

# *Hallaj: Iblis as Tragic Lover (The TāSīn of Before-Time and Ambiguity<sup>1</sup>)*

## INTRODUCTION

*Al-Ḥusayn ibn Maṣṣūr Al-Ḥallāj is most commonly associated with his sensational trial and execution (309/922). Hallaj was from the Fars region of Iran. For several years he lived and studied with Sufi masters such as Tustari and Junayd, but later broke from them. It is said that Junayd refused to grant him the Sufi cloak that was the sign of initiation into the ranks of Sufi masters.*

*When he arrived back in Baghdad after making the pilgrimage to Mecca, he gathered a large group of followers and became enmeshed in political and theological controversy. He was imprisoned for eight years. Caught up in the political intrigue of the Abbasid court, he was ultimately sentenced to death and executed (after flogging, mutilation, and exposure on the gibbet) in the year 309 Hijra (922 C.E.).*

*Unlike Junayd, Hallaj cannot be considered a classical Sufi in the sense of having his teachings passed on formally through Sufi schools. But his work is classic in another sense; among some Sufis and throughout Islamic culture, the writings and the story of Hallaj have continued to generate con-*

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troversy and creativity down to the present day.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the Islamic world, Hallaj has been the subject of debate and cultural reappropriation within Europe and America.<sup>3</sup>

Hallaj has been characterized as a social revolutionary, an Islamic analogue to the crucified Jesus, and a wayward and confused Sufi. The historical issues surrounding his execution are complex—far more complex than the common notion that he was executed for his mystical utterance “I am the real.”<sup>4</sup> Such utterances were not rare in Sufism, as has been seen above in the case of Bistami, and they are grounded in the concept of the deity speaking through the emptied senses of the Sufi annihilated in mystical union. Hallaj was also accused of incarnationism (*ḥulūl*), the basis of which charge seems to be a disputed verse in which the author proclaims mystical union in terms of two spirits in one body. Such a proclamation would be far more difficult to harmonize with Islamic understandings of mystical union, and is indeed in conflict with the poem on mystical union attributed to Hallaj in which two spirits are becoming one.<sup>5</sup>

It is not the notion of radical mystical union that is difficult for Islam to accept; Islamic *fanāʾ* texts are as radical in their depiction of mystical union as those of any tradition. Indeed, the problem with the “two spirits in one body” language is that it does not affirm union and unity strongly enough; there are two spirits left whereas the Sufi *fanāʾ* texts speak of utter annihilation and annihilation in annihilation (the annihilation of the consciousness of annihilation), with only one actor, the deity, left.

There seems to be a tension in the story of Hallaj, between Hallaj’s Jesus-like or Socrates-like refusal to allow his executioners a face-saving way out of carrying out the execution, on the one hand, and a complex set of political intrigues on the other. What often gets lost in the discussions of Hallaj the martyr is Hallaj the author. Few texts have come down to us intact, although numerous anecdotes and aphorisms have been collected as the *Akhbār al-Ḥallāj* (Sayings of Hallaj). Aside from those, we have a collection of poetry attributed to Hallaj (an attribution that is controversial), and a single sustained text, the *Ṭāwāsīn*, with a very thin set of surviving manuscripts.

The *Ṭāwāsīn* is a truly remarkable work of Sufi literature. In genre and idiom, there is nothing quite like it. The work has been described as a “carefully thought out and graduated collection of at least eleven separate treatises,” edited by a disciple of Hallaj who claims to be writing “under the express dictation of the master.”<sup>6</sup> The title is a plural form of the heading for section six, which begins with the names of two Arabic letters, *ṭā* (t) and *sīn* (s). The meaning of the letters is unclear. Several Qur’anic suras also

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begin with a series of two or three mysterious letters. Two of them are named after the letters: Sura 20, *Ṭā Hā*, and Sura 36, *Yā Sīn*. Hallaj's title, *Ṭā Sīn*, works as a combination of the first term of Sura 20 and the second term of Sura 36. That these two suras are the only suras in the Qur'an named after two opening letters makes such an association particularly likely.

The chapters vary in length and subject. Chapter 1 is an homage to the Prophet Muhammad, for example, while Chapters 4 and 5 are treatments of the Prophet's heavenly ascent or *Mi'raj*. Presented here is Chapter 6, *The ṬāSīn of Before-Time and Ambiguity*, the longest of the chapters. The *ṬāSīn of Before-Time and Ambiguity* presents the story of Iblis (the intimate companion of the deity who is expelled from the heavens and transformed into Satan when he disobeys the divine command to pray before the newly created Adam). The chapter takes the unusual form of a set of dramatic dialogues between Iblis and Allah and Iblis and Moses, along with a number of Iblisian monologues, and some powerful commentary by an implied narrator.

The story presumes the following two Qur'anic passages on the creation of Adam and the disobedience of Iblis:

### The Creation and Regency of Adam (Sura 2:30–34)

*When your lord said to the angels:<sup>7</sup>  
I am going to place a regent (khalīfa) on the earth,  
and they said: Will you place one there  
who will corrupt it and spill blood,  
while we recite your praises and exalt you?  
He said: I know what you do not know.*

*Then he taught Adam all the names  
and showed everything to the angels, saying:  
tell me their names, if you are sincere.*

*They said: Praise be to you,  
we know only what you have taught us,  
you are the All-Knowing, the most wise.*

*He said: O Adam, tell them their names,  
and when he had told them the names,  
he said: Did I not tell you that I know  
what is hidden in the heavens and earth,  
and know what you disclose and know what you hide?*

*Then we told the angels  
to bow before Adam*

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*and they did, except for Iblis,  
who was scornful and acted proud,  
and became a disbeliever.*

### The Creation of Adam and the Pride of Iblis (Sura 38:71-75)

*Remember when your lord said to the angels,  
I am going to create a person (bashar) from clay.*

*When I have shaped it  
and breathed into it of my spirit,  
fall bowing before it.*

*All the angels fell bowing together  
Except Iblis who acted proud  
and became a disbeliever.*

*He said: O Iblis,  
what has prevented you from bowing  
before what I created with my two hands?  
Are you too proud or are you too lofty?*

The word I have translated here as "bow" is a very precise term, based on the Arabic root *s/j/d*, which indicates the positions taken in formal Islamic prayer. These positions are not prostrations (which imply a complete falling to the ground), but they involve a larger set of physical motions than simple bowing, including assuming a kneeling position and touching the head to the ground. The crucial point here is that the term used is the term for Islamic ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) and thus entails, in the argument that Iblis will give, the notion not only of respect, but of formal worship.

The common interpretation of the Qur'anic story is that Iblis refused out of pride to bow down before a human being made of an inferior substance (mud or clay—Iblis being made of fire according to tradition) and inferior in stature. In Hallaj's retelling of the story, Iblis's pride and disobedience are clearly present, but the issue is woven deeply into the intricacies of love-madness, monotheistic loyalty, and theological meditations on divine predetermination and free will.

The *ṬāSīn* of Before-Time and Ambiguity can be divided into four sections. Section 1 (paragraphs 1-12) is a discussion of the relative merits of Muhammad and Iblis as "proclaimers" of the truth. Section 2 (paragraphs 13-17) is a dialogue between Moses and Iblis, in which Iblis continues to defend his refusal to bow before Adam. Toward the end of this part,

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the dialogue turns into a soliloquy by Iblis. Section 3 (paragraphs 18–19, 26–35) consists of direct comments attributed to Hallaj concerning Iblis, on the derivation of Iblis's other name, "Azāzil," along with snatches of dialogue between Iblis and the deity. As the argument continues, the style and tone become more intense. Standard prose gives way to rhymed prose (saj') and the rhyming becomes increasingly more dense as the rhyming terms begin to appear in shorter refrains. At the same time, the sense becomes more and more opaque, culminating in a series of riddles.<sup>8</sup>

Section 4 (paragraphs 20–25) consists of a competition among Iblis, Pharoah, and Hallaj himself over who had the first rank in futuwwa (chivalry, valor). There is good reason to consider this section a posthumous interpolation. It cuts right into the Azazil discussion, and it ends with some dramatic quotes from Hallaj: "I am his trace. I am the real," the most famous statement attributed to Hallaj; and "I was killed and my hands and feet were cut off. Still I did not go back on my proclamation." Here the martyred Hallaj champions his own valor against Pharoah and Iblis.

The literary form of the chapter shifts from narrative to a more dramatic genre with various interior dialogues (especially between the deity and Iblis), from loosely rhymed prose to strictly rhymed prose (saj'), to poetry, to linguistic riddles. Iblis's monotheistic claim—that he refused to bow before an other-than-God even at the risk of eternal rejection and torment—is combined with the lyrical language of the love-mad lover from the Majnun tradition, the lover whose loyalty is so total that there is no path for him to any "other than" the beloved. The tragic paradox is already apparent: In his total loyalty, the lover is willing to risk everything—including separation from the beloved—before being disloyal. When accused of pride, Iblis acknowledges it, but justifies his pride by pointing to the intimacy he has shared with the deity.

The unstable form of the language, the sudden shifts in theme and genre, and the heavy use of riddles, paradox, and enigma add to the richness of the text and the multiple possibilities for its interpretation. Within this exuberance of form and content, we might outline the following modes of interpretation and argument:

1. In the metaphysical mode, nothing happens without God's pre-knowing and predetermining will; thus God knew, predetermined, and willed that Iblis would disobey his command. This argument, implicit throughout, is explicitly formulated in paragraph 28 ("All choices, including my own, are yours.").

2. In the mode of personal, mystical knowledge (ma'rifa), Iblis was the most intimate companion of the deity, and thus was in a position to know

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the inner divine will (*irāda*) and to know its difference from the command (*amr*). This level is implicit in the argumentative stance Iblis takes throughout, disputing with the deity over the status of the divine command, and interpreting the command to bow down to an other-than-God as a "test" of Iblis's loyalty to radical monotheism.

3. In the lyrical mode, Iblis's will and discursive knowledge (*'aql*) have been annihilated, and his only existence is existence for-the-beloved; thus, he implies, his bowing before Adam was inconceivable. Yet this "pure-lover" position is complemented by another aspect of Iblis's love, his jealousy toward Adam; as the oldest and closest intimate of the deity, Iblis cannot keep his jealous rage from showing. Iblis presents himself as the paradigm of the Majnun figure (the love-mad lover willing to endure all things and to perish out of love for the beloved), but this pure-hearted abjection of the lover slips almost immediately into jealousy that God would prefer a new creature, made of mud, to Iblis, his most intimate companion.

4. In the mode of mystical union, Iblis would not be acting out of his own will, but his annihilated will would be replaced by the divine will acting through him. Significantly, Iblis does not make this argument in regard to will from the perspective of mystical union, the union of the human will with the divine will. He stays on the theological plain; all acts are forewilled by the all-knowing, all-powerful deity. However, he does make a mystical argument (paragraph 15) in regard to *dhikr* or remembrance: "His remembrance is my remembrance, my remembrance, his."

These are a few of the aspects of Iblis evoked in this text. In addition, Hallaj is quoted in the text as associating Iblis with the principle of complementarity (the implication of opposites in the definition and meaningfulness of one another)—thus, the black backing that is needed to show the white in a fine garment, the vice without which virtue would not be known (paragraph 19). The poem in paragraph 12, however, gives the position not of complementarity but of coincidence of opposites achieved through a kind of unity (*tawhīd*) of love, as the exiled Iblis exclaims: "When I have achieved certainty / nearness and distance are one / Even if I am abandoned / abandonment will be my companion / How can it be abandonment / while love is one?"

Louis Massignon, in his monumental work on Hallaj, mentions the tradition that offers an ultimate reconciliation for Iblis. Massignon rejects such a position and interprets the figure more traditionally: "Hallaj shows that the obstinate quietism of Satan, posing as the perfect gnostic and boasting of loving God, ends up by rejecting divine union." Massignon attributed

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to Hallaj a final comment by his commentator Ruzbehan Baqli, which explicitly condemns Iblis.<sup>9</sup>

Yet in the text itself the issue remains less clear and more open. Many questions remain. What is the 'ayn (a word that can mean essence, eye, source, or spring of water) that is said to cover and disorient Iblis? What is the relationship of his absolute affirmation of unity and his "individuation"? What is the psychological and theological significance of such individuation and its relationship to his status as God's closest confidant? Beyond these specific questions, what makes this text so memorable and compelling is the manner in which it defers or even prevents easy moral judgment. That Iblis is condemned is presented as a fact of sacred history. The theological, psychological, and mystical implications of that fact are complex and intertwined. Iblis is certainly not a "trustworthy narrator" of his own story. Yet the issues he raises are deep. The final sections of the ṬāSīn of Before-Time and Ambiguity present ever more abstruse riddles, even as the rhythm of the rhymed prose and the density of similes and metaphors grow to a fever pitch. One way of viewing the final cascades of saj' rhymes is as a way of testing the boundaries of discursive reason and walking the edge of ḥayra, that particular intellectual perplexity which can be viewed not as a failure to achieve knowledge, but as the result of confrontations with certain questions too deep for discursive intellect to fathom.



### THE ṬĀSĪN OF BEFORE-TIME AND AMBIGUITY IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING THE VALIDITY OF PROCLAMATIONS WITH INVERSION OF MEANINGS

Section 1 begins with a discussion of proclamation (tadā'i). Iblis proclaims his absolute monotheistic fidelity and appeals to that fidelity in defending his decision not to bow before any other-than-God, including Adam. The mode of presentation is part objective narrative, part direct dialogue (between Iblis and what appears to be the divine voice). The comparison of Iblis to Muhammad (referred to by the more intimate variant on his name, Aḥmad) confronts the reader with a riddle. Iblis, we are told, fell from the

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*'ayn while Muhammad had revealed to him the 'ayn of 'ayn. Because of its rich semantic base, the Arabic word 'ayn is frequently difficult to translate. It can mean "eye," "source," "spring," or "essence," or even a "concrete manifestation" of something.<sup>10</sup>*

*Iblis refused to bow and Muhammad refused to look directly at the vision that he experienced (another reference to the Qur'anic "vision" passage of Sura 53:1–18). Among all the inhabitants of heaven, Iblis was the greatest affirmer of unity (tawḥīd), the "unifier" (muwaḥḥid) par excellence. He worshiped the deity "purely" or "stripped of all else" (bi tajrīd). He attained the status of "individuation" (tafrīd). When commanded to bow before Adam, he replied with the monotheistic affirmation: "to no other [than the one God]." In a famous poem, Iblis states that his refusal was in fact a form of taqdīs, that is, a hallowing of the deity through the affirmation of absolute transcendence and unity.*

*Iblis then evokes the issue of divine predetermination. Addressing the deity, he says, enigmatically: "I have a will (irāda) in you and you have a will in me; yours in me is prior and mine in you is prior." He then shifts to another kind of predetermination, that of inherent nature: Iblis was created from fire and fire returns to fire, so that the threat of being cast into "the fire" of divine punishment is viewed only as a return to his essential element. The section ends with a poem depicting Iblis as the loyal lover, willing to accept eternal rejection and separation if that is the beloved's will, in the face of eternal suffering refusing to betray his loyalty to the beloved.*

## MUHAMMAD AND IBLIS<sup>11</sup>

1. That strange<sup>12</sup> and learned master, Abū l-Mughīth Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallā—may Allah adorn his place of rest—said:

Making claims is appropriate for no one but Iblis and Ahmad, except that Iblis fell from the *'ayn* while Ahmad—God bless him—had revealed to him the *'ayn* of *'ayn*.<sup>13</sup>

2. Iblis was told: "Bow down!"<sup>14</sup> Ahmad was told: "Look!" The former did not bow and Ahmad turned neither to the right nor left.<sup>15</sup>

(53:17) "The eye did not swerve nor did it exceed its bounds."

3. Iblis made claims but he returned to his power.<sup>16</sup>

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4. Ahmad made claims and returned from his power,<sup>17</sup>
5. With the sayings,<sup>18</sup> "O changer of hearts!" and "I cannot measure out your praise."
6. Among the inhabitants of heaven, there was no affirmer of unity (*mu-wahhid*) like Iblis,<sup>19</sup>
7. When Iblis was veiled by (*ulbisa*) the 'ayn, and he fled the glances and gazed into the secret, and worshiped his deity stripped of all else,<sup>20</sup>
8. Only to be cursed when he attained individuation and given demands when he demanded more.<sup>21</sup>
9. He was told: "Bow down!" He said, "[to] no other!" He was asked, "Even if you receive my curse?" He said, "It does not matter. I have no way to an other-than-you. I am an abject lover."
10. My disavowal in you is *taqdīr* (affirmation of transcendence)  
My reason in you, befuddlement.  
Who is Adam other than you?  
To distinguish them, who is Iblis?  
[And the one in between is Iblis].<sup>22</sup>
11. He said: He disdained and grew proud, turned away and backed around, and what he insisted upon, set down.<sup>23</sup>  
  
He said, "You've grown proud."<sup>24</sup> He replied, "A moment with you would be enough to justify my pride and lording-it-over (*tajabbur*). So how much more am I justified when I have passed the ages with you. (7:11) 'I am better than him' because of my priority in service. There is not in the two creations anyone more knowing of you than I. I have a will in you and you have a will in me. Your will in me is prior and my will in you is prior. If I bow before an other-than-you or do not bow, I must return to my origin, for (7:11) 'you have created me from fire.' Fire returns to fire. To you belongs the determination and the choice."
12. There can be no distance for me  
distancing you from me  
When I have achieved certainty

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nearness and distance are one.<sup>25</sup>  
Even if I am abandoned,  
abandonment will be my companion.  
How can it be abandonment  
while love is one?  
To you, praise in success,  
in the pure absolute  
For a servant of true heart  
who will bow to no other than you.<sup>26</sup>

*Section 2 begins with a dialogue between Moses and Iblis and evokes the "look at the mountain" theophany passage from the Qur'an. Iblis declares that he is unconcerned about the transformation and deformation he undergoes as a result of his disobedience. He also explicitly distinguishes between God's command (amr) to bow before Adam, and his will (irāda). The command was only a "test" (paragraph 14).<sup>27</sup>*

### MOSES AND IBLIS

13. Musa met Iblis on Mount Sinai and said, "O Iblis, what kept you from bowing down?" He answered, "The proclamation of only one object of worship prevented me. If I had bowed down in prayer before Adam, I would have been like you. You were called one time to 'look at the mountain!' and you looked. I was called a thousand times to 'bow down! bow down!' but I did not bow, held back by the meaning of my proclamation."<sup>28</sup>

14. He said, "You abandoned the command!"  
He replied, "That was a test, not a command."  
He said, "Of course he deformed you."

He answered, "Musa, that and that is masquerade. The condition is unreliable; it will change. Knowing remains as sound as it was before, unchanged; only the figure has been transformed."<sup>29</sup>

15. Musa said, "Do you remember him now?"

"O Musa," he replied, "remembrance does not remember.<sup>30</sup> I am the remembered and he is the remembered. His remembrance is my remembrance, my remembrance, his. Can the two rememberers be anything but together? My service is now purer, my moment freer, my remembrance

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greater. Formerly I served him out of concern for my own lot; now I serve out of concern for his.”

16. We took cupidity from prohibition and defense, harm and advantage. He set me apart, “extased me” (*awjadanī*) when he expelled me, so that I would not be mixed with the pure-hearted. He held me back from others because of my zeal, othered me because of my bewilderment, bewildered me because of my exile, exiled me because of my service, proscribed me because of my friendship, disfigured me because of my praise, consecrated me because of my *hijra*,<sup>31</sup> abandoned me because of my unveiling, unveiled me because of my union, made me one with him because of my separation, cut me off because of the preclusion of my fate.<sup>32</sup>

17. By his reality! I have not erred concerning the designing (*tadbīr*) nor rejected the destining (*taqdīr*) nor concerned myself with the change in imaging (*taṣwīr*), nor am I in such measures the one to be judging!<sup>33</sup> Even if he torments me with his fire forever and beyond, I will not bow before any other than him, abase myself before a figure and body, or recognize a rival or offspring. My proclamation is the proclamation of those who are sincere, and in love I am triumphant. How not?

*Section 3 consists of comments on Iblis attributed to Hallaj himself, explanation of Iblis's other name, 'Azazil, and snatches of dialogue between Iblis and the deity.*

### 'AZAZIL (1)

18. Al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallaj, God's compassion upon him, said:

Concerning the states of 'Azāzil there are different opinions. One is that he was the proclaimer in heaven and on earth. In heaven he was the proclaimer of the angels, showing them the virtues, and on earth he was the proclaimer of humankind, showing them the vices.<sup>34</sup>

19. Things are known through opposites. A fine garment is woven on a course, black backing. Similarly, the angel displays the virtues and says to the virtuous: “Perform them and you will be requited,” while Iblis shows the vices and says: “Perform them and you will be requited”—symbolically. Whoever does not know vice will not know virtue.

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*Section 3 on Azazil is interrupted here by a thematically independent section, the depiction of the spiritual chivalry and jousting of Iblis, Pharoah, and Hallaj, with Hallaj's famous "I am the real" proclamation and comments on his own execution.*

### IBLIS, PHAROAH, AND HALLAJ<sup>35</sup>

20. Abu 'Umāra al-Hallaj, the strange master, said:

I competed with Iblis and Pharoah in the domain of valor.

Iblis said, "If I had bowed down, the name of valor would have fallen from me."

Pharoah said, "If I had affirmed belief in the Prophet,<sup>36</sup> I would have been thrown from the station of valor."

21. I said, "If I had gone back on my proclamation, I would have been thrown from the carpet of valor."

22. Iblis said (7:12), "I am better than he" when he saw no other other than he.

Pharoah said [28:37], "I know of no other lord for you than me." He knew no one among his people who could distinguish between the real and the creation.<sup>37</sup>

23. And as for me, I said, "If you do not recognize him, recognize his trace. I am his trace. I am the real!"<sup>38</sup> because I never ceased to be real in the real.

24. My friends and teachers are Iblis and Pharoah.<sup>39</sup> Iblis was threatened with fire but did not go back on his proclamation. Pharoah was drowned in the sea, but did not go back on his proclamation and did not affirm any mediation at all. But I said (10:90), "I believe that there is no God but he in whom the people of Israel believed." Don't you see that Allah (may he be praised) opposed Jibril at his gate and said "Why have you filled his mouth with sand?"<sup>40</sup>

25. I was killed and my hands and feet were cut off.<sup>41</sup> Still I did not go back on my proclamation.

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*At this point the text returns to the discussion of Azazil. The text begins to move into a very heavy rhymed prose and the rhyming prose soon becomes the dominant force in the language. In order to give the reader some sense of how the rhymed prose works here, without resorting to artificial English rhymes, some of the key Arabic terms are kept in parentheses. As the rhymed prose intensifies, the actual meaning of the text becomes more enigmatic, turning toward a sense of pure riddle. At this point the manuscripts disagree wildly as to the correct terms and the "pointing" of the Arabic. To avoid an arbitrary translator's decision on which is the "correct" reading, the various versions have been placed together in order to allow the reader to decide which might be better, and to console the reader with the fact that the original redactors of the text may have been just as puzzled as later readers.*

### 'AZAZIL (2)

26. The name "Iblis" is derived from his name 'Azāzīl: the letter 'ayn [ʿ] corresponds to the height of his inner resolve, the zā' [z] to the compounding of dilation in his dilation; the alif [ā] to his views on his "thatness";<sup>42</sup> the second zā' [z] to his renunciation in rank (*rutba*); the yā' [ī] to his seeking refuge in the knowledge of his priority; and the lām [l] to his disputation over his reddening (*lamiyya*).<sup>43</sup>

27. He said to him: "Why did you not bow in prayer, abject one?"

He replied: "I am a lover; lover abject. You say abject [*mahīn*] // but I read in the book *mubīn* [that makes clear] // what would happen to me, O you of the power *matīn* [unbreakable] // How was I to abase myself before him when [8:2] 'you created me from fire and created him from *ḥīn* [mud, clay]? //' two contraries that cannot meet, and I am in service senior, more majestic in his favor, in knowledge more learned, in living more complete!"<sup>44</sup>

28. The real, be praised, said to him: The choice is mine not yours.

He said, "All choices, including my own, are yours. You have chosen for me, O Originator! If you forbid me from bowing, you are the Forbidder. If I err in speaking, don't abandon me, All-Hearer! If you will me to bow before him, I am the Obeyer."<sup>45</sup> I know no one more knowing of you than me."

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29. Don't blame me, blame from me is *ba'id* [far away]  
Reward me! master, for I am *waḥīd* [unique]  
In your true threat, I am made true  
Desert in desert, my plight is *shad'id* [severe]  
Whoever wills a speech, here is my book and testament,  
Read it and know I am a *shahīd* [witness, martyr].
30. My brother Iblis was called 'Azāzīl because he was set apart, set apart  
as intimate friend, not proceeding from beginning to end, but brought forth  
emergent from his end.<sup>46</sup>
31. His coming forth inverted his rootness-on-site, ignited by his blazing  
fire of night, from his precedence, blinding light.<sup>47</sup>
32. His watering pond  
dried, cracked ground  
Abundance want,  
lightning fading  
His rain-swords only apparitions  
Blind he wanders off the path
- Alas
33. My brother, if you understand this  
you have piled up stones,  
spectres of imagination,  
then returned in consternation,  
and passed away in cares.<sup>48</sup>
34. The most eloquent of the tribe were dumbstruck at his gate  
The sages failed to appreciate;  
He was more perfected than they in the position of prayer  
Nearer than they to the one existing  
Spending himself in struggle, more giving  
More faithful than they in the oaths they would swear  
More loyal to the master than they, more near.<sup>49</sup>
35. They fell before Adam in prayer as a favor  
While Iblis, because of his ancient age of witnessing, refused.

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His character against the horizon huge,  
his excess a refuge,  
thornweeds fruitful,  
his being cut away an unfolding flower,  
his return, most giving, noble.<sup>10</sup>

# EARLY ISLAMIC MYSTICISM

SUFI, QUR'AN, MI`RAJ, POETIC AND THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS

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TRANSLATED, EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
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**Cover art:** AIDA MUŠANOVIĆ, a graphic artist, was born in Bosnia and earned her B.F.A. degree at the Academy of Fine Arts at Sarajevo University. A survivor of the aggression in Bosnia, she came to the United States, where she co-organized the internationally shown project *Sarajevo '92*, the art/print portfolio created in the besieged Bosnian capital under war conditions. The image on the cover of this volume depicts the prayer niche (*mīhrāb*) from the "Colored Mosque" in Foča (pronounced Fō-cha), in southeast Bosnia-Herzegovina. The mosque, one of the masterworks of South Slavic architecture, was constructed in 1551 C.E. It was called the Colored Mosque (*Aladža džamiya*) because of its stunning colors both on the interior and exterior. The artwork shows the section of the *mīhrāb* known as *muqarnas*, the "stalactite" forms that connect the square to the curved areas of the mosque and are symbolic of the connections between heaven and earth. The mosque was destroyed by Serbian nationalists during the "ethnic cleansing" of Foča in the spring of 1993. It is to all such destroyed Bosnian monuments that the artist pays homage in her artwork.

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