversation with Edward O. Wilson and Robert Hass* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2014).

5 Eric McLuhan, *The Sensus Communis, Synesthesia, and the Soul: An Odyssey* (New York: BPS Books, 2015), 10–11.

6 Dylan Thomas, *On the Air with Dylan Thomas: The Broadcasts*, ed. Ralph Maud (New York: New Directions Books, 1992), 61.

7 Charles Upton, *What the Poets Used to Know* (Kettering, MI: Angelico Press, 2016), 1.

8 Audre Lorde, "Poetry is not a Luxury," in *The Selected Works of Audre Lorde*, ed. Roxane Gay (New York: W. W. Norton, 2020), 4–5.

9 Even famous poets from the Islamic era, such as Abū Nuwās and al-Mutannabī, were rumored to have jinn who inspired and taught them their poetry. See Amira El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 128–33.

10 See Qur'an 21:5, 36:69, 37:36, 52:30, 69:41. This dynamic even extended to the early poets who represented the nascent Muslim community in poetic duels, with the Prophet praying that the Holy Spirit support and inspire them against their poetic foes. For example, a hadith related by al-Nasā'ī states, "ʿUmar passed by Ḥassān b. Thābit while he was reciting poetry in the mosque and glared at him. He said: 'I recited poetry when there was someone better than you in the mosque.' Then he turned to Abū Hurayrah and said: 'Did you not hear the Messenger of God when he said: "Answer back on my behalf. O God, help him with the Holy Spirit!"' He said: 'Yes, by God'" (Al-Nasā'ī # 716). Other accounts note that the Prophet sometimes told his companions to compose poetry in response to the idolaters, for example, saying to Ḥassān b. Thābit, "Versify against them, for Gabriel is with thee" (Al-Bukhārī #3213, #4123; Muslim #2486). During the conquest of Makkah, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Rawāḥah recited verses against the idolaters. He was rebuked by ʿUmar for reciting poetry in the environs of the Kaaba, but the Prophet said, "Leave him be, O ʿUmar, for it [the verse] goes through them [the idolaters] faster than an arrow" (Al-Tirmidhī #2847).

11 In this regard, it is helpful to remember that the etymological origin of "symbol," the Greek

sym-bolon, literally means "to throw/bring together," while its opposite, *dia-bolon* (just as "synchronic" is opposite to "diachronic" and "symmetrically" to "diametrically") means "to separate, to throw apart, to attack or accuse" and is the origin of the English "diabolic." So this verse can read as contrasting "diabolical" poets and poetry with "symbolic" poets and poetry.

12 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 76. Nasr elaborates, "The rhyme and rhythm of Persian poetry reflects a 'spiritual style' that relates it to the form of the Quran as the message of this poetry is related to the content of the Quranic revelation.... Persian poetry in its rhyme and rhythm reflects the echo of the Sacred Book in the minds of men and women who created this poetry. In its turn this poetry causes a reminiscence of this echo in the minds and souls of the men who read it, and returns them to a state in which they participate in its paradisal joy and beauty. Herein lies its alchemical effect. The person who enjoys this poetry or can create such poetry is still living potentially in the paradise which it creates through the grace issuing from the Quran. To appreciate Ḥāfiẓ fully is to be already in the proximity of the Divine" (76–77).

13 And others as well, as illustrated in the rest of this essay. Also see René Guénon, "The Language of Birds," *Studies in Comparative Religion* 3, no. 2 (1969): 80–82. In Egyptian Arabic, hieroglyphics are known as the "alphabet of the birds," which the ancient Egyptians themselves called "the language of the gods," being revealed by the bird-headed god Thoth. In medieval and Renaissance alchemy, the "language of the birds" named a "perfect language," whose form perfectly corresponded to the cosmos, and from which one could learn all of the mysteries. This is somewhat similar to the notion of the Syrian language (*al-lughah al-suryāniyyah*) in certain schools of Sufism, which the great shaykh of Fes, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dabbāgh, describes as "the language of the spirits and the Friends of God who are members of the Diwan. Syriac was the language of Adam in Paradise and is the most compact of languages because its letters by themselves are like words that communicate numerous meanings at once. Only those human beings who have received the great illumination can speak it. All the other languages in the world were derived from Syriac after the death of Idris (Enoch). The speech of breastfeeding babies and small children preserves words from Syriac. Examples are: *ugh*, *būbū*, *ʻaʻa*, *mūmū*, etc. Finally, the angels who carry out the interrogation in the grave speak in Syriac." John O'Kane and Bernd Radtke, *Pure Gold from the Words of Sayyidī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dabbāgh* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 20.

14 Or, in the case of the title of ʿAṭṭār's famous poetic epic, it is often translated as "Conference of the Birds."

15 As Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains, "poetry and logic refer to a single Reality that binds and yet transcends them," and while logic in its various forms governs the abstract movement of the human intellect/heart/mind from the known to the unknown, "poetry deals with human language as molded by the principles of harmony and rhythm, which also govern the cosmos. These two disciplines or activities of the human mind or soul have nearly completely parted ways in the modern West while they have preserved their complementarity and close association in theory and practice wherever Oriental traditions survive. There has always been in the Orient a logical aspect to poetry and a poetical aspect to the great expressions of logical thought. Still today, in many Oriental languages, works of a logical nature are studied in poetic form that facilitates their mastery while there is an innate logic to traditional poetry to the extent that this type of poetry is used instead of a strictly logical argument to prove a logical point." Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, 87–88.

16 Sonam Kachru and Jane Mikkelson, "The Mind Is its Own Place: Of Lalla's Comparative Poetics," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (2019): 125.

17 Lara Harb, "The Meaning of Cowardly Dogs and Other Puzzles of Arabic Poetry," *Psyche*, August 30, 2021, https://psyche.co/ideas/the-meaning-of-cowardly-dogs-and-other-puzzles-of-

arabic-poetry.

18 Harb, "The Meaning of Cowardly Dogs."

19 Patrick Laude and Barry McDonald, eds., *Music of the Sky: An Anthology of Spiritual Poetry* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2004), 13.

20 William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence," in *Poets of the English Language* (Viking Press, 1950), https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43650/auguries-of-innocence. As this poem suggests, this awe-inspiring aspect of poetry is also connected to the unique temporality of poetry that is echoed, felt, and partially produced by its rhythms. As Sufi commentators such as al-Qushayrī have pointed out, fear and hope are directed toward the future, grief and nostalgia are directed toward the past, while awe is rooted firmly in the present moment, and its dazzling gleams banish the shadows of past and future. As Charles Simic wrote, "The secret wish of poetry is to stop time" (Charles Simic, *The Life of Images: Selected Prose* [New York: Ecco, 2015], 30). This poetic present or perpetual moment (*al-ān al-dā'im*) of awe or bewilderment (*ḥayrah*/*taḥayyur*) is a shadow of the state of the saints (*awliyā'*), of whom the Qur'an says, "They neither fear nor grieve" (10:62, 2:38, 2:62, 2:112, 2:277, 3:170, 5:69, 6:48, 7:35, 39:61, 46:13). As T. S. Eliot wrote in "Little Gidding," the last of his *Four Quartets*, "And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time." Eliot, *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, 1988), 59.

21 William Blake, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David Erdman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 208), 39.

22 James C. Taylor writes, "Poetry, and poetic knowledge, discovers the invisible principles in real things without destroying the thing itself." Taylor, *Poetic Knowledge* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), 70.

23 Taylor, *Poetic Knowledge*, 6.

24 T. Emil Homerin, trans., *ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 187. وفي الإشارة معنى ما العبارة حدّت

25 Raniero Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta* (Varanasi: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1968), xxxiii. He also writes, "As this matter is most essential, it is given by suggestion rather than by direct statement, for an essential matter carries far greater luster by not being stated in so many words. For it is common knowledge among intelligent and well-educated circles that one should suggest rather than state in so many words the matter which one has most at heart." Abhinavagupta, *The Dhvanyaloka of Anandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta*, trans. and ed. Daniel Ingalls, Jeffrey Masson, and M. V. Patwardhan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 693.

26 Abhinavagupta, *The Dhvanyaloka*, 186.

27 To the eight traditional *rasas* enumerated in the classical Nāṭya Śāstra—*śṛinigara* (romantic love), *hāsya* (humor), *raudra* (anger), *kārunya* (compassion), *bībhatsa* (disgust), *bhayānaka* (terror), *vīra* (heroism), *adhbuta* (wonder)—Abhinavagupta added a ninth, *śanta* (the permanent, peaceful joy of spiritual deliverance from ignorance and desire).

28 He writes, "Once a *rasa* has been thus realized, its enjoyment (*bhoga*) is possible, an enjoyment which is different from the apprehensions derived from memory or direct experience and which takes the form of melting, expansion, and radiance. This enjoyment is like the bliss that comes from realizing (one's identity) with the highest Brahman, for it consists of repose in the bliss which is the true nature of one's own self, a nature which is basically *sattva* but is intermingled with the diversity of rajas and tamas. It is this aesthetic pleasure (*bhoga*) alone that is the major element [i.e., the purpose of poetry] and it is something already (eternally) accomplished (*siddharūpa*)." Abhinavagupta, *The Dhvanyaloka*, 222.

29 Abhinavagupta, *The Dhvanyaloka*, 222. Similarly, as Raniero Gnoli writes, paraphrasing the Kashmiri sage, "Art is not absence of life—every element of life appears in the aesthetic experience—but it is life itself, pacified and detached from all passions" (Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, xl); Maritain similarly defined poetry as "the divination of the spiritual in the things of sense, which expresses itself in the things of sense." But it is in the words of the great Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky that we find an aesthetic theory that seems to have the greatest resonance with that of Abhinavagupta, "The allotted function of art is not, as is often assumed, to put across ideas, to propagate thoughts, to serve as example. The aim of art is to prepare a person for death, to plough and harrow his soul, rendering it capable of turning to good. Touched by a masterpiece, a person begins to hear in himself that same call of truth which prompted the artist to his creative act. When a link is established between the work and its beholder, the latter experiences a sublime, purging trauma. Within that aura which unites masterpieces and audience, the best sides of our souls are made known, and we long for them to be freed. In those moments we recognise and discover ourselves, the unfathomable depths of our own potential, and the furthest reaches of our emotions." Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 43.

30 Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience*, xlv.

31 Lisa Widdison, "The Power of Suggestion: Rasa, Dhvani, and the Ineffable," *Journal of Dharma Studies* 2, no. 1 (2019), 1. In Abhinavagupta's own words, "Rather, poetic words are of an altogether different nature from ordinary words, thanks to their threefold operation. Their denotative power (*abhidhāyakatva*) operates within the limits of the literal meaning; their aesthetic efficacy (*bhāvakatva*) operates in the area of the *rasas*, etc.; and their efficacy of aesthetic enjoyment (*bhogakṛttva*) operates within the sensitive audience. The working of a poem consists of these three operations.... Therefore there is a second operation known as the efficacy (*bhāvanā*) of *rasa* (i.e., the ability to create *rasa*), thanks to which denotation assumes a new dimension." Abhinavagupta, *The Dhvanyaloka*, 221–22.

32 Moreover, poetry works based on the resonances of the subtle connections (*raqā'iq*), often described as hairlike filaments, between all things. See Claude Addas, "The Ship of Stone," *The Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ᶜArabi Society* 19 (1996): 5–24, https://ibnarabisociety.org/poetry-imagination-futuhat-claude-addas/. Ibn al-ᶜArabī similarly describes the obscure, "subtle perception" of *shuᶜūr* (which he likens to our awareness of someone being behind a door without knowing how we are aware) as the source of poetry (*shiᶜr*): "The Prophet was not forbidden from using poetry because of its being contemptible, degrading or in any way inferior, but rather because of its basis in allusions (*ishārāt*) and symbols (*rumūz*), since poetry springs forth from subtle knowledge (*shuᶜūr*). It is incumbent upon the Prophet to be clear for everyone and to use expressions as straightforward as possible" (23). However, elsewhere he describes true poetry as a treasury of divine wisdom and *maᶜrifah* (in which the only obscurity is due to the "black light" of its overwhelming brightness), explaining that the allusiveness and symbolic nature of poetry protect and veil this "hidden treasure" (24).

33 Helen Vendler, *Dickinson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 431.

34 As Michael Sells writes, "The paradoxes, aporias, and coincidences of opposites within apophatic discourse are not merely apparent contradictions. Real contradictions occur when language engages the ineffable transcendent, but these contradictions are not illogical. For the apophatic writer, the logical rule of non-contradiction functions for object entities. When the subject of discourse is a non-object and no-thing, it is not irrational that such a logic be superseded." Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 3–4.

35 Abhinavagupta, *The Dhvanyaloka*, 678.

36 The Greek *poiesis*, the origin of the word *poetry*, literally means "to make" or "to create," and

Aristotle's *Poetics* primarily analyzed dramatic poetry through the lens of *mimesis*, or imitative representation. This framing of the subject led to an understanding of poetry as a kind of artifice, a representation of the world, which for Platonists, is already a representation of the archetypal world of forms. This view of poetry as a poor copy of a poor copy of reality significantly undercut its intellectual import. However, in Islamic, Dharmic, and other traditions, poetry is more conceived of as a means of perception, as a form of knowledge, and as a means of communicating or cultivating this knowledge. This, in part, accounts for the greater intellectual, spiritual, and cultural significance of poetry in these traditions. However, even in Plato's works, this latter conception of poetry is exemplified in the poetic structure and features of his Dialogues, and the Socratic account of *poiesis* of the soul through the cultivation of virtue and knowledge in the *Symposium*.

37 Tu Wei-Ming, "Profound Learning, Personal Knowledge, and Poetic Vision," in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the late Han to the T'ang* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 28.

38 Robert Hass, trans., *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Bashō, Buson, and Issa* (New York: Ecco, 1994), 27.

39 Abhinavagupta, *The Dhvanyaloka*, 520.

40 Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, trans., *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* (Washington, DC : Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2017), 114. The verses in the original Spanish are as follows:

> Quedéme y olvidéme,
> el rostro recliné sobre el Amado,
> cesó todo y dejéme,
> dejando mi cuidado
> entre las azucenas olvidado.

41 Rūmī, *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, in William Chittick, ed., *The Sufi Path of Love* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 226.

42 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, 94.

43 *Mathnawī* I: 113–17, in Nasr, trans., *Rumi: Lament of the Reed* (Istanbul: Asr Media, 2000).

44 Tu Wei-Ming, "Profound Learning," 28.

45 William Chittick, "The Sound of Silence," *Renovatio* (Fall 2019), 17.

46 While metered, Sanskrit poetry, the Hebrew Psalms, Greek and Latin poetry, and most early European-language poetry was not strictly end-rhymed, the rise in the importance of end-rhyme in European-language poetry seems to have resulted from the influence of Arabic poetry, especially through the troubadour tradition.

47 Denis McAuley, *Ibn `Arabī's Mystical Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 45.

48 Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, 89. Further clarifying this point, he explains, "According to this doctrine, everything in the macrocosmic world consists of both an external form (*ṣūrah*) and an inner meaning (*ma'nā*). This is also true of human language which has come into being as a result of the imposition of *ma'nā* upon the very substance of language or its *ṣūrah*. As this impression of *ma'nā* upon *ṣūrah* increases, the external form becomes more transparent and reveals more readily the inner meaning. With poetry or poetic language in general, this process reaches a higher degree of intensity until in the case of inspired poetry, *ma'nā* dominates completely over *ṣūrah* and remolds the outward form completely from within (without of course, destroying the poetic canons)" (89).

49 Rafal Stepien, "The Original Mind Is the Literary Mind, the Original Body Carves Dragons," in *Buddhist Literature as Philosophy, Buddhist Philosophy as Literature*, ed. Rafal Stepien (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2020), 238, 240.

50 Stepien, "The Original Mind," 232.

51 Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 189, quoted in Stepien, "The Original Mind," 241.

52 Stepien, "The Original Mind," 242–43.

53 Similarly, poet Charles Upton says, "In some ways poetry is the end of the line—the line being the creative act of God. God brings forth the universal order; inspired by the exalted archetypes and constants of that order, and in some cases under the direct inspiration of God Himself, the poet creates." Upton, *What the Poets Used to Know*, 176–77.

54 Stepien, "The Original Mind," 238.

55 Stepien, "The Original Mind," 246. Stepien concludes, "The original mind is the literary mind in that literature, pattern, *wen*, is the very reality the mind discerns. And the original body carves dragons in that this carving, this act of properly literary writing, is precisely the natural functioning of phenomenal reality—the phenomenal reality that turns out to be nothing other than the ultimate, naturally" (245).

56 William Buck and B. A. van Nooten, trans., *Ramayana* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 7.

57 Abhinavagupta, *The Dhvanyaloka*, 115.

58 Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience*, xlviii–iv.

59 Taylor, *Poetic Knowledge*, 70.

60 W. H. Gardner, "A Note on Hopkins and Duns Scotus," in *Scrutiny* 5, no. 1 (July 1936): 28.

61 As Rowland Abiọdun explains, "Broadly speaking all verbal and visual invocations qualify as *oríkì* in Yorùbá culture. *Oríkì* affirm the identity of everything in existence. Thus, *oríkì* extend beyond our traditional categories of two and three-dimensional arts and color. They include architectural space, dress, music, dance, the performed word, mime, ritual, food, and smell, engaging virtually all the senses." Abiọdun, *Yorùbá Art and Language: Seeking the African in African Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 5.

62 Karin Barber, *I Could Speak until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women, and the Past in a Yoruba Town* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 1.

63 In this regard, the myths of *orí* bear many similarities to the ancient Greek *daimon* and the Roman/Latin *genius*; see Oludamini Ogunnaike, "Myth and the Secret of Destiny: Mircea Eliade's Creative Hermeneutics and the Yorùbá Concept of Orí," *Journal of Comparative Theology* 3, no. 1 (2012): 4–42.

64 Ogunnaike, *Deep Knowledge: Ways of Knowing in Sufism and Ifa, Two West African Intellectual Traditions* (College Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2020), 360.

65 Rowland Abiodun, *Yoruba Art and Language: Seeking the African in African Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 26–31.

66 Aimé Césaire, "Poetry and Knowledge," trans. A. James Arnold, *Sulfur* 5 (1982): 24–25.

67 Matsuo Basho, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*, trans. Nobuyuki Yuasa (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), 33.

68 Wallace Stevens, "The Snow Man," in *Poetry Magazine* (1921), https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45235/the-snow-man-56d224a6d4e90.