

## VIII

## THE TIME OF SINGING IS COME

*This lyric is perhaps the most beautiful expression of love in the spring to be found in literature. It is worth noting that the point of origin is the city rather than the country. That nature discloses her charms primarily to the urban dweller rather than to the rustic has long been suspected. The appreciation of nature and the creation of nature-poetry are the products of urban culture, whether it be ancient Israel, the Hellenistic Age, the Silver Age of Roman literature, or the modern Romantic movement.*

*The city maiden, ensconced in her house, sees her lover coming to her and calling her to go out with him to the countryside, so that they may greet the spring in all its loveliness (2:8-13).*

Hark! my beloved! here he comes,  
 Leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.  
 My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart;  
 Behold, he stands behind our wall,  
 Looking through the windows,  
 Peering through the lattices.  
 My beloved spoke, saying unto me:  
 "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.  
 For lo, the winter is past,  
 The rain is over and gone;  
 The flowers have appeared on the earth;  
 The time of singing is come,  
 And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land.  
 The fig-tree puts forth her green fruits,  
 And the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance.  
 Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

## IX

## THE LOVER'S WELCOME

*That a new song begins here seems clear. The beloved is here pictured as hiding among the cliffs, instead of being in her city home, and the lover calls upon her not to go out with him to the countryside, but to show herself to him. Her response is expressed cryptically. Little foxes have been devouring the vineyards already in bloom. Does she mean that young men have already found their way to her? (2:14-15).*

THE LOVER: O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in  
 the shadow of the cliff,  
 Let me see thy face, let me hear thy voice;  
 For sweet is thy voice, and thy face is  
 comely.

THE BELOVED: The foxes have seized us, the little foxes  
 that spoil the vineyards;  
 For our vineyard is in blossom.

X  
SURRENDER

*The maiden speaks of the love binding her and her lover, and invites him to taste the joys of love until dawn (2:16-17).*

My beloved is mine, and I am his, who feeds among  
the lilies.  
Until the day break, and the shadows flee,  
Turn, my love, and be like a gazelle or a young hart  
Upon the mountain of spices.

XI  
THE DREAM OF THE LOST LOVER

*The pathos of love's separation is movingly described in this song. Dreaming of her absent lover, the beloved wanders through the streets seeking him, until she finds him and holds him fast. She too, like the happy maiden in 2:7, adjures the daughters of Jerusalem not to disturb their love — but her reunion with her lover is only in a dream. The repetition of those passion-charged words highlights the pathos of the lovers' separation.*

*The sorrowful echo of an imaginary fulfillment recalls the scene in Christopher Marlowe's play, "Dr. Faustus," when the hero, in the last few hours before the Devil comes to claim his soul, repeats the words of Ovid, spoken by a lover in the midst of his revelry, "O lente, lente, currite noctis equi," "O slowly, slowly, run on, ye coursers of the night" (3:1-5).*

On my couch at night I sought him whom I love,  
Sought him, but found him not.  
"I will rise now, and go about the city,  
On the streets and highways,  
I will seek him whom I love."  
I sought him, but I found him not.  
The watchmen making their rounds in the city found me.  
"Have you seen him, whom I love?"  
Scarcely had I passed them,  
When I found him whom I love.  
I held him, and would not let him go,  
Until I had brought him into my mother's house,  
Into the chamber of her that conceived me.  
"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field,  
That you disturb not, nor interrupt our love,  
Until it be satiated."

Song 2:15; 8:12. The last-named passage, as here, employs "vineyard" in both the literal and the symbolic meanings.

1:7. שָׁלֵקָה, literally, "for why?," a Hebrew equivalent for the Aramaic שְׁלֵקָה, "lest," the use of שָׁל being principally, but not exclusively, North Israelite. Cf. אֲשֶׁר לָקָה (Dan. 1:10). אָנָּה a) has been rendered "wayward woman," from the verb עָשָׂה I, "cover, wrap" (cf. I Sam. 28:14), hence "a robed woman, sign of a harlot" (cf. Gen. 38:14), and b) from עָשָׂה II, "delouse" (cf. Jer. 43:12 LXX; Von Gall, *ZATW*, 24, p. 105). It is best taken as a metathesis or a scribal error for טָנָּה (Sym., P, V, Tar.), "wandering one." The Kaph is asseverative, "Why indeed should I be a wanderer"; cf., for example, Num. 11:1, and see Gordis, in *JAOS*, vol. 63, 1943. The usage occurs again in our book in 8:1 and probably in 7:1.

1:8. The verse is a quotation of the speech of the shepherd's comrades used without a formula of citation, as Tur-Sinai recognizes, p. 366. On the entire usage of quotations, cf. R. Gordis, in *HUCA*, 1949.

1:9. On the Judean origin of this song and on this type of simile, see the Introduction. לַסֹּסִי, "to a mare," with paragogic Yod; cf. Lam. 1:1.

1:12. עַד, "while, so long as"; cf., for example, Job 1:18. בִּקְסֹבֹו, not "table," but "couch"; cf. the Mishnaic use of הִקְסֹב, "to recline."

1:14. בְּקִרְיֵי, perhaps "from the vineyards," rather than "in the vineyards"; cf. this meaning of Beth in Ugaritic. En-gedi, on the western shore of the Dead Sea, was famous for its vineyards; cf. Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, XII, 14 and 24.

1:15. The deletion of עֵינַי יָנוּס deprives the verse of its third stich. Note the three stichs in the next verse.

1:16. עֵרְשֵׁנו, generally rendered "couch," may possibly mean "arbor." Cf. M. Kil. 6:1, עָרִים. Deleting the third stich is unjustified. See v. 15.

1:17. קִרְוֵי בָתֵּינו is the plural of קִרְוֵי בַּיְתָנו, formed on the Mishnaic model, where the plural of בַּיְתָנו is בָּתֵּי בָתֵּינו (Ehr.). Hence the MT is to be rendered, not "the beams of our houses," but "the beams of our house." בְּרוּשִׁים, a dialectic pronunciation for the classical בְּרוֹשִׁים, probably influenced by the Aramaic; cf. *sibōleth-sibbōleth*, Judg. 12:6, and see the Introduction and note 78. It is the cypress (I. Low) or the Phoenician juniper-tree (Koehler, *Lexicon*, s. v., according to Pliny, XII, 78).

2:1. חֲבַצְלֵה has been identified with the narcissus (Dalman), the *colchicum autumnale*, a flower of pale lilac-color (I. Löw), the saffron (Jastrow), and the rose (Tar., Ibn Janah, Ibn Ezra). שֹׁשָׁנָה, generally

rendered "lily," is probably a red or dark purple flower; cf. 5:13. שָׁרוֹן, from יִשְׂרוֹן, "a valley, plain," was originally a common noun, and then was applied to the fertile central valley in Palestine, a process paralleled by *Carmel*; cf. the Commentary on 7:6.

2:2. בָּנוֹת = "girls"; cf. Prov. 31:29. On רַעְיָה, "beloved," see the Introduction, sec. XI.

2:3. חִסְרָתִי וְנִשְׁבָּתִי, "I delight to sit." Cf. Deut. 1:5; Hos. 5:11 for examples of this paratactic variant of the complementary infinitive.

2:4. וְנָגְלוּ עָלַי אֲהָבָה, a difficult phrase which may perhaps contain a reference to a custom unfamiliar to us today. The traditional rendering, "His shield" (so Hal.) or, "his banner over me is love," is a bold and striking figure. The emendation וְנָגְלוּ, taken as an imperative plural verb, "serve me with love," on the basis of the Akkadian *dagālu* (Del., Jastrow), does not commend itself, because we expect a singular verb addressed to the lover and, in addition, the preposition is unhebraic.

2:5. אֲשֵׁישׁוֹת, "dainties," perhaps "raisin-cakes" (see Hos. 3:1). רִפְדָּוּ, not "spread out" (Job 17:13; 41:22), but "strengthen," on the basis of the Arabic (Ibn Ezra, JPS). There is no need to change the imperative verbs to the perfect singular, "he has strengthened me" (against Hal.), since she is addressing the company in the banquet-hall. Note the plural in v. 7. Raisin-cakes, which were used in fertility rites (cf. Hos. 3:1), served, like the apple, as an erotic symbol on the subconscious level, while on the conscious level they refer literally to a source of physical refreshment. See the Introduction, sec. XIII.

2:7. On the oath and the symbolism employed, see the Introduction. תְּעוּרְרֵנוּ and תְּעוּרְרֵנוּ most naturally mean "arouse, stir up love" (JPS), on the basis of which Bettan interprets the passage to mean that the maiden opposes rousing love by artificial means in favor of gentle, natural love. This is not likely. Not only is there no reference to these artificial means in the text, but the context implies that she is already experiencing passionate love in all its fullness. Hence the verbs are best rendered "disturb, i. e. interfere with love" (so most commentators). עַד שֶׁתִּשְׂבָּע, "until love wishes" (*scilicet* to be disturbed, because it has been satisfied).

2:8. קוֹל = "hark." Cf. Gen. 4:10.

2:9. This verse is replete with Aramaisms and late Hebrew words. For נָקַל, a *hapax legomenon* in the Bible, see the Targum to Lev. 1:15; for תְּרַבֵּם see the Targum on Prov. 7:6. שְׂשִׁיחָה is also an Aramaism; cf. Isa. 14:16; Ps. 33:14.

שִׁיבְרֵי, in earlier Hebrew "sprout" (cf. Ps. 90:6) and "shine" (Ps. 132:18), here means "look, peep"; cf. the Mishnaic usage הִצִּיץ, generally

תפגע, "Ben Azzai looked in and was wounded" (M. Hag. 13:2). For a parallel semantic development, cf. the German *glänzen*, English *glance*.

**2:10.** The opening stich can not be deleted (against Hal.), as it leaves only one stich in the verse. Its presence militates strongly against the dramatic theory.

**2:11.** סָקוּ, "winter," a *hapax legomenon*, is an Aramaism; cf. the Targum on Gen. 8:22, where it renders חֲרִף. Some manuscripts and editions read סָתוּ Kethib, סָתוּ Qere, an instance of the original function of the Kethib-Qere formula as a guide to the reader; see Gordis, *The Biblical Text in the Making* (Philadelphia, 1937).

**2:12.** On וְקִיר see the Introduction, note 30.

**2:13.** סָקָר, "in blossom," has Aramaic and Mandaic cognates, but no satisfactory etymology.

**2:14.** חָנָי, singular חָנָה or חָנָה (cf. חָנָה and חָנָה), has the basic meaning "break, crack." It is used literally here, and figuratively in Isa. 19:17 in the meaning "destruction, calamity." סָרְרִית, the terraces dug into the hillside for purposes of cultivation. Cf. Ezek. 38:20 for its use parallel to חָרִים.

**2:15.** The verse is patently symbolic. If the vineyard represents the maiden, the young foxes may be the young men who lay siege to her. אָחֳזוּ is generally regarded as the imperative Qal, and the verse is then given two diametrically opposite interpretations: 1) "Catch the little foxes for us," a plea to save her chastity (so most commentators); and 2) "Take us, you little foxes," a plea for love (so Just., Hal.). While the second view is far more appropriate to the theme, it is not satisfactory. In v. 14, the lover pleads to see his beloved; she is hardly likely to respond by calling upon many young men to take her. Even if verses 14 and 15 be treated as unrelated, the whole spirit of the *Song* militates against the idea of promiscuity in love, for everywhere the unique relationship of the pair involved is emphasized (cf. 6:9; 8:8 ff.; 8:11 ff.), while we do find complaints by the maiden of advances made by other youths, which she rejects (cf. 1:6 f.; 8:10). We prefer, therefore, to regard אָחֳזוּ as a perfect and to render the entire clause as "Little foxes have seized us." Nor is it necessary to revocalize the verb as אָחֳזוּ, if it be recognized as a Piel, which occurs in Job 26:9, אָחֳזוּ אֶת הַיָּם. On this form of the Piel perfect instead of the usual אָחֳזוּ, cf. Judg. 5:28, אָחֳזוּ, the broader vocalization being due to the gutturals. לָנוּ is to be construed as the direct object; cf. Lev. 19:18; II Sam. 3:30. קָרְעֵנוּ is a plene spelling for the singular: "our vineyard."

**2:17.** עַד שְׁמֹטָה הַיּוֹם, "until the day blows, i. e. in the morning"; note the parallelism, "and the shadows flee." On the night as the

season for love, which really requires no Biblical references, cf. Prov. 7:18. It cannot mean "until evening," nor can the phrase "and the shadows flee" refer to nightfall, when the shadows lengthen and fade (against Bettan), since the context refers not to the lover's departure, but to his enjoyment of love. The gazelle and the hart are symbols of the lover. The precise meaning of הָרִי הָקָר is not clear. It has been 1) emended to הָרִי בְּשִׁמְשֵׁי, "hills of spices" (cf. 8:14); 2) interpreted to mean "spices"; 3) emended to read הָרִי הַמִּטּוֹר, "hills of myrrh" (Jastrow); and 4) taken as a geographical reference to Bether (or Betar) in Judah (AV, RV), later the scene of Bar Kochba's heroic but fruitless Third War against Rome (132-35 C. E.). Hal. suggests that the place-name may have been derived from an aromatic plant, so that the phrase may virtually mean "spices" in our passage.

**3:1.** While Jastrow deletes בְּקִשְׁתִּי וְלֹא קִצְצֵתִי, Hal. adds קִרְאֵתִי, following the LXX. Actually, the LXX's reading here is an example of "leveling," to bring our passage into agreement with 5:6. Neither change is necessary, the two dream-songs being similar but not identical examples of this genre. The MT is therefore to be preferred.

**3:3.** Reading קִצְצֵתִי for the opening word is unnecessary; in fact the MT is superior (against Ehr., Hal.).

**3:5.** This refrain is often deleted on the ground that it is appropriate to a genuine meeting of the lovers, but not to a dream. See the Introductory Comment on this song for the psychological appropriateness of the oath both here and in 8:4.

**3:6.** בְּתִיקְרוֹת עָשָׁן, "like pillars of smoke," a reference to the dust of the procession traveling across the desert. In Joel 3:3, the phrase alludes to the pillar of cloud which accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21 f.). Perhaps we should read בְּתִיקְרוֹת, "with pillars of smoke," which would refer either to the smoke-wreaths of the campfire at night, or possibly to the smoke of incense burned in the bride's honor. רִיבֵל, "merchant"; cf. קוֹמַת הַרְיֹבִלִים (B. Giṭ. 67a). The root is a metaplastic form for רָגַל, "go on foot"; hence both roots develop the secondary connotation of "tale-bearing, slander"; cf. Jer. 9:3; Ps. 15:3.

**3:7.** On the "Aramaic" form שְׁלִשְׁלֹטָה and on the usage of pronominal anticipation, see Intr., sec. VIII and n. 80. The first two letters of שְׁלִשְׁלֹטָה may be a dittography.

**3:8.** אָחֳזוּ תְרַב, the participle passive, is here used with middle force; cf. אָחֳזוּ in Judg. 18:11, and such Mishnaic forms as סָבַר, "thinking," etc. On the basis of the Akkadian, Perles interprets אָחֳזוּ as "taught, skilled"; cf. the parallelism. The "terrors of the night" may refer to evil spirits rampant particularly in those hours, or to desert