

59.

The night unloads in lilacs, the rush  
of fragrance loosed by a thin Sufi  
sliced moon comes and goes quickly —  
what lingers like the figured bass  
of a lavish contrapuntal score  
and more is the open sensuality  
pouring from newly dampened earth  
coupled with the taste of green.

The dark wet days of grey  
and mist that follow deliver  
azaleas in scarlet masses, two  
exotic weeks in May, mauve  
and pink, red and fuchsia are  
newly made colors expounded like  
doctrine heard for the first time —  
and up above the dazzling dogwood

Spreads out flat pink flowers  
or white, overhung and interlaced  
with wisteria unleashing its own  
bluish mauve perfume in the wind.  
My God, what is this, what is  
this declaration, this promise leaping  
fully grown from nothing, a lunar  
landscape where nothing lived

And nothing died, what Allah  
is this, what reckoning where nothing  
was rings Your resplendent praise  
from the heart of every flower,  
what reckoning where new life breeds  
so hot upon the death of the old we  
smell roses before they flower and see  
birds fall before the egg is laid?

And I found myself  
 mountain path again, the  
 myself so large, a medieval  
 or mode made for someone  
 the mountains beyond Salt  
 the green and ochred pre-  
 or curving peaks for  
 ah now, the only cave

how unwilling is desire  
 against a clear and neutral  
 we are disavowed even  
 brothers, your children,  
 lies were your prison that  
 lies make the bars for my  
 cares except God Himself  
 truth, your trust, all, all

summer of pain which  
 gether, here where I still  
 pinnacles mind can sacrifice  
 yield to mind yet each  
 the only cave for us now  
 where true lovers meet  
 sandals of ascent are  
 blown away, here in the Hira'

climbing that stony  
 mountain so small  
 mood, an architecture  
 with no sandals, then  
 where we used to search  
 views of carved  
 caves, but now beloved  
 is the cave of the heart;

to relinquish desire  
 sky. You and I beloved  
 disallowed by everyone, your  
 your friends, no one cares that  
 lies were your death that  
 life in death, no one  
 that I accept you and your  
 of it, even the humming

blew you off the mountain alto-  
 cing to craggy heights, those  
 to desire and desire can  
 will perish alone; ah love,  
 is the cave of the heart  
 and merge, where the slipping  
 safely set aside and the body  
 of *akhira* we will merge.

61.

A soft rain ends  
                  with the night, a syncopation  
Of silence until  
                  a few predawn birds begin  
To chant the offbeat,  
                  then the scent of sandal-  
Wood underwrites  
                  the silence of roses, the trans-  
Action between  
                  waking and sleeping or the  
Transition between  
                  dreaming and dying, you give  
Some and you lose  
                  some without anything actually  
Taken away. After  
                  sunrise the mockingbird has  
Its brief say  
                  and a column of white angels,  
One above the  
                  other, rises up from within.

## 62.

This night the moon was in eclipse, behind the clouds sometimes and sometimes not, for several hours slowly disappearing with a cool breeze that seemed to blow it away then reappearing from a terraced bank, the radiant cloudy clusters twitching in nervous attendance upon that reemerging majesty, impervious but diminished with distance for time will have its say irreversible once it has begun; then slowly slowly morning came on the subtle scent of honeysuckle and a few white moons of waxy magnolias like plates, their fruity sweetness almost eclipsing the memory of jasmine and other distant mornings in Amman where we woke sometimes to the baking sibyllance of a desert breeze and sometimes to the stony stillness of the desert hills, my God, my God, how many lifetimes in eclipse for such a little breath of time; now that I am weak and feel so frail will the effort of even forty lifetimes bring me to Your perfection? My God what shall I do, my God what shall I do?