Khamriyaat (The Wine Songs) of Abu Nuwwas

(Translated by Anne Marie Flood)

Censure me not for your censure but tempts me

And the cure of my ills is the cause of it all.

The sad cannot linger long here in wine’s courtyard,

Where even the cup it is sipped from rejoices.

Served by the hand of a woman in garb of a man,

Whose androgyny captivates all those who see her.

As she stood with her jug through the dregs of the night,

Her face was the glimmer that lit up the courtyard.

She poured from her jug a wine that was clear

As if the mere sight of it could numb the mind.

You thinned out the wine far beyond what was seemly…

Yes, thinned it, for water is coarser than wine.

Were you to blend it instead with pure light,

It would blaze with a brilliance engendered alone.

She walked ‘midst the youth, to whom time was indebted,

To whom nothing befalls, save what they so wish.

For her do I cry, not for Asma and Hind,

Those often praised beauties, who always depart.

Had you built a wine-tent for them such as this,

For the camels and even the sheep to repose…

Tell him who would preach to the world his ideals:

Some things you may know, but the others elude you.

If you take offence to my state, keep your silence.

To deprive my oblivion, that would be blasphemy

“*Khamsa*” from the *Khamriyat* (Wine Songs) of Abu Nuwas

Source: Abu Nuwas Rhapsody CD (2010)

Singer Dhafer Youssef

Lyrics: Abu Nuwas

Quench the thirst

Of Joseph and mine

With that acidulous wine!

The sludge in life forget

And enjoy that which is pure.

Fill my cup to the brim,

A cup half-full I like not!

Set aside the wineskin!

And with the wineskin a copy of the Qur’an

And from this take three sips and from that verses recite.

With the good in this weighing against the evil in that God is surely forgiving!

Saved is he who is content to wipe this with that.

(Translation by Lamia Benyoussef)

Link to original Arabic text <http://www.adab.com/modules.php?name=Sh3er&doWhat=shqas&qid=25291>

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| |  | | --- | | decoration  I Die of Love for Him  decoration  I die of love for him, perfect in every way, Lost in the strains of wafting music. My eyes are fixed upon his delightful body And I do not wonder at his beauty. His waist is a sapling, his face a moon, And loveliness rolls off his rosy cheek I die of love for you, but keep this secret: The tie that binds us is an unbreakable rope. How much time did your creation take, O angel? So what! All I want is to sing your praises.  *Love in Bloom*; after Monteil, p. 95  decoration  A Boy Is Worth More Than a Girl  decoration  For young boys, the girls I've left behind And for old wine set clear water out of mind. Far from the straight road, I took without conceit The winding way of sin, because this horse Has cut the reins without remorse, And carried away the bridle and the bit.  Here I am, fallen for a faun, A dandy who butchers Arabic. His forehead, brilliant like a full moon, Chases away the black night's gloom. He cares not for shirts of cotton Nor for the Bedouin's hair coat.  He sports a short tunic over his slender thighs But his shirt is long of sleeve. His feet are well-shod, and under his coat You can glimpse rich brocade.  He takes off on campaign and rides to attack Casting arrows and javelins; He hides the ardor of war, and his Attitude under fire is magnanimous.  Comparing a young boy to a young girl, I am ignorant. And yet, how can you mix up some bitch Who goes in monthly heat And drops a litter once a year With him I see on the fly.  How I wish he would come Return my greeting. I reveal to him all my thoughts Without fear of the imam, or of the muezin.  Abu Nuwas, *Le Vin, le Vent, la Vie*, (tr. Vincent Mansour Monteil), Sindbad, Paris, 1979, p. 91From: Abu Nuwas, *Le Vin, le Vent, la Vie*, (tr. Vincent Mansour Monteil), Sindbad, Paris, 1979, p. 72 | |