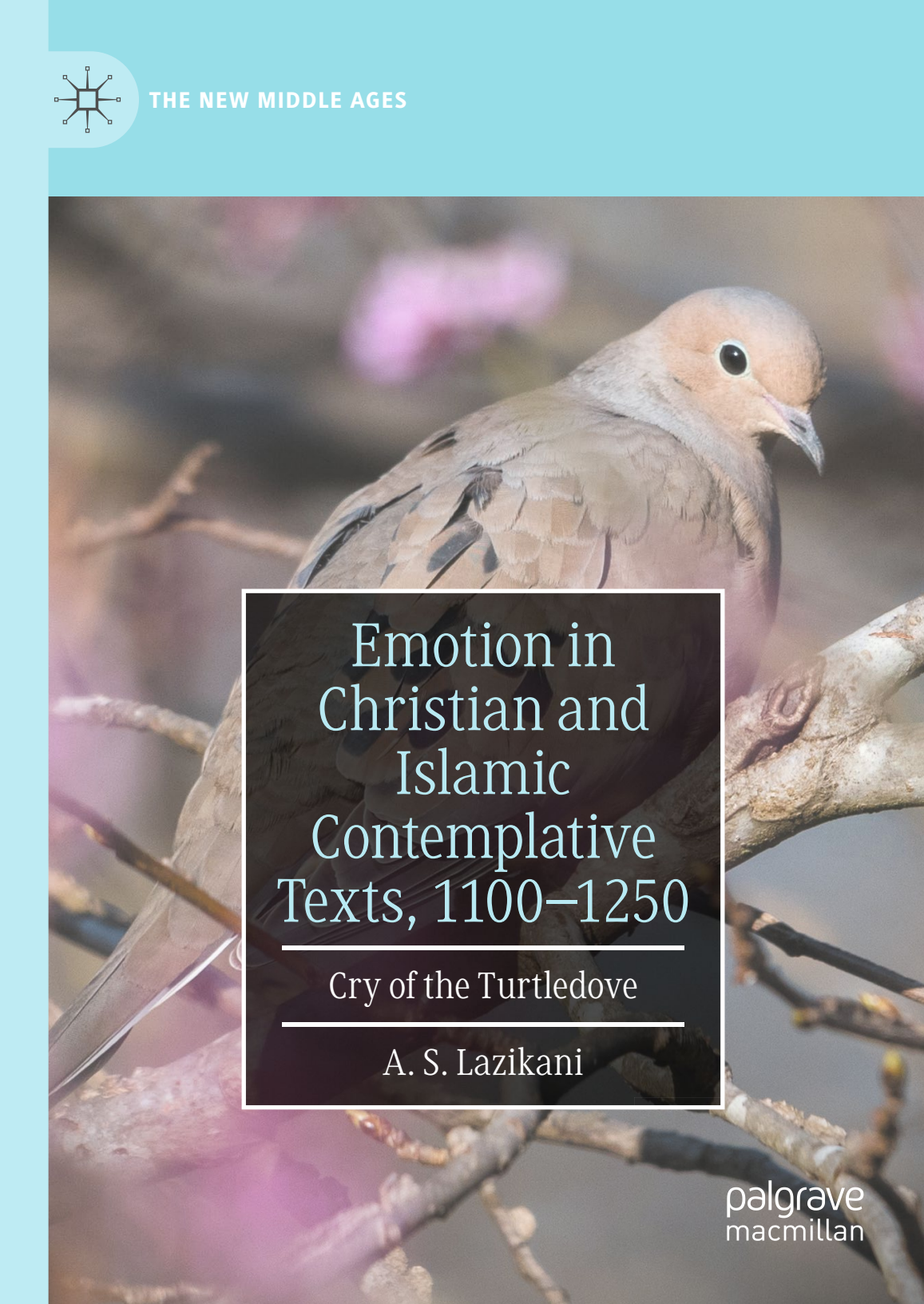
THE NEW MIDDLE AGES
Emotion in Christian and Islamic Contemplative Texts, 1100–1250
Cry of the Turtledove
A. S. Lazikani
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Note on Transliteration, Translation, and Quotation

Transliteration of Arabic

There are a number of methodological difficulties posed by transliteration or romanization of Arabic material. Whilst there are some extended passages of transliteration, I have limited such material, especially given that a significant part of the audience for this book may not be familiar with the Arabic language. Instead of extensive transliteration, I have romanized individual words or phrases, both within the text and at the end of this book, in the 'Glossary of Key Arabic Terms'. I have employed standard practice in the transliteration of Arabic quotations.[1]

My transliteration of Shushtarī's poetry is based on the following edition and the following transliteration; references are to page numbers:

ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār, ed., *Dīwān Abī al-Ḥasan Shushtarī: shāʿir al-ṣūfīyah al-kabīr fī al-Andalus wa-al-Maghrib / ḥaqqaqah wa- ʿallaqa ʿalahy* (Alexandria: Mansha'at al-Maʿārif, 1960).

F. Corriente, ed., *Poesía Estrófica (Cejeles Y/O Muwassahāt) Atribuida Al Místico Granadino As-Sustarī (Siglo XIII. d. C.*, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Instituto de Filologia, Departamento De Estudios Arabes, 1988).

[1] See further Leonard Lewisohn, ed., 'System of Transliteration', in *Classical Persian Sufism: From Its Origins to Rūmī* (London: Khaniqah Nimatullahi, 1993), p. xi; and the *IJME*'s Transliteration Chart, online <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-file-manager/file/57d83390f6ea5a022234b400/TransChart.pdf> [accessed 30th December 2020].

My transliteration of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry is based on the following edition, used alongside the following published transliteration; references are to line numbers:

ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mahmūd, ed., *Dīwān Ibn al-Fāriḍ: taḥqīq wa-dirāsah naqdīyah* (al-Haram [Jīzah]: ʻAyn lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-Insānīyah wa-al-Ijtimāʿīyah, 1995).

J. Arberry, ed., *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Edited in Transcription from the Oldest Extant Manuscript in the Chester Beatty Collection* (London: Emery Walker, 1952), Chester Beatty Monographs 5.

My transliteration of Ibn ʿArabī's *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* is based on *The Tarjumān al-ashwāq: A Collection of Mystical Odes,* ed. R. A. Nicholson (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911). References to the *Tarjumān* are to poem and line number.

I have made silently some small alterations to the published transliterations by Corriente and Arberry in order to maintain consistency throughout.

Translation of Arabic

Most translations of the central Arabic texts (particularly of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Shushtarī) are my own, although I have also drawn on authoritative published translations, as will be specified. These sources include:

For Ibn ʿArabī: R. A. Nicholson, ed. and trans., *The Tarjumān al-ashwāq: A Collection of Mystical Odes* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911), which is available in the public domain; and R. W. J. Austin, trans., *The Bezels of Wisdom* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980).

For Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Th. Emil Homerin, trans., *ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life* (Mahwah, NJ: 2001); and A. J. Arberry, trans., *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ* (Dublin: E. Walker, 1956), Chester Beatty Monographs 6.

For Shushtarī: Lourdes María Alvarez, trans., *Abū al-Ḥasan Shushtarī: Songs of Love and Devotion* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009).[2]

[2] When possible, I have referred to Shushtarī's poems with their titles in Alvarez's work, so that non-Arabic specialists can find these texts in her accessible translation.

Due to its wide availability to readers, I have also at times consulted and quoted from Martin Lings, ed. and trans., *Sufi Poems: A Mediaeval* [sic] *Anthology* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2004), as specified at various points in this book.

Quotation and Translation of Early English

Quotations from *Ancrene Wisse*, the *Wooing Group*, and Thomas of Hales' *Love Rune* are taken from the following editions respectively:

Ancrene Wisse, ed. Bella Millett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005–2006), 2 Vols, Early English Text Society O.S. 325 and 326. References are to page and line number.

The Wooing of Our Lord and the Wooing Group Prayers, ed. and trans. Catherine Innes-Parker (Peterborough, Ontario, 2015). References are to page number.

Moral Love Songs and Laments, ed. Susanna Greer Fein (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998). References are to line number.

Translations of these and other texts in English are my own, unless otherwise specified.

Translations of Scripture

Due to considerations of space, quotations from scripture will be taken from authoritative translations, rather than the original Arabic or Latin Vulgate.

In the case of the Qur'an, quotations within the text body itself will be based on *The Qur'an*, trans. Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). However, for copyright reasons, my more extensive quotation in footnotes will be taken from a translation in the public domain: *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, trans. M. M. Pickthall (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1938). Pickthall's translation is generally accurate, but its language is archaic.[3] Readers are directed instead towards more recent scholarly translations like Haleem's.[4]

[3] On the strengths and the limitations of Pickthall's translation, see further A. R. Kidwai, 'Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's English Translation of the Quran [sic] (1930): An Assessment', in *Marmaduke Pickthall: Islam and the Modern World*, ed. Geoffrey P. Nash (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 231–248.

[4] For an overview of English-language translations of the Qur'an, see further Abdel Haleem, trans., *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. ix–xxxvi.

In the case of the Bible, quotations are from the Douay-Rheims translation of the Latin Vulgate (1580–1610). The biblical text itself is in the public domain, but it is also available in, for example, *The Holy Bible, Douay Version: Translated from the Latin Vulgate (Douay, A. D. 1609: Rheims, A.D. 1582)* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1956).[5]

[5] See also 'Douay-Rheims Bible' Online <www.drbo.org>.

Contents

Abbreviations

EETS:

The Early English Text Society (1864–)
O. S. Original Series (1864–)
E. S. Extra Series (1867–1920)
S. S. Supplementary Series (1970–)

IJMES:

International Journal of Middle East Studies
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970–)

LCL:

Loeb Classical Library
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989–)

MED:

Middle English Dictionary, ed. by Hans Kurath and S. M. Kuhn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1952–)
Online version (Michigan, 18 December 2001)
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>

OED:

Oxford English Dictionary (Online)
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010–)
<https://www.oed.com>

PL:

Patrologiae cursus completus: series Latina, ed. by J. P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Migne, 1844–55 and 1862–65)

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PART I

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Birds Beneath the Eaves: An Introduction

The Bird's Cry: Avian Emotion

We can ache from the cry of a turtledove. In the thirteenth-century collection of Arabic poems known as *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* (*The Interpreter of Desires*), the doves reside in the wisps of the *bān* and the fragrant branches of the *arāk*, and their song is of painful love.[1] A wanderer traverses this desert wilderness, and at the moment of hearing the turtledove's cry remembers their beloved:

> O *sarh* tree of the valley and O *bān* tree of the thicket, deliver to us of your perfume, by means of the zephyr,
> A musky odour which exhales its fragrance to us from the flowers of thy lowlands or the flowers of the hills.
> O *bān* tree of the valley, show us a branch or some twigs that can be compared with *her* tenderness!
> The zephyr's breeze tells of the time of youth spent at Hājir or Minā or Qubā,
> Or at the sand-hills and where the vale bends beside the guarded pasture or at La'la', where the gazelles come to browse.
> Do not wonder, do not wonder, do not wonder at an Arab passionately fond of the coy beauties,

[1] See further Glossary of Key Arabic Terms at the end of this book.

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59924-9_1

> Who, whenever a turtle-dove moans, is thrilled by the remembrance of his beloved and passes away.[2] (XXV: 14–20)

The *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* was in fact composed by an Islamic contemplative, a Sufi: the famous Muhyddin Ibn ʿArabī (1165–1240).[3] As he explains in his own commentary on the poems, the *qumri* (turtledove) here represents 'the soul of a gnostic [*ʿārif*]' whose 'sublime utterance excited in him [the speaker] a longing for God'.[4] Ibn ʿArabī's doves embody the soul's relentless desire for oneness with the Divine. Of course, many kinds of bird in the *Columbidae* family have acted as love-symbols across the centuries. More familiar to some readers may be the lover-doves in Dante Alighieri's (d. 1321) *Inferno*, or the mourning dove of Roberto Bellarmino's (1542–1621) *De Gemitu columbae*.[5] But as is clear from the quoted passage of *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, Dante's desiring, wilful birds—as Bellarmino's penitential creature—resonate with works far outside 'the West'. Another Arabic writer, ʿAlī Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm (994–1064), is best known for his treatise on the nature of love, *Al-Ṭawq al-ḥamāma* (*The Collar of the Dove* or *The Ring of the Dove*), a text which has striking

[2] *The Tarjumān al-ashwāq: Collection of Mystical Odes*, ed. and trans. R.A. Nicholson (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911); all subsequent references are to this edition and translation, to poem and line numbers respectively. Although very dated now, this is still the most comprehensive translation into English currently available. For a translation into French, see *L'interprète des désirs (Turjumān [*sic*] al-ashwāq*), trans. Maurice Gloton (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996). The specified locations in the quotation are all places associated with the Islamic holy lands, especially Mecca and Medina.

[3] For ease of reference for English-language readers, I give centuries in the Common Era rather than the Hijri system.

[4] XXV: comm. 4.

[5] 'Quali colombe dal disio chiamate | con l'ali alzate e ferme al dolce nido | vegnon per l'aere, dal voler portate; | cotali uscir de la schiera ov' è Dido, | a noi venendo per l'aere maligno, sì forte fu l'affettüoso grido.' ('Even as doves when summoned by desire, | borne forward by their will, move through the air, | with wings uplifted, still, to their sweet nest, | those spirits left the ranks where Dido suffers | approaching us through the malignant air; | so powerful had been my loving cry.') (*Inferno* 5: 82–87: 'Digital Dante', Columbia University, https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-5/ [accessed 23rd July 2020]). For discussion, see Elena Lombardi, *The Wings of the Dove: Love and Desire in Dante and Medieval Culture* (Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), especially pp. 3, 12, 18. For Roberto Bellarmino, see his *De Gemitu columbae* (Germany: apud. Cornel. ab Egmond, 1626). I am indebted to Professor Peter Davidson for sharing his knowledge of this text with me. For additional examples of the loving turtledove in European texts, see further note 166 in this chapter.

parallels with later *fin' amor* discourses.[6] Ibn Ḥazm has even been defined as the 'Andalusian counterpart' to Andreas Capellanus (1150–1220).[7] For both Andalusian writers, Ibn Ḥazm as for Ibn ʿArabī, doves encode the loving soul. Ibn ʿArabī's doves also perform the fraught potencies and failures of language when it comes to love; these birds pressurize words to the point of breakage.

Within the same decades as Ibn ʿArabī, an author in England—most probably on the border between Herefordshire and Shropshire—images the soul of a religious recluse as a dove.[8] The dove takes shelter in Christ's wounded body, based on Canticles 2: 14[9]:

> He him seolf cleopeð þe toward teose wunden. *Columba mea, in foraminibus petre, in cauernis macerie:* 'Mi culure,' he seið, 'cum hud te i mine limen þurles, i þe hole of mi side.' (111: 1639–1642)
>
> (He himself calls you towards these wounds. *My dove, in the cleft of the rock, in the hollows of the wall.* 'My dove', he says, 'come hide yourself in my body's openings, in the hole of my side.')

This follows the *Ancrene Wisse*-author's broader discussion of the recluses as birds. Anchorite-birds ascend, joyfully, to the sky:

> Treowe ancres beoð ariht briddes of heovene, þe fleoð on heh ant sitteð singinde murie o the grene bohes (þet is, þencheð uppart of þe blisse of heouene, þe neauer ne faleweð, ah is aa grene), ant sitteð o this grene singinde murie (þet is, resteð ham i þulli þoht, ant ase þeo þe singeð, habbeð murhðe of heorte). (53: 201–205)
>
> (True anchorites are rightly [termed] birds of heaven, who fly on high and sit singing happily on the green boughs—that is, they think upwards on

[6] The title of his treatise is usually translated as *The Ring of the Dove*, but it can be more accurately rendered *The Collar of the Dove*, or perhaps *The Necklace of the Dove*. The *Ṭawq* refers to the marking around the bird's neck—hence its translation into English 'ringdove'. For a full translation of the text, see *The Ring of the Dove*: *A Treatise on the Art and Practice of Arab Love*, trans. A. J. Arberry (London: Luzac & Company, 1953).

[7] María Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literature: A Forgotten Heritage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 110.

[8] On the localization of *Ancrene Wisse* and the 'AB Group' more broadly, see especially Millett, ed., *Ancrene Wisse* volume, II, x and xiii–xvi; and Richard Dance, 'The AB Language: the Recluse, the Gossip and the Language Historian', in *A Companion to Ancrene Wisse*, ed. Yoko Wada (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 57–82.

[9] 'My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall' (Canticles 2: 14).

> the bliss of Heaven, which never becomes barren but is always green—and sit on this greenery singing happily—that is, rest themselves in such a thought, and as those who sing, have happiness of heart.)

With a basis in Psalm 101: 7, the author of *Ancrene Wisse* images the anchorites specifically as night-birds sheltering beneath the eaves ('evesunges') of a church, in turn fortifying this sacred edifice ('halden hire [*her*] up', 56).[10]

For both authors, birds sing the languages of divine love—languages that transcend cultures whilst also being rooted in cultural codes. Across geo-cultural divides, contemplative birds embody the soul's sensitive shifts and the felt ways of approaching the Divine. Like the *Ancrene Wisse*-author, the later John of the Cross (1542–1591) employs Psalm 101: 7 to image the contemplative soul as a solitary sparrow.[11] Closer to the temporal framework of this book, John of Howden (fl. 1268/9–1275) has the nightingale sing contemplatively in *Rossignos* (*The Nightingale*), an Anglo-Norman reworking of his own Latin *Philomena*.[12] And the Sufi 'Aṭṭār of Nishapur (*c.* 1145–1220) is known for his Persian poem *Manṭiq-ut-ṭair* (*The Conference of the Birds* or *The Speech of the Birds*), an intricate narrative with many diegetic levels involving *hikāyāt* (exempla, stories).[13] In *The*

[10] Psalms 101: 7–8. ('I am become like to a pelican of the wilderness: I am like a night raven in the house. I have watched, and am become as a sparrow all alone on the housetop.') The image of the anchorites as birds of heaven is an elaboration of Psalm 101. The image of the singing birds on the evergreen branches ('aa grene', 'sitteth o this grene singinde murie') derives from Gregory the Great (*Homiliae in Euangelia*, Book I) and Augustine of Hippo (*Confessiones*, Book 9). See further Millett, trans., *Guide for Anchoresses*, p. 200 n. 3/40.

[11] 'The traits of the solitary bird are five: first, it seeks the highest place; second, it withstands no company; third, it holds its beak in the air; fourth, it has no definite colour; fifth, it sings sweetly. These traits must be possessed by the contemplative soul.' Quoted from Kieran Kavanaugh's translation of John of the Cross' 'Sayings of Light and Love', as provided in 'The Matheson Trust: For the Study of Comparative Religion', https://www.thematesontrust.org/library/solitary-bird [accessed 23rd July 2020].

[12] John of Howden, *Rossignos*, ed. Glynn Hesketh (London: Anglo-Norma Text Society, 2006): see, for example, p. 36 ll. 101–p. 37 l.144. For a discussion of this text, see Denis Renevey, '1215–1349: Texts', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, ed. Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 91–112. For a discussion of the nightingale as contemplative in this text, see also Daniel Reeve, 'Romance and the Literature of Religious Instruction, *c.* 1170-*c.* 1330' (unpublished dissertation, University of Oxford, 2014), p. 171.

[13] Its frame narrative has been compared with the work of Geoffrey Chaucer: see Maryam Khoshbakht, Moussa Ahmadian, and Shahrukh Hekmat, 'A Comparative Study of Chaucer's

Speech of the Birds, a host of birds are led by a hoopoe (*hodhod*) in a journey to seek the Simorgh, their legendary king[14]:

> There is for us a King indisputable,
> Behind a mountain that is the Mount of Qāf.
>
> His name is Sīmurgh, Sultan of Birds;
> He to us close but we from Him distant far.
>
> In the Sanctuary of Glory is His nest.
> Not within the compass of every tongue is His name.
>
> Hundreds of thousands of veils He has and more,
> Both of light and of darkness in front of Him.[15]

The birds are overcome with longing for the Simorgh; they undertake a devastating journey to reach this King of the Birds and are ultimately annihilated by his radiance (ll. 744–747, 4231–4232). *The Speech of the Birds* is, of course, an allegory of the soul's search to be united with the Divine.

The quest for love language, like the quest for bird language, can be exhausting and seemingly hopeless. But it is this bird-song that we attempt

The Canterbury Tales and ʿAṭṭār's *The Conference of the Birds*', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 2.1 (2013), 90–97.

[14] ʿAṭṭār's ultimate source is surah 27, 'An Naml' (The Ants): 'And Solomon was David's heir. And he said: O mankind! Lo! we have been taught the language of birds, and have been given (abundance) of all things. This surely is evident favour' (27: 16); 'Till, when they reached the Valley of the Ants, an ant exclaimed: O ants! Enter your dwellings lest Solomon and his armies crush you, unperceiving' (27: 18); 'But he [the hoopoe] was not long in coming, and he said: I have found out (a thing) that you apprehend not, and I come to you from Sheba with sure tidings' (27: 22). Parallel passages in the Bible include the Third Book of Kings 4: 29 and 32–34: 'And God gave to Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart as the sand that is on the sea shore. […] Solomon also spoke three thousand parables: and his poems were a thousand and five. And he treated about trees from the cedar that is in Libanus, unto the hyssop that cometh out of the wall: and he discoursed of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And they came from all nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who heard of his wisdom.'

[15] Farīd ud-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *The Speech of the Birds*, trans. Peter Avery, p. 67, ll. 711–714; all subsequent references are to this translation, incorporated in the body of the text. Another translation is available as *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis (London: Penguin Books, 2011). For the original Persian text, see Kadkani's critical edition: *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, ed. Muhammad Rida Shafi'i-Kadkani (Tehran: Sukhan, 2004).

to hear in this book. This monograph seeks to contribute to the growing interest in 'globalization' in medieval studies, as epitomized in, for example, María Rose Menocal's work on the Arabic heritage of European literary history and Sahar Amer's work on the love between women across Arabic and French texts.[16] I argue for the necessity of placing medieval English devotional texts in their broader, more global, context, and this study seeks to modify influential narratives on the 'history of emotions' to enable this more wide-ranging critical outlook. It examines 'feeling' and 'emotion' (particularly in the form of love, related closely to compassion) in contemplative Islamic and Christian texts written by and for those embracing the solitary/semi-solitary life. As yet, there has been no book-length study that assesses English and Arabic contemplative texts from the period *c.* 1100–1250 comparatively. Despite the scholarly shifts towards globalization, there has been no sustained work of this nature, and the present monograph aims to meet this need. Through this kind of comparative work, I hope that we can continue to critique and revise isolationist mindsets.

To capture such work in cross-cultural histories of emotion, I would like to suggest the term 'avian emotion'. Apart from alluding to the soul-as-bird image at the heart of these texts, this term also encapsulates the workings of such a comparative approach. In *Rossignos*, John of Howden likens the act of creative assimilation or compilation to the varied song of a nightingale: 'sicome li rossignos feit de diverses notes une melodie, auci feit cest livres de diverses matires une acoraunce' (as the nightingale makes a melody from diverse notes, so does this book make one agreement from diverse subjects).[17] I borrow this image to aid in our understanding of

[16] Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literature*: for an outline of the study's premises, see 'The Myth of Westernness in Medieval Literary Historiography', pp. 1–25; Sahar Amer, *Crossing Borders: Love Between Women in Medieval French and Arabic Literatures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013): for an outline of this study's premises, see 'Crossing Disciplinary Boundaries: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Same-Sex Love Between Women', pp. 1–28. See also Amer's earlier article: 'Medieval Arab Lesbians and Lesbian-Like Women', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18.2 (2009), 215–236.

[17] *Rossignos*, ed. Hasketh, p. 33. On compilation strategies in late medieval texts, see Diana Denissen, *Middle English Devotional Compilations: Composing Imaginative Variations in Late Medieval England* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019), especially pp. 1–20; and Marleen Cré, Diana Denissen, and Denis Renevey, 'Introduction', in *Late Medieval Devotional Compilations in England*, ed. Marleen Cré, Diana Denissen, and Denis Renevey (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2020), pp. 1–24.

comparative strategies, which seek to harmonize diverse traditions whilst not cancelling out one by the other. An avian perspective of emotion asks us to look across cultures as well as within them, migrating from one to the other with sensitivity. As a bird shifts across multiple regions, a comparative study seeks to become a kind of flight, a cyclical movement that is sensitive to the rhythms of the surrounding environment. It embraces similarity as well as difference; it moves from one to the other with the same flight, but with subtle modulations depending on the region it traverses.

Introducing the Texts

'Contemplative'

The Arabic and English texts studied in this book are collectively labelled with the shorthand term 'contemplative'. Whilst there are problems with referring to *Ancrene Wisse* and the *Wooing Group* (*c.* 1225) as 'contemplative', the terms 'devotional' and 'meditative' alone would also be insufficient. The term 'contemplative' will thus be employed for a variety of texts with a meditative function, in preference to the more nebulous term 'mystical'. The term 'mystical' is suffused with Christian connotations that makes its application to non-Christian texts difficult.[18] This is not to say that 'contemplative' does not have its own biases, but there is some precedent for addressing 'contemplative' texts across cultures.[19] The term 'mystical' has also been challenged for its lack of authority in medieval Christian texts.[20] Furthermore, the term 'contemplative' enables greater expansiveness and inclusivity than 'mystical', discriminating less against audience and practice.[21] In particular, it is important not to disassociate penitence and contemplation too starkly. Despite the long-standing

[18] See further Lloyd Ridgeon, 'Mysticism in Medieval Sufism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 125–149.

[19] See, for example, *Contemplative Literature: A Comparative Sourcebook on Meditation and Contemplative Prayer*, ed. Louis Komjathy (New York: State University of New York Press, 2015); for a discussion of terminology, see especially pp. 4–9.

[20] See further Vincent Gillespie and Samuel Fanous, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 294.

[21] See further Eleanor Johnson, *Staging Contemplation: Participatory Theology in Middle English Prose, Verse, and Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), especially p. 3.

tendency for scholarship to polarize 'mysticism' and 'asceticism', the two are inextricably connected.[22] The bird-anchorite of *Ancrene Wisse* flourishes in penitential terms. Their penitential labour is partly expressed in a long section on the 'birds of the air', an elaboration of Luke 9: 58 (52–53).[23] For Mary Agnes Edsall, the birds of *Ancrene Wisse* express an alternative contemplative practice, beyond Pseudo-Dionysian models. Edsall defines this as a contemplation which 'privileges a Passion-centred penitential asceticism focused on experiencing Christ'.[24] The author's contemplative insights are 'emblematized in the image of the cross-bearing anchoress as cruciform bird':[25]

> The anchoress is the contemplative eagle, perhaps not gazing into the sun, but engaged in a deeply inward quest for total attachment to the transformative and salvific person of Christ.[26]

Ancrene Wisse, and alongside it the group of meditations known as the *Wooing Group*, centre on penitential labour, but this does not cancel out an attendant emphasis on union with the Divine. Equally, as will be addressed particularly in Part III of this book, the emphasis on transcendent union with the Divine in the Sufi texts does not erase their attendant emphasis on self-mortification or asceticism (*zuhd*).

[22] See further M. Dakake, 'Guest of the Inmost Heart: Conceptions of the Divine Beloved Among Early Sufi Women', *Comparative Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2007), 72–97; and Olga Solovieva, '"Veiled with a Special Veil": Rabi'a of Basra and the Ascetic Reconfiguration of Identity', *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* 49.2 (2014): 4–28.

[23] 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests' (Luke 9: 58).

[24] Mary Agnes Edsall, '"True Anchoresses Are Called Birds": Asceticism as Ascent and the Purgative Mysticism of the *Ancrene Wisse*', *Viator* 34 (2003), 157–186 (158).

[25] Edsall '"True Anchoresses Are Called Birds"', 157.

[26] Edsall, '"True Anchoresses Are Called Birds"', 180. For a more recent discussion of the birds of *Ancrene Wisse*, see further Iva Jevtic, 'Becoming-Birds: The Destabilizing Use of Gendered Animal Imagery in *Ancrene Wisse*', in *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication*, ed. Alison Langdon (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 13–30.

Summary of Texts and Audiences/Readers[27]

With an avian outlook, I examine the dialogic encounters generated by comparative readings of Ibn ʿArabī, ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (1181–1235), Abu al-Ḥasan Shushtarī (d. 1269), *Ancrene Wisse*, and the *Wooing Group*. There will also be some discussion of other works, including Thomas of Hales' *Love Rune* (*c.* 1234–1272) and Muhammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Tufail's (1105–1185) *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, alongside Persian, Latin, and Anglo-Norman analogues. I hope for this study to demonstrate the rich potential for comparative work across English and Arabic contemplative texts, *c.* 1100–1250, revealing a wealth of interrelations. For this reason, focus will be restricted neither to only one author or one textual unit, nor solely to more canonical texts; instead, the study ranges across contemplative authors and texts in Arabic and English. The scope must inevitably remain selective, however. I have been unable to include discussion of the Persian Sufi poet Fakhr al-din 'Iraqī (1213–1289).[28] I have also only touched briefly on perhaps the most famous Sufi in the 'West', Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (1207–1273), who likewise composed primarily in Persian. Furthermore, as hagiography is not the main focus of this study, the life of ʿAishah al-Manubiyya (d. 1267) will not feature in the coming pages.[29]

Ibn ʿArabī

Although Ibn ʿArabī was born and nurtured in Murcia, in 'Al-Andalus' (Islamic Iberia), he travelled widely, particularly in Mecca and Medina in the Islamic holy lands.[30] Ibn ʿArabī is unparalleled in his output; he was a

[27] I use the term 'audiences' alongside 'readers' to account for a range of literacies and reading practices. See further Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), especially 'Reading and Writerly Culture', pp. 11–31; and Mark Amsler, *Affective Literacies: Writing and Multilingualism in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), especially 'Theorizing Medieval Literacy', pp. 1–46.

[28] For a reading of 'Iraqī alongside Ibn ʿArabī, see Cyrus Ali Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics: Beauty, Love, and the Human Form in the Writings of Ibn ʿArabī and ʿIraqi* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011); for an overview of this study's focus on vision and beauty, see especially pp. 1–10.

[29] The subject of ʿAishah al-Manubiyya's love for the Divine has been addressed by Minlib Dallh, "Aishah al Manubiyya (d. 1267): La Ravie en Dieu' (unpublished seminar paper, University of Oxford, 5th November 2020).

[30] On Ibn ʿArabī's life and work, see further Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: the Life of Ibn ʿArabī*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993): on his