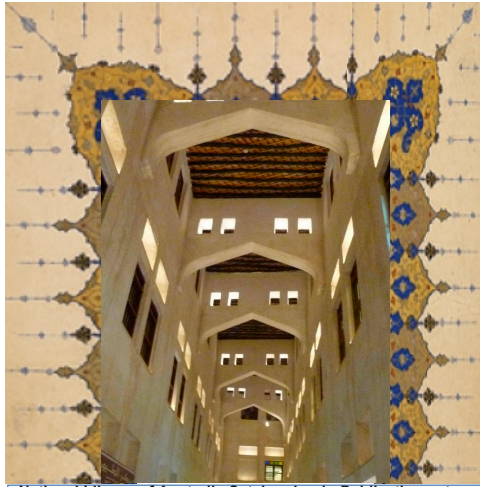


Proverbs 1: 21 She crieth in the chief place of
concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city
she uttereth her words, saying, 22 How long, ye
simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the
scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate
knowledge? 23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I
will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make
known my words unto you. 3: 7 Be not wise in
thine own eyes. 8 It shall be health to thy navel,
and marrow to thy bones. 4: 5 Get wisdom, get
understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the
words of my mouth. 6 Forsake her not, and she
shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.
7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get
wisdom, and with thy money get understanding. 8
Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring
thee to honour, when she shall embrace her. 9 She
shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a
crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. 9: 9 Give
instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser:
teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.
10 Respect for integration is the beginning of
wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is
understanding. 15: 17 Better is a dinner of herbs
where love is, than a banquet of hatred therewith.
16: 16 How much better is it to get wisdom than
gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen
than silver! 18: 1 Through desire a man, having
separated himself, seeketh and intermeddeth with all
wisdom. 19: 8 He that getteth wisdom loveth his own
soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.
22: 17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of
the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.
23: 9 Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will
despise the wisdom of thy words.

Song of Songs
of Solomon

a poetic interpretation



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Proverbs. 4. 5 Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth, 6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. 7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. 8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. 9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.




FOREWORD

The Song of Songs [of Solomon] (שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים *Šir haŠirīm*, Ἄσμα Ἄσματων *Aisma Aismatōn*, *Canticum Canticōrum*) is a poetic courtship that moves from enchantment to consummation. Devoid of religiosity, it has traditionally been understood as metaphor for the relationship of the soul with the Divine – of God with Israel – of Christ with the Church – of Christ with the human soul – or humanistically, as a metaphor for psychological integrity.

In his 12th century sermon, 'On the Title of the Book: The Song of Songs', St. Bernard of Clairvaux's meditative reading followed the book of Ecclesiastes, which teaches 'how to ... have done with the false promise of this world', and the book of Proverbs that enlightens 'your life and your conduct'. He called these two preliminary books antidotes to the two enemies of the soul – 'misguided love of the world and an excessive love of self', and he observed that only 'the mind disciplined by persevering study' is made 'ripe ... for nuptial union with the divine partner'. His spiritual marriage between the heavenly Bridegroom and the human bride occurs when the two become one, and that one is the same as God in the mystical world accessed through meditative reading, *Lectio Divina*.

The Song of Songs has inspired more art than we can ever know, in music from Bach's 'Sleepers Wake' to Purcell's 'My Beloved Spake', and in literature from



Chaucer's 'The Canterbury Tales' to Goethe's 'Faust'. The Song of Songs is also the favourite book of the title character in one of my favourite books, that of Nobel Laureate Sinclair Lewis – 'Elmer Gantry'.

To me the Song of Songs unites the mystical traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, dispensing with trivial dogmatic and cultural differences in such beautiful metaphor that it is no surprise to find such imagery in these and all other religions, albeit often neglected or even denigrated by institutional religious bodies to 'protect' the ignorant.

Long noticed similarities of the Song of Songs with other Ancient Middle Eastern love poetry from Sumeria through Egypt, and beyond into Persia, continues today into modern Tamil literature. A recent exhibition of 13th century Persian and related manuscripts from the State Library of Victoria and the Bodleian Library in Oxford spurred me to render the similar but much more ancient Song of Songs into a rhyming poetic form. And as had Bernard, I first studied Ecclesiastes – rendering it into Buddhist thought through rhyming verse that was published as 'Pranja Anthology'. Consideration of the book of Proverbs concentrating on versus related to wisdom as in the background of the cover of this book then led to this poetic interpretation of the Song of Songs.

LF

Reborn & Doh, 2012





Song of Solomon

A wise man once set down in song,
beauty that in nature rests,
for which all hearts forever long
like dreams deep in maidens' breasts :

THE YOUNG WOMAN:

*"My man, your kiss is my mantle
your musk clothes me with alarm,
allows my guard be more gentle.
Oh, who could resist such charm!*

*Oh, let's elope to foreign parts,
and reveal to me your realm;
there let us practice lovers' arts
for we'll both be overwhelmed.*

*Yes, no one could resist such charm!
Sisters of our sober town,
You see my skin so sunned from farm,
its like a richly gilded gown –*

*a noble robe gifting my hue.
Though born beyond your boudoir,
underneath I'm the same as you.
Why look down on my colour,*

*which sun with radiant health imbued
when I with siblings laboured,
growing grapes and farming food?
That life makes me feel favoured!*

*Tell me, my love, where you will lay
for its with you I belong
so that I need not seek all day
among flocking common throng."*





THE YOUNG MAN:

He replied: *"Where I go you know,
our love will lead my queen's feet,
to where paradise overflows –
in plenty we'll be replete.*

*For you my mistress are to men
as mare to noble stallion,
hair bejewels your neck as a mane,
bridled by golden garland."*

THE YOUNG WOMAN:

And thus sparked, the lady replied:
*"From scent you sense my presence
and at the couch where you recline
it moulds your manly essence.*

*Nesting all night my breasts between
like bunchéd blooms of henna
'midst verdant vines kissed by sea's sheen
you're more to me than all men are."*



THE YOUNG MAN:

And he sighed responding inspired:

*"Your soft eyes sparkle with love,
of their beauty I scarce grow tired –
soulful, serene like a dove's."*

THE YOUNG WOMAN:

Swooning as she sang in return:

*"Your form inflames my desire,
your beautiful body I yearn –
my heart with passion's afire."*

*Oh, let's lie in stately meadows
'twix soaring stems of cedar
and hold as to never let go
'neath a roof of rugged fir.*

*I'll be flowers of the forest
open to you like a rose,
bashfully bowing to our nest;
as valley lily I'd pose."*


THE YOUNG MAN:

*"Ah my one love", he then whispers:
"You're my beauty 'midst a briar;
no wonder among the sisters,
you joy and envy inspire."*



THE YOUNG WOMAN:

Thus bewitched, she blessed her lover:
*"My fruit tree in a forest
sweet and safer than a brother,
your succour and shade bode rest."*



*As I feast upon your banquet
whence I fly on gods' banner,
revived by raisins and loquats,
passion loosens my manner.*

*With your left hand embrace my bodice,
let your right caress my wrist.
Oh my sisters in peace please promise,
to never disrupt our tryst.*

*My lover's lively voice I hear
praising me 'cross vales and peaks,
hastening o'er hills to me be near,
a gazelle that grazing seeks.*

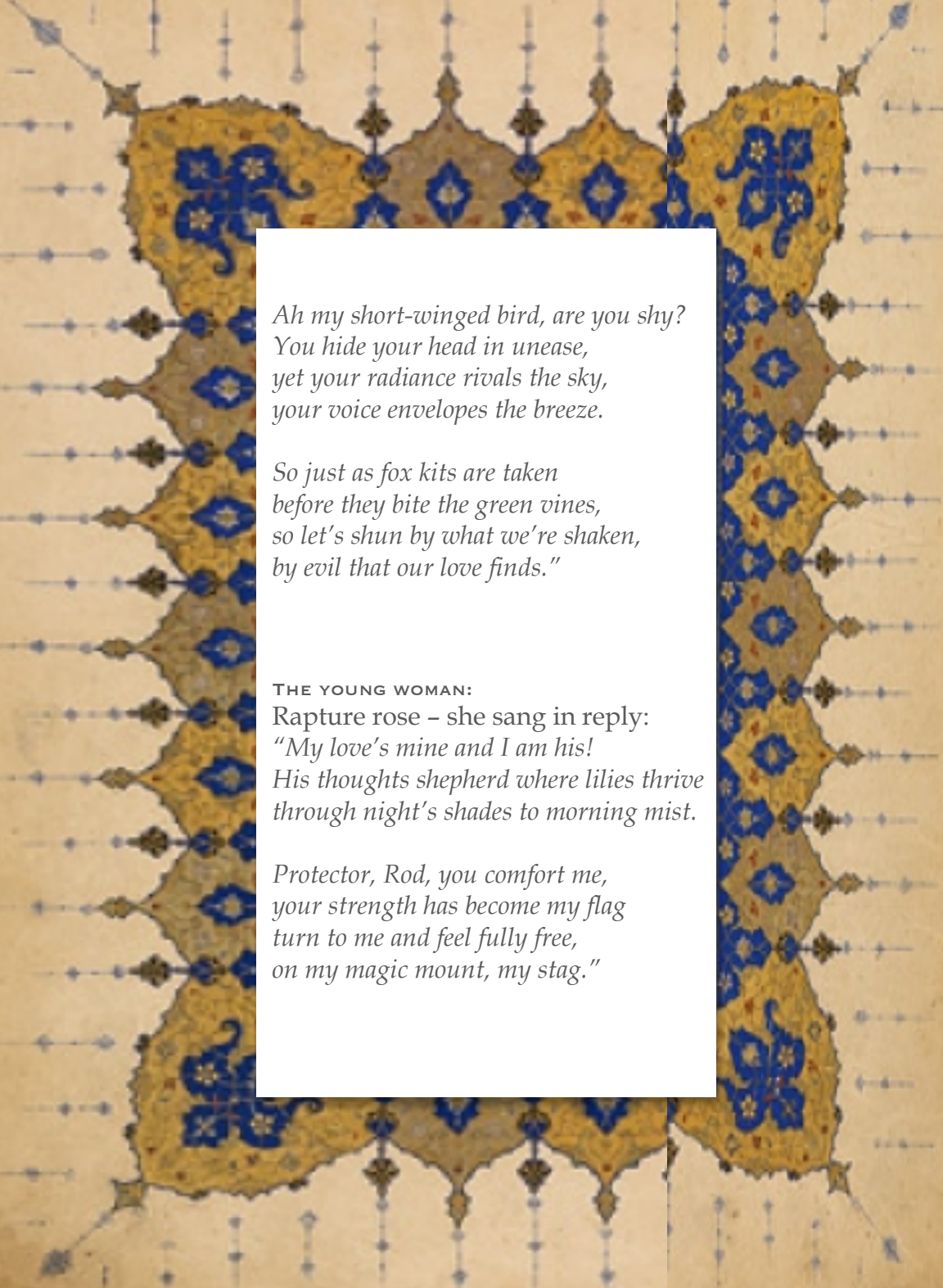
*Yes, a young stag's my steadfast man,
a deer who's near my window
watching to glimpse me if he can,
and then whispers soft and low."*



THE YOUNG MAN:

And sotto voce he slowly sighs:
*“Come flee with me mon amour,
our winter’s ceased, the sun is high
and lights the blooms of the moor.*

*Lovebirds’ lyrics fill the meadow,
Spilling o’er with nature’s spoor
as figs fill, grapes glisten and glow –
come flee with me mon amour!*



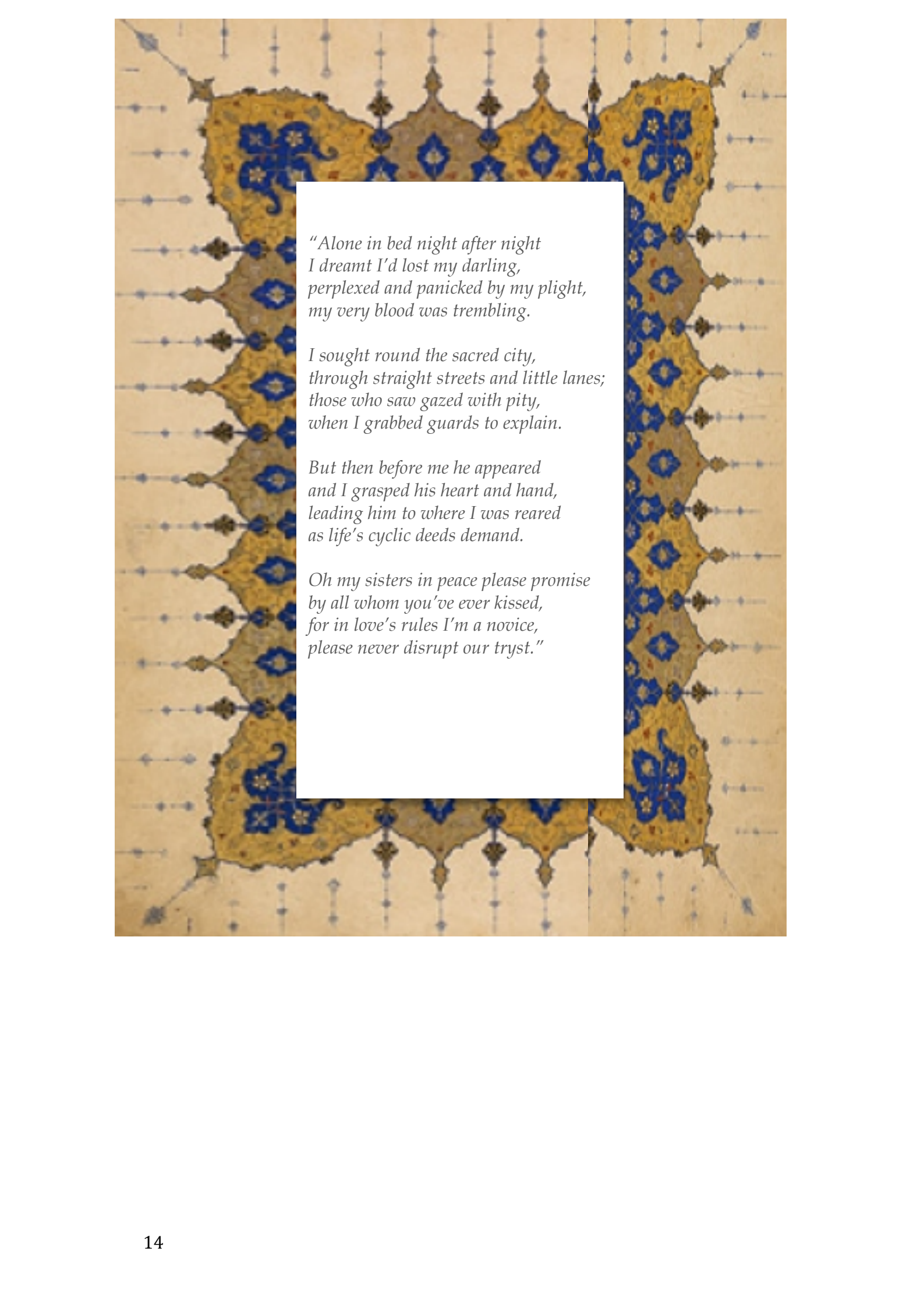
*Ah my short-winged bird, are you shy?
You hide your head in unease,
yet your radiance rivals the sky,
your voice envelopes the breeze.*

*So just as fox kits are taken
before they bite the green vines,
so let's shun by what we're shaken,
by evil that our love finds."*

THE YOUNG WOMAN:

Rapture rose – she sang in reply:
*"My love's mine and I am his!
His thoughts shepherd where lilies thrive
through night's shades to morning mist.*

*Protector, Rod, you comfort me,
your strength has become my flag
turn to me and feel fully free,
on my magic mount, my stag."*



*"Alone in bed night after night
I dreamt I'd lost my darling,
perplexed and panicked by my plight,
my very blood was trembling.*

*I sought round the sacred city,
through straight streets and little lanes;
those who saw gazed with pity,
when I grabbed guards to explain.*

*But then before me he appeared
and I grasped his heart and hand,
leading him to where I was reared
as life's cyclic deeds demand.*

*Oh my sisters in peace please promise
by all whom you've ever kissed,
for in love's rules I'm a novice,
please never disrupt our tryst."*



Still in her dream she softly spoke:
*"Look! what's on the horizon
raising dust into swirls like smoke?
He's striding to this maiden!*

*My glimpse foreshadows his fragrance
and overpowers my sight,
for my prince's rising potency
is blessed by goodness and might.*

*His throne is built of smooth cedar
with pillows purple and gold,
its supports encased in silver.
Come sisters see love extolled."*



THE YOUNG MAN:

Her reverie had prince reply:

*"Love, your veil makes transparent,
your hijab bejewels kid's eyes,
gamboling round their parents.*

*Pure as pearls are your perfect teeth,
white as washed sheep from shearing,
boldly displaying health beneath
lips so sensually searing.*

*Cheeks that call forth ripe grenadine
on that slender towering poem
your neck, a graceful swanlike scene
described by grand dancing gems.*

*Gems that guard those gemini fawns,
your breasts, browsing 'midst wildflowers,
I'll linger on that mound of myrrh
for its incense me empowers.*

*Perfect is my true love's beauty!
Let's hasten to heaven's heights
united in dharmic duty
for your soft eyes so excite.*

*Ah! Fair necklace that strokes your throat
disarms me so I demure
for as prime wine does lust promote,
it strengthens your scent's allure.*

*Honey drips from your nectared lips,
your tongue's tanged by fresh-gained milk
the cedar's scent seeps from your hips,
a garden guarded by silk.*



*That arbour hides a spritzed spring
to be dehisced to life's dance,
a grenadine patch offering
ripe fruits filled rich with fragrance.*

*Such bounty foretells fullfillment
from wells watering bushes,
awaking all that lay dormant
washing through hills in gushes."*



THE YOUNG WOMAN:

Gasping as a thrill passed through her
*"Rude winds my prudence refute
and waft my spices all over
willing you to pluck my fruit."*

THE YOUNG MAN:

*"My bride", he replied "from my cup
I savour your must and milk
and on your sweet syrup I sup."*
Thus they both imbibed till drunk.

She slept and in that world she saw,
damp from dew and moist from mist,
her man, drawn to her door implore:
"open, my dove for my kiss".



THE YOUNG WOMAN:

*"But I am bathed and for bed dressed.
I'll rise?" She asked heart burning.
To her portal his firm palm pressed,
his nearness fostered yearning.*

*"I prepared to let him inside,
my body bathed in balsam,
loosed the hasp, cast caution aside –
my lover I would welcome.*

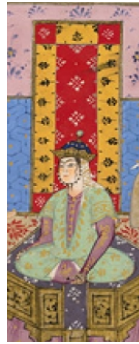
*But next, my desire was dampened,
as if he was never there;
he had knocked and I had opened,
sad I search but know not where.*

*Now crazed I hastened to the night
where rude guards patrol the dark;
who proceeded to punish my plight,
they tear my headscarf apart.*

*Oh my sisters in peace please promise,
should you behold my beloved,
you'll tell him I flower like a lotus
yet am by passion made pallid."*

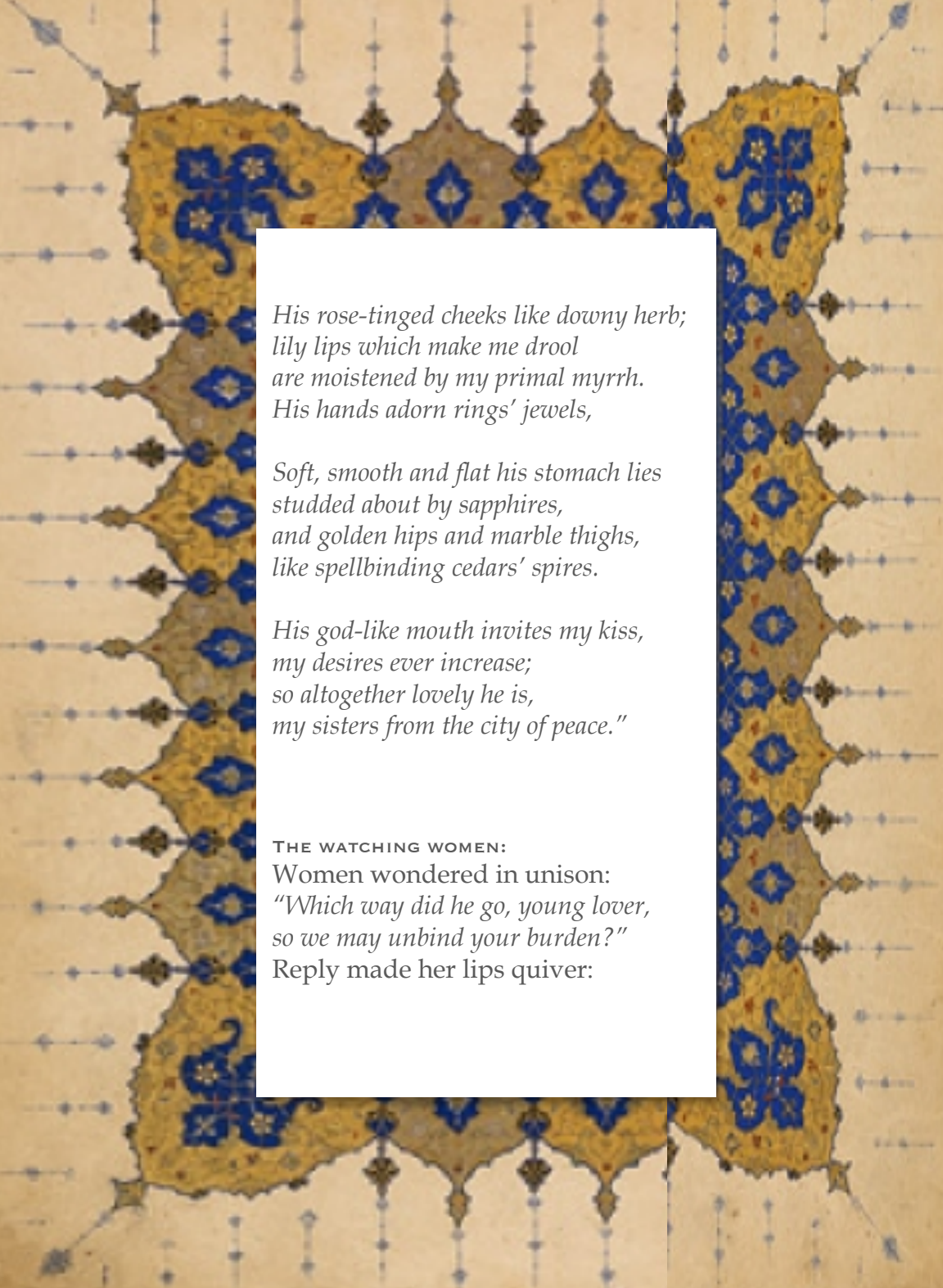
THE WATCHING WOMEN:

Of women I dreamt in chorus:
*“Young girl, why should this lover
provoke us to such a promise –
does he differ from others?”*



THE YOUNG WOMAN:

She sang: *“Oh who with him compares!
My man’s one in a million,
bronzed and bare, slight wave in his hair,
eyes where doves rest in union.*



*His rose-tinged cheeks like downy herb;
lily lips which make me drool
are moistened by my primal myrrh.
His hands adorn rings' jewels,*

*Soft, smooth and flat his stomach lies
studded about by sapphires,
and golden hips and marble thighs,
like spellbinding cedars' spires.*

*His god-like mouth invites my kiss,
my desires ever increase;
so altogether lovely he is,
my sisters from the city of peace."*

THE WATCHING WOMEN:

Women wondered in unison:
"Which way did he go, young lover,
so we may unbind your burden?"
Reply made her lips quiver:



THE YOUNG WOMAN:

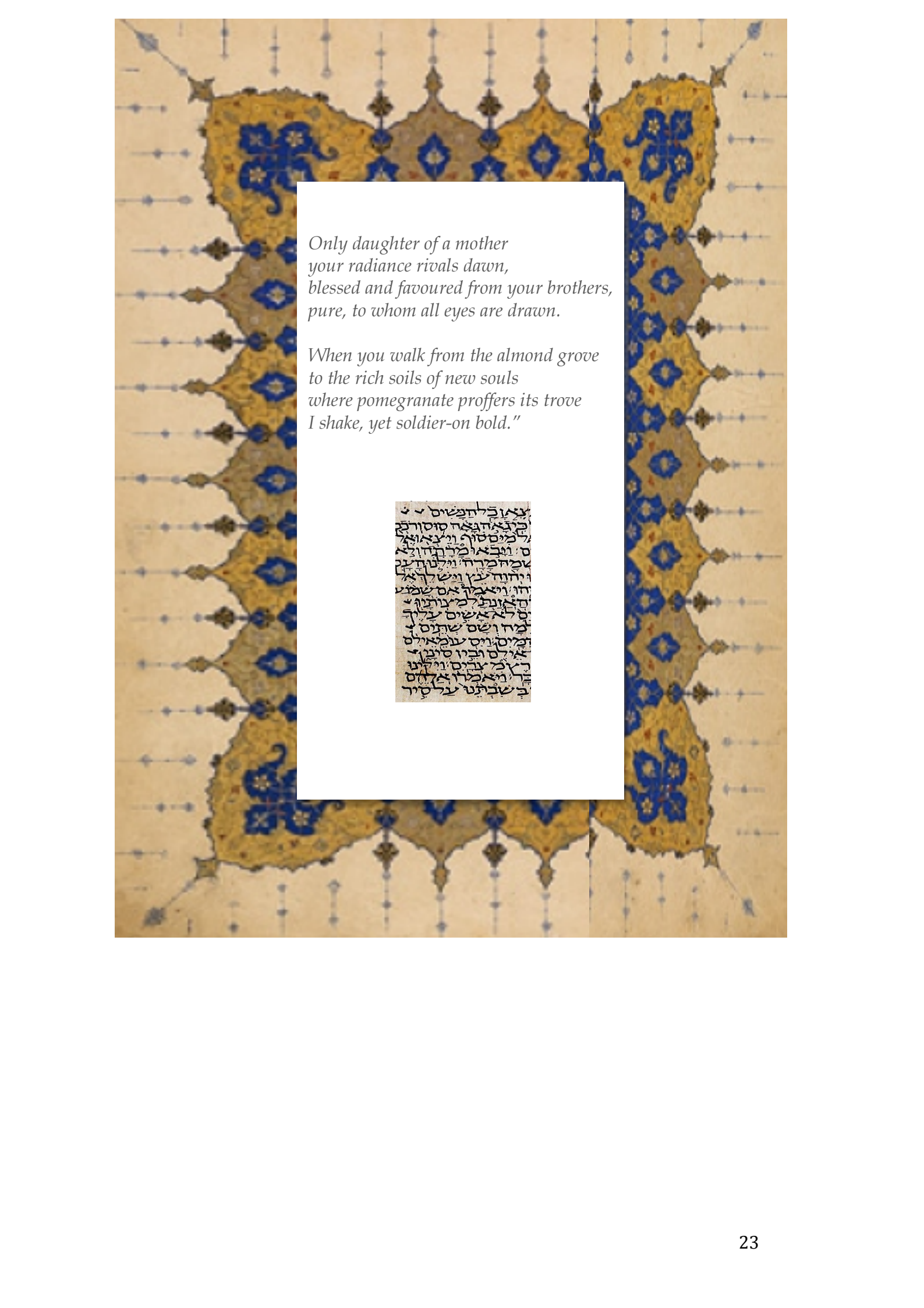
*"He dallies down in the garden,
in beds of balsamed parsleys,
where he and I are always one –
I'm his, he's mine 'midst lilies."*

THE YOUNG MAN:

Across the vale his voice did praise:
*"As deserts' art enraptures,
thus your grace firm fixes my gaze,
and I'm completely captured.*

*Your hair is like young playful goats
on fertile hills of legend,
and your teeth like lambs shorn of coats,
perfect twins full and fecund.*

*Your beauty your veil thrusts through!
Kings have crowds of concubines,
with a wealth of women to woo,
yet there's more in my dove enshrined.*



*Only daughter of a mother
your radiance rivals dawn,
blessed and favoured from your brothers,
pure, to whom all eyes are drawn.*

*When you walk from the almond grove
to the rich soils of new souls
where pomegranate proffers its trove
I shake, yet soldier-on bold."*





THE WATCHING WOMEN,
THEN THE YOUNG WOMAN:

In refrain the women replied:
"Come and dance for our delight."
She shrieked: *"Why, so eyes can deride
and glare like gangs fixed to fight?"*

THE YOUNG MAN:
Which won more her hero's homage:
*"Oh, my love I can't resist
from feet to your perfect carriage,
and thighs made by an artist.*

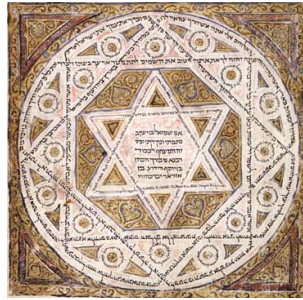
*That blessed bowl of ambrosia,
your navel nests in poured wheat
girt by a garland of fuchsia,
where twin fawns rest fully replete.*

*Your ivory neck towers tall,
your eyes evoke Jordan's deep,
your guardian nose graces all
like a watchman of the keep.*

*Like sacred mount your head's held high
mantled mauve by filtered light;
so comely no king dare deny
that all in you take delight.*

*Fairer than queens are you my sweet,
slender and straight like date palms;
you infuse my being with heat
when date clusters press their charms.*

*Fondling those fruits I dare to taste
refreshing bunches of grapes
with aromas of orange laced
as sweet wine your breath escapes."*





THE YOUNG WOMAN:

Enraptured, his refrain she reprised:


*"My wine flows free to your lips
to lubricate our lullabies,
for I'm yours, thus my heart skips.*

*Come, let's flee to village and farm,
rise refreshed with dawn's rosebuds
opening ripe with childlike charm
blessing pomegranate's blood.*

*Where magic musk wafts from mandrake
'midst treasured fare doused in dew;
my fruits I've kept fresh for our sake
a cache of gifts old and new."*

*"Oh, why we were not born siblings
who suckled the self-same breasts,
I could kiss you without quibbling,
when we meet in public fests.*

*Then would I take my mother's bed
where seduced, I'd nought to hide,
as your left hand cradles my head
with your right caress my side.*



*Oh my sisters in peace please promise
to never disrupt our tryst."
At which the town's women chorused
"Look, she glows as if first kissed!"*

THE YOUNG WOMAN:

The enchanted girl staunchly sang:
*"My love I've roused you to life!
reborn – this time purged of all pangs,
inspired by your virgin wife.*

*Seal your heart, look on no hussy,
none other but me desire,
for death's the price of jealousy,
from passion that flares like fire.*

*A wildfire no water could quench,
no flood of remorse could quell;
repaid but by ashen contempt
who thought my virtue I'd sell."*

THE WOMAN'S BROTHERS:

Her brooding brothers then cried out:
"Our sister's breasts are yet small,
we can't let her out and about
when a young man comes to call.

*For our precious bird in ardour,
we'll build a cage argentine,
wrap her virtue like fine cedar
by silver plate kept pristine."*



THE YOUNG WOMAN:

Bold beside her lover she states:

*"A wall am I, my breasts towers,
I know peace and can see my fate
can only be love like ours."*



THE YOUNG WOMAN AND MAN:

Lovers then in unison sing:

*"In vineyards on the best soils,
with waters sweet and cooling
is where tireless workers toil.*

*Their rate of return is riches,
there's plenty, all may partake;
but our harvest's shared just by us –
Our Eden we'll ne'er forsake."*

THE YOUNG WOMAN:
And she sang her final song's round:
*"Come quickly dear, my young hart,
for mounted on my spiced mound,
you are my body and heart."*



primum in quantum diligunt ip-
sum: inimicam autem tanquam
foris tan aliquando dilecturum,
pono parentes carnis sue gamma-
nus propter naturam: spiritualis uero
eruditores suos propter spiritum
atque in hunc modum ad cetera quo-
da ordinata intendat amore, des-
picent caritatem, suscipient celum,
utant bono modo tanquam in si uentis
aut uti uentura & fruenda in uino
quodam mentis sapore discernes
ut in ista uita uisitare, & ad id dum
taxat quod opus est pro opus est curat
cetera desideria amplectitur aermo-
talem in qua da mudi bonum me
ego auda ad illum sapientiam pnu-
tio, & cum munitum queque res reia
sapienter pro sunt: & in uentate
atque seruitate copeto gloriam &
desere, & ordinatur in me carna-
tem, Sed ubi ille & quidam ista: Quis
fient dico, quo usque odorum & non
gustamus, prospicientes pernam, &
de longe salutaris. Quoniam cau-
lam pica, calu sunt uideo te: sed
in uare si finis, carne reuenit, si
nec dignus admitti: peccatis se
dens, O sapientia que attingit a fi-
ne usque ad finem forat: in in-
tuendit & commendit rebus, & dis-
ponit omnia suauiter, in beatitudo
& ordinandis affectibus: dirigat
tuis nris per tua temporalis ne-
cessitas postea, & disponit affect-

nris per tua uentate eterna requirit
ut postea unguis: nris secute in
te gloriam & dicere, quod ordinata in
me caritatem. Quis es de uentis &
de sapientia, propter spiritus ecclesie dicit
ut: de benedictus in secula amen.

Ulcere in prosermo
me flo. *In quinquagesima.*
nris stupere me ma-
lis: quod amore lan-
guet. Creuit amo-
re in centum amo-
ris plura solito peccata. Vides si
quidem quia hoc uice non uident
di carnis: si & colloquendi copia fu-
it. Illa quoque uisio apparet uita
in dubia sermone, & sermo uocum-
dico, & sermone uero longior atque
pura etiam. Hec solum oblectata col-
loquio: si & gloria precorior est. Ad
hec aut quoniam desiderat ueritatem est
fibra, alba fructus: potana calice,
per se, subunda pirata est: cetera de
cella humana in qua se iudicium in noui-
tate gaudet. Immo uero subunda:
quoniam qui bibo me inquit, ad huc
sicut: post ista omnia sponso mo-
re suo secedente: illa languere
amore se prohibet, ut per amore. Quod
cum gunt uen fuerat ex parte pre-
sentiam: eo postmodum abstinentia
molestiam sentit. Sub tractatione
per quam amat augmentatio
desiderii est: & quod ardentius
desiderat, carnis ignis. Rogat pro-