

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society

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Ancient mosque an endangered monument

The Al-Azhar mosque in Fez is one of the few places we can point to which has a definite association with Ibn 'Arabi. In the *Futuh* Ibn 'Arabi describes how, while leading the prayer here in 1196/593, he reached the Station of Light.

In 2005 a section of wall fell from a neighbouring property through the roof of the mosque. The risk of this happening had long been obvious, but remedial action had been slow in coming. Tragically, ten people were killed during prayers in the collapse.

The Regional Council of Tourism of Fez has succeeded in having the mosque included in a list of one hundred highly-threatened sites known as World Monuments Watch 2008. It has also requested 219,831 Euros of funding from the World Monuments Fund.

David Hornsby writes: On a recent trip to Fez I visited the Al-Azhar mosque, also known as the Ain el Khail after the area in which it lies. The king was very angry about the damage it had suffered, and much wooden scaffolding has since appeared throughout the old medina.

The event has focused the authorities' mind on the need to prop up the walls and secure many of the medina's ancient and ricketily precarious properties so as to avoid further mishaps.

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Part of a page of coded letters with explanation in Ibn 'Arabi's own hand, from the Berlin manuscript of the 'Anqa' Mughrib, written in Fez in 597H (1201).

A remarkable document

Earliest known Ibn 'Arabi manuscript

The Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (the Berlin State Library) houses one of the most important collections of oriental manuscripts in Europe.

During a recent stay in Berlin Stephen Hirtenstein had the opportunity to spend several days going through the manuscripts relating to Ibn 'Arabi and Sadruddin al-Qunawi. In general these are well-known works copied in 9th-13th century Hijra, i.e. at least 200 years after Ibn 'Arabi's lifetime, and therefore of less primary interest than some of the manuscripts which have been digitised from Turkish libraries. However, there are also some jewels of the kind that may appear in unexpected places. In the end 19 works were digitised for the Society archive.

Among these was the exceptional text which Gerald Elmore alerted us to in *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time* (pp.197-99). It is a precious copy of the 'Anqa' Mughrib, in a beautiful Maghribi hand, apparently written in Fez in 597H/1201 when Ibn 'Arabi was staying in the city. The work itself was composed approximately two years earlier. It is, as Elmore notes, "a truly remarkable document... not only the earliest known text of the 'Anqa' Mughrib but as far as I am aware, the oldest existing copy of any work by Ibn al-'Arabi."

Stephen Hirtenstein writes: I can confirm his findings, and add that the remains of the cover page (only the right-hand bottom corner survives)

Continued on Page 2





Pablo Beneito, Andrey Smirnov, Hilmi Yavuz, Ibrahim Kalin, William Chittick, James Morris – four of them Honorary Fellows of the Society – among the 159 speakers who came to Istanbul from 32 countries.

A major symposium to celebrate the 800th anniversary of Rumi's birth was held in Istanbul and Konya in May 2007, organized by Dr Mahmud Kiliç for the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Seyyed Hossein Nasr was a keynote speaker. A report by Qaiser Shahzad has been posted on the Symposium page of the Society web site.

Among the books related to this anniversary has been Alan Williams' translation of Book I of the *Masnawi*, published by Penguin. A foretaste of his translation of Book II appears opposite.

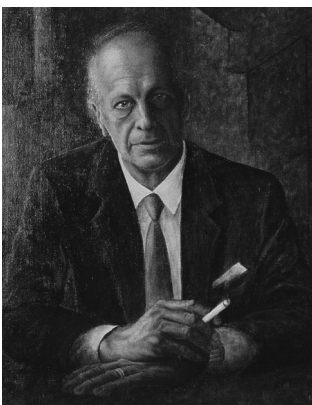
There is a conjunction between Rumi and Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi which, even if it cannot be exactly defined, is special.

Each of these great men speaks with a unique and completely original voice. What each of them wrote would stand out in any age. Born far apart, they ended up living within journeying distance of each other, like two wandering Mount Everests come to a halt side by side. There is no proof that they ever met, but there are indirect connections between them. Rumi knew Sadruddin Qunawi, the foremost student and heir of Ibn 'Arabi. It is probable that Shamsi Tabrizi, the focal point of so much of Rumi's expression, met Ibn 'Arabi in Damascus.

What each of them wrote exposes and invites to the highest possibility of being human. Given what they have in common, it is no surprise if those attracted to the meaning that Ibn 'Arabi points to also delight in the writings and presence of Jelaluddin Rumi.

Martin Notcutt

Frithiof Rundgren



The Society learned with sadness of the death of Professor Frithiof Rundgren on September 16th, 2006. Formerly Professor of Semitic Languages at Uppsala University, and Director of the Institute for Afro-Asiatic Languages, he was for 20 years an Honorary Fellow of the Society, and a kindly friend. His paper, "On the Dignity of Man – Some Aspects of the Unity of Being in Ibn 'Arabi", can be found on the Society web site

has some fragmentary lines in Ibn 'Arabi's own distinctive hand, mentioning al-Habashi, his own name, and the town of Fez in the month of Jumada al-Ula [59]7H (= Feb 1201). Below this is a barely legible and rather tantalising sama' certificate in a different hand, mentioning a reading of the whole work in front of at least four people (some of the names are too faint to be identified or are missing).

Two of these, Isma'il b. Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Ansari and 'Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad al-Lawati, are known to have also been present at the Cairo reading of the *Ruh al-quds* in 603H, and so could be counted as part of the original group of disciples and companions who came with Ibn 'Arabi from the Maghrib. In both cases the association was close and long-lasting: al-Ansari recited the *Taj al-rasa'il* in 613H in Ibn 'Arabi's house (probably in Malatya) while al-Lawati heard the *K. al-Isra'* in the author's house in Damascus in 633H.

The manuscript itself is in amazingly good condition given its age, despite the fragmentary nature of the first two pages. From the handwriting, which is extremely clear and beautiful, it would appear that this is the same scribe who wrote the now famous copy of the *Hilyat al-abdal* in 602H (which was stolen and then 'found' at Christies some seven years ago, and kick-started the MIAS archiving project). Perhaps it may even be the writing of al-Lawati himself. In addition, there are two pages of cryptic letters in Ibn 'Arabi's own handwriting (see Elmore, pp.580-82), which suggests that this may have been the main source copy of the work brought with him from the West.

It is hard to convey the extraordinary privilege of being able to physically handle such a remarkable work, earlier than any other of Ibn 'Arabi's writings, which has survived down the centuries, conveying to us a flavour of his time and a breath of the Master's presence.

The MIAS archive collection now consists of 898 digital copies (based on 1941 manuscripts inspected). In the next phase a catalogue will be produced, and some of the major findings presented in the Society Journal.

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“The beauty of His state cannot be told”

A translation from Rumi’s *Masnavi*
by Alan Williams

Dr Alan Williams is Reader in Iranian Studies and Comparative Religion at the University of Manchester. His translation of Book I of the *Masnavi* was recently published by Penguin. This passage is from his work in progress on Book II.

The passage I have chosen to present here (*Masnavi*, Book II, lines 157-193, ed. Este’lami) sums up so much of Rumi’s teaching, and will be immediately recognisable to readers of Muhyiddin Ibn al-‘Arabi’s works. Inimitably, and without the use of metaphysics or philosophical language, in the thinly-veiled guise of a story which he begins and abandons after two and a half couplets, Rumi goes to the very heart of Sufi teaching: it is a flight through imagery, metaphor and thought to the ecstatic utterance of certain knowledge in line 191. The passage ends in Rumi’s own self-silencing of lines 192-3. Readers are invited to experience for themselves this example of Rumi’s consummate poetic art, in the operation of what I have elsewhere referred to as his ‘open-heart surgery’ (see further the Introduction to my translation of the first book of the *Masnavi*, *Rumi Spiritual Verses*, Penguin Classics, 2006).

A Sufi wandered round the world’s horizons
till one night he resided in a lodge.
He had a beast, and tied it in the stable;
he took the honoured seat with his companions,
And then he joined his friends in contemplation:
friends’ presence is a book, and even more.
160 The Sufi’s book’s not written in black ink:
it’s nothing but a heart as white as snow.
The scholar’s sustenance is found in penmarks;
so what sustains the Sufi? Marks of footprints.
He’s like a hunter who is after game:
He sees the deer tracks and he’s on the trail.
For some time he will make do with the deer tracks,
and then he’s guided by the musk-deer gland.
When he is grateful for the track, and travelled,
that track will doubtless bring him his desire.
165 To go one stage upon the scent of musk-gland
is better than five score by tracks and traipsing.
That heart which is the rising place of moonbeams
is where the doors are opened for the wise.
To you it is a wall, to them a doorway;
to you a stone, a gemstone to the Dear Ones.
Those things which you see clearly in a mirror
the pir will see before you in a brick.
The pirs are those whose souls were in the sea
of grace before this world came into being.
170 They lived for lifetimes long before this body;
they harvested the wheat before the sowing.
Before the form they did receive the spirit;
they bored the pearls before the sea existed.
Creation’s plans were still in process when
their souls were neck-deep in God’s sea of power.



And while the angels were opposing that,
they clapped their hands at them in secret, jeering.
They were informed of every form that is,
before the Universal Soul was fettered. 175
Before the heavens were made they witnessed
Saturn;
they saw the bread before the seeds existed.
Without a brain and heart, they’re filled with
thought;
without an army and a war, they won.
For them that contemplation is their thought,
and yet to those far off it’s intuition.
Thought is about things past and things to come:
when it escapes these two, the problem’s solved.
[The spirit’s seen the wine within the grape,
the spirit sees the thing in non-existence.]¹
Conditioned things were seen as unconditioned,
before the mine true coin and fake distinguished. 180
And long before creation of the grapes
they tasted wine and felt its ecstasies.
They see December in a hot July,
and in the sunlight’s beams they see the shadows.
Inside the grape’s heart they have seen the wine:
in pure *fanâ* they’ve seen phenomena.
The sky drinks deeply from their circling cup,
the sun is swathed in gold by their abundance.
When you see two of these meet as companions,
they are both one and they’re six hundred
thousand.
They can be likened to the waves in number: 185
they’ll have been put in numbers by the wind.
The sun, which is the souls, is all divided
reflected in the windows of the bodies.
If you look at its disk, indeed it’s one,
but he who’s veiled by bodies is in doubt.
Disunion is within the animal soul:
in human souls the One Self is residing.
Since God ‘has sprinkled over them His light’
His light has never truly been divided. 190
Give up fatigue one moment, fellow traveller,
that I may picture one mole of His beauty.
The beauty of His state cannot be told.
Both worlds — what are they? Just His mole’s
reflection.
If I should breathe a word of His fair mole,
my speech is going to tear apart my body.
I’m happy as an ant inside a grain store
to bear a weight much greater than myself.

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¹ This couplet is not in Este’lami’s edition and may be a later interpolation.

Unveiling from the Effects of the Voyages

An introduction by Angela Jaffray to the *Kitâb al-Isfâr*, and a translation



Sunrise from
space

Having recently published her translation of Ibn 'Arabi's *Ittihâd al-kawni*, "The Universal Tree and the Four Birds", Angela Jaffray is now working on a translation of his *Kitâb al-isfâr 'an natâ'ij al-asfâr* – "Unveiling from the Effects of the Voyages". She has kindly given us a sample of that translation, and an introduction to the great theme of the *Isfâr*.

When a waystation appears to you, and you say: "This is the goal," another road opens up before you. You supply yourself with provisions for the road and take off. There is no waystation that you survey but that you say: "This is my goal." Then when you reach it, it is not long before you set out once more on the journey.¹

In the *Futûhât*'s Chapter on the Voyage, Ibn 'Arabî describes a poignant exchange between God and the gnostic voyager who, through repeated unveilings at numerous spiritual and conceptual waystations, has come to see God in everything. The voyager wants nothing more than to throw down his traveler's staff and find rest in his goal. But God informs him that this is impossible: voyaging has no end, either in this life or the hereafter. In a passage echoed in the *Isfâr*, which we present below, God describes the cosmological, physical, and eschatological voyages the soul, intellect, and body endure as they pass from waystation to waystation, undergoing ceaseless transformations.

How much you have voyaged through the stages of created beings until you were generated as blood in your father and mother! Then they came together for your sake, either with or without the intention of bringing you into manifestation. You passed from being sperm; then you passed from that form to a blood clot, then to a tiny piece of flesh and then to bone. Then the bone was clothed with flesh. Then you were configured in another way and expelled into this world. You passed to infancy, and from infancy to childhood, from childhood to adolescence, from adolescence to adulthood, from adulthood to middle age, and from middle age to old age, which is the most despised age. From here, [you will voyage] to the Barzakh² and voyage in the Barzakh to the Mustering. Then from the Mustering, you undertake a new voyage to the Bridge,³ either to the Garden or to the Fire, if you are one of its people. If you are not one of its people, you will voyage to the Garden and from the Garden to the Dune of Vision.⁴ You will continue to go back and forth between the Garden and the Dune always and forever. In the Fire, [its people] will continue to voyage, ascending and descending, descending and ascending, like a piece of meat in the pot [set to boil] upon the fire.⁵

There can be no doubt that the theme of the voyage was central to Ibn 'Arabi's thought, perhaps not surprising for a man who spent nearly half of his life on the road. Aside from a number of spiritual *mi'râj* narratives, he devotes six chapters of the *Futûhât* merely to explaining the difference between words relating to transferral from place to place.⁶ Voyaging (*safar*), for example, must be distinguished from wayfaring (*sulûk*) and wandering (*siyâha*). The wayfarer wanders freely on the highways and byways of this life, while the voyager has a destination.⁷ If we take into account the many discussions in Ibn 'Arabi's works relating to various aspects and categorizations of movement—ascents and descents; vertical, horizontal, and circular movements; voluntary and compelled movements; the "movements" (*harakât* = vowels) of the Arabic letters; the substantial motion of generation and corruption; the passage from dreams to their interpretation (*ta'bîr*); the ritual movements accompanying prayer⁸ and pilgrimage, as well as the constant reference to those temporary halting spots and watering holes we encounter before pressing onwards: stages, stations, waystations, mutual waystations – we find that there is virtually no page in the Shaykh's voluminous oeuvre that does not deal with the voyage.

All of these come together in Ibn 'Arabi's *Isfâr 'an natâ'ij al-asfâr* – Unveiling from the Effects of the Voyages – which traces the trajectory of a number of voyages: existential, metaphoric, and textual. Like all of Ibn 'Arabi's writings, the *Isfâr* is sui generis. Part cosmology, part Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsîr*) and stories of the prophets (*qisas al-anbiyâ*), part spiritual vademecum, its seventeen chapters deny categorization. Alongside the major themes of the book, gracefully summarized by the Shaykh in his Prologue, are myriad allusions to grammar, alchemy, astrology, and apocalypse. After an initial chapter discussing "the three voyages" – to God, from God, and with God – subsequent chapters are given titles characterizing the specific voyage dealt with therein: The lordly voyage of the All-Merciful from the Cloud to the Throne; the voyage of creation and command, or the voyage of origination; the voyage of the Qur'an; the voyage of the vision in the signs and the esoteric significations (Muhammad's *mir'âj*); Adam's voyage of trial; Idris' voyage of might and elevation in place and rank; Noah's voyage of salvation; Abraham's voyage of guidance; Lot's voyage of approach with no return; the voyage of ruse and trial involving Jacob and Joseph; and Moses' voyages of the divine tryst, satisfaction; anger and return; striving for one's family; fear; and a final chapter on precaution.

This excerpt, "The voyage of approach and no return, which is the voyage of Lot toward Abraham the Intimate Friend, Peace be upon him," may provide some sense of the work.

The Voyage of Approach and no Return

which is the voyage of Lot toward Abraham the Intimate Friend

The voyage of approach and no return, which is the voyage of Lot toward Abraham the Intimate Friend, Peace be upon him.

His meeting with him is in "Certainty."⁹

The tradition reported concerning this is well known and preserved by the religious scholars, but its spirit with us is something we should seek to interpret esoterically.

Know that the name "Lot" is a noble name of majestic value for it means attachment¹⁰ to the Divine Presence. For that reason, He said: "...or that I could betake myself to some powerful support" (Q. 11:80)—he meant the tribe—"because I cannot pass from the divine support to the creaturely support." The Messenger of God—God's blessing and peace be upon him—bore witness to him regarding that by saying: "God have mercy on my brother Lot, who sought refuge in a strong support." How excellent are the witness and the one for whom he bore witness, for he sought to rely upon Him and to cling to Him with respect to knowledge of God. He was called "Lot," and [this name] was not attributed to any but him. [God] made him travel by night because he voyaged in the Unseen, since the expression *isrâ'* is only applied to night travel, by way of esoteric interpretation, not [exoteric] explication. It was said to him: "Travel by night with your family" (Q. 11:81), i.e., with everything of your essence, "and witness all of the realities, 'except thy wife' (Q. 11:81)." We interpret this esoterically as the command to leave his soul that commands to evil, which has no portion in the supernal ascents of the heart. He betook himself to *al-Yaqîn* [=Certainty], which is a place well known, called by that name, and in it he awaited Abraham the Intimate Friend—peace be upon him—who was staying there. For this reason, [the Prophet]—God's blessing and peace be upon him—said: "We have more reason to doubt than Abraham,"¹¹ because of his knowledge that Abraham the Intimate Friend was in "Certainty." The prophet Lot—peace be upon him—obtained this station. In the morning, certainty came to him, because when the sun rose and unveiled things to his eye after they were hidden, it provided certainty without doubt or equivocation.

This is an example of our share in Lot's voyage and in every voyage that I have spoken about as well. I speak about it only as far as my own self is concerned. It is not my intention to explicate the actual story in [the case of the prophets]. These voyages are only bridges and pontoons that are placed for us to cross over upon to our essences and the states that are specific to us. There is utility in them for us, since God has set them up as passageways for us. "And all that We relate unto thee of the story of the messengers is in order that thereby We may make firm thy heart. And herein hath come unto thee the Truth and an exhortation and a reminder for the believers" (Q. 11:120). How

eloquent is the Most High's saying: "And herein hath come unto thee the Truth," and His saying: "as a reminder" of that which is in you and with you of that which you have forgotten. What I have narrated to you is to remind you of what is in you and what I have called to your attention, so you will know that you are everything, in everything, and from everything.

I am from everything,

And I am with the Real in everything.

I am a shadow that becomes manifest through Him.

And if I am a shadow, I am an afternoon shadow.¹²

My very fall is my ascent to Him,
With the most auspicious of stars¹³

For every living being.

My right conduct has gone

Beyond every right conduct

And my straying has gone beyond every straying,

Just as He is with every one, dead or living,

So is He in every unfolding and folding.

"And God speaks the truth and He guides on the Path" (Q. 33:14)



Footnotes

1. *Isfâr*, par. 3. 2. The intermediate world. 3. This Bridge passes through the Fire and leads to the Garden.

4. Arabic: *kathîb al-ru'yâ*. The Dune is mentioned in Q. 73:14. According to tradition, the Dune of Vision, made of white musk, is situated in the Garden of Eden, the most elevated of the Gardens. It is here that the inhabitants of the Garden will meet to contemplate God. See *Fut.* I.320; III.442. 5. *Isfâr*, par. 4. 6. See James W. Morris' article in *Journey of the Heart*; revised in *The Reflective Heart*.

7. *Fut.* II.382. This difference is reflected in Islamic Law: The wayfarer must complete the full ritual prayer while the voyager curtails it; the wayfarer fasts during Ramadan; the voyager is exempt.

8. See *Fut.* I, Chapter 27. 9. Arabic: *yaqîn*. This is also the name of the town to which Lot was reported to have fled.

10. Ibn 'Arabi connects the name "Lût" to the word *lâta*, to cling or adhere to. 11. See Q. 2:260.

12. Arabic: *fay'*. As Denis Gril (*Dévoilement des effets du voyage*, p. 50, n. 113), explains, *zill* is shadow in general, *fay'* is the specific kind of shadow that extends with the sun's declination. 13. Arabic: *sa'd al-su'ûd*. The twenty-fourth lunar mansion, considered the most favorable of the cluster of stars known as *su'ûd*.

Postgraduate work around the world

Ongoing studies in Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, the UK and the USA

Brazil, Pontifica Universidade Catolica do Parana. Sandra Benato, "*Tawhid* and the heart of itself. Unicity and identity in Ibn 'Arabi – notes for the study of the essential identity." Based on Ibn 'Arabi's concept of *'ayn thabitah* this study focuses on a deeper understanding of the human identity and subjectivity. As a psychotherapist I have been observing, for the last 18 years, how the essential identity underlies and structures our practising of 'selfhood'. It is possible to see and develop awareness of the flow of the essence through our behaviour and circumstances of life. So, 'know thyself, know your Lord' becomes a daily living out experience.

Egypt, American University in Cairo. Reham Elnory. MA Thesis Title: "Ibn 'Arabi's Primacy of Consciousness: Being Found and Finding the Real" The irreducible primaries in any philosophical argument are drawn from a certain metaphysical worldview. Any metaphysical system asks and seeks to answer the questions: Is there a reality? Why is there something rather than nothing? How does it come to be and why is it there? Ibn 'Arabi's unique answers to these questions reveals a reality with a clearly articulated origin and telos, a reality where consciousness is prior, for existence "*wujud*" is nothing but finding, and we come to exist through God's finding of us, which is ultimately God's finding of Himself.

Indonesia: post-graduate studies at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta.

Kautsar Noer writes: Sumanta finished his doctoral dissertation, entitled "*Al-Insân al-Kâmil* in Sufi Perspective: A Comparative Study of Al-Ghazali and Al-Jili", in March 2007.

M. Afif Anshori finished his doctoral dissertation in June 2007, entitled "The Sufi Teachings in Shekh Siti Jenar's *Serat*". (*Serat* is a Javanese word which means literary work or writing). Shekh Siti Jenar was a controversial and legendary figure in Java. The dissertation is an answer to the accusa-

tion by exoteric religious scholars that the teachings of Shekh Siti Jenar are outside the Islamic frame, and demonstrates Ibn 'Arabi's influence on him.

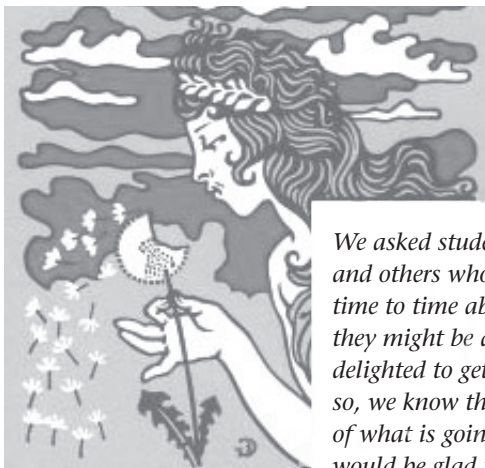
Miftah Arifin has finished his doctoral dissertation, entitled "*Wujudiyah* in Nusantara: Exploring the Continuity and Changes of the Doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujûd* in Indonesia of the 16th - 19th Centuries." He is interested in this subject because *Wujudiyah*, the well-known Malay designation for *Wahdat al-Wujud*, has been often misunderstood and led to the labels of "heretic", "apostate", "misled", etc. to the doctrine. He demonstrates that *Wujudiyah* as a concept and school of Sufism in Indonesia had been continuously developed and changed in various new forms.

Mohammad Yusuf has been doing his doctoral dissertation, entitled "The Poetry of Love in Sufi Literature: A *Balâghah* Study of the Poems of Ibn 'Arabi's *Tarjumân al-Ashwâq*." (*Balâghah* is an Arabic word which means eloquence; art of good style, art of composition; literature. *Ilm al-balâghah* is an Arabic technical term which means rhetoric.) Yusuf chose this subject because the *Tarjumân* is a *diwân* which is very often misunderstood by scholars who accuse Ibn 'Arabi of producing an erotic work under the pretence that the verses in it were mystical poems. Yusuf wanted to demonstrate that the *Tarjumân* contains esoteric and symbolic verses expressing its author's love for the Beloved.

Umdah El Baroroh has been doing her magisterial work, "The Feminine Dimensions in Ibn 'Arabi's *Tarjumân*." She chose this subject because the *Tarjumân* is a literary, spiritual work which highly appreciates women and strongly emphasizes the feminine dimensions as symbol of divine beauty and love.

Spain, University of Seville. Gracia López Anguita: In 2006 I completed my Masters dissertation on "The Genies in Islam. Translation and commentary of Chapter Nine of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi's *al-Futûhât al-Makkiyya*". The Sheikh al-Akbar explains the origin of the *djinn*, their position with regard to human beings and angels, the rebel act of Iblis, and the close relationship between the *djinn* and one of the central concepts of Ibn Arabi's thought, the *barzakh*. I am now preparing my Ph.D. thesis on angels, devils and *djinns* in the work of Ibn 'Arabi and other muslim gnostics.

United Kingdom, Cambridge University. Huzayfa Mangera. The tentative title of my M. Phil. dissertation is: "Inspiration: the *Futûhât al-Makkiyya* and the *Rûh al-Quds*." The study



*Je sème à tout vent –
I sow in any wind.
A famous image from Le
Petit Larousse, 1905.*

We asked student members of the Society and others who have contacted us from time to time about post-graduate work they might be doing in this field, and were delighted to get such a good response. Even so, we know that this is only a fraction of what is going on round the world, and would be glad to learn more.

considers some of the repercussions of Ibn 'Arabi's frequent claims to 'inspiration' for his relationship to the wider Islamic tradition – especially a) the Qur'an and b) the religious jurists of his time (*fuqaha' al-zaman*). The discussion concentrates on the *Futûhât al-Makkiyya* (together with the interpretive obstacles this work proposes) and how (and whether) these can be resolved within the *Rûh al-Quds*.

United Kingdom, Glasgow University.

David Heath, "The problem of diversity and the imperative of dialogue." David is writing this masters dissertation to familiarise himself with the English literature on Ibn 'Arabi with particular focus on how 'Arabi's thoughts support an esoteric dialogue between Islam and other religious traditions and through this a basis for defence of religion against the onslaught of the secular west. He hopes to develop this into PhD work.

United Kingdom, Oxford University.

Denis McAuley is working on a doctoral dissertation entitled, "An analysis of selected poems from Ibn 'Arabi's *Diwân*." I am discussing a small number of poems from the *Diwân* to see how they use formal features such as metre and rhyme, how they fit in a wider literary context, and what they tell us about Ibn 'Arabi's understanding of poetry.

United Kindom, SOAS, London.

Husam Almallak is a Ph.D. student at The School of Oriental and African Studies, department of the Study of Religions. My thesis title is "Post-Secular Islamic Religiosity: Re-reading Ibn 'Arabi's Hermeneutics of Nothingness". In this I explore how Continental Philosophy as espoused by the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger can provide for a 'bridge' between secular thought and Islamic religiosity. In essence the thesis postulates that secular thought need not be antithetical to religiosity, rather it can lead to a 'post-secular' religiosity. This is fundamentally founded on the hermeneutic philosophy nihilism (as the foundation of secular thought) and the concept of nothingness."

USA, Yale University. Matthew Warren, tentative Ph.D. Dissertation Topic: "The Interpretation of Ibn al-Farid's *Ta'ïyyah al-Kubra* from Farghani to Jami." Sa'id al-Din Farghani's (d. 699/1300) influential Persian and Arabic commentaries, the first to be written on that high point of Arabic Sufi poetry, the *Ta'ïyyah al-Kubra* of Ibn al-Farid (d. 632/1235), were praised by Jami some two centuries later as being the most coherent and systematic exposition of the doctrines of the Ibn al-'Arabi school; as such, they proved of central importance to the development of that school's thought through several of its interpretive projects.

If you know about somebody doing post-graduate work in this area, please tell the Society about it.

Ancient mosque

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The Al-Azhar mosque dates from the twelfth century and is in the Almohad style. Architecturally it is the only octagonal minaret perched on a flying buttress in the entire Maghreb.

In reaching the Station of Light, Ibn 'Arabi had a vision of himself as one total eye capable of seeing in every direction, and being like a sphere, inheriting from Mohammed this status of being 'without a nape'.

In *The Quest for the Red Sulphur*, Claude Addas relates that only those who have reached such a circular vision have the right to perform prayers on horseback, and it is a strange coincidence that the mosque is situated in the district known as the 'Source of the horse'.

The pool where the horses of the medina still love to come and drink the water is adjacent to the ruined mosque. Plastic rubbish abounds, and yet, apparently, the very large fish which sometimes appears in the pool is still around; we were told that it has been seen quite recently.

Being unable to go inside because of the building's current highly perilous condition, we made a fairly hair-raising ascent onto its roof via a steep unlit stairwell in a neighbouring house. From there we were able to look through the cracked roof onto the floor of the mosque many feet below, to precisely where Ibn 'Arabi was leading the prayer when he had his experience. We leaned over an external wall and gazed into the clear pond which the very large fish inhabits.

The application for funding envisages that the restored building will function not only as a mosque but also as a library concentrating on the works of the Shaykh and their translations, and as a place of meditation open to all.

Those who are leading the restoration project would very much like to see the mosque become a centre for the study of Ibn 'Arabi in Morocco – where his significance, importance and the time he spent in Fez are not well known. They are open to active cooperation with the Society to make use of the restored space, and would very particularly welcome help to establish a library of the Shaykh's works there.



The Society Library, though limited in size, has relevant works in 18 or more languages. These ones are in Swedish, Russian, Bosnian, German, Czech and Indonesian.

Unified Vision – Unified World?

Symposium in Oxford, in Berkeley, and on the internet

Richard Twinch writes: This year's Oxford symposium, held as for the last few years in the beautiful surroundings of Worcester College, invited a lively exchange of views. Several of the speakers noted that it was the question mark at the end of the title which opened up the debate – indicating that the subject was not cut and dried, but could be interpreted according to context. We were presented with a series of diverse presentations which nonetheless all contributed to the harmonious flavour of the weekend; difference, we were reminded by one delegate, does not mean division.



Kautsar Noer presents his paper at the Oxford symposium. Dr Noer has become an Honorary Fellow of the Society.

Another dimension of this year's symposium is that some of the papers have already been broadcast as the Ibn 'Arabi Society 'podcasts' – available free through the Internet (go to podcast section on the MIAS website) These have been recommended on the internet on a number of 'blogs':

"Ibn 'Arabi Society has made available many beautiful and valuable audio talks in its website. They have great spiritual wisdom, inspiration and deeper understanding of reality – a great way to appreciate what the richness of Islamic philosophy has to offer to humanity."

So far three talks from the recent symposium have been broadcast:

Jane Clark 'As if you saw Him – vision and best action.' She is inspired by a recent trip to Fatehpur Sikri where the great Mughal Emperor Akbar attempted to establish a universal religion - which failed in its time but is perhaps the precursor to a world of peaceful co-existence.

Elias Amidon, who is well versed in the practicalities of the 'right and beautiful action' in the development of the Abraham Path, speaks of 'Crossing Borders: the Question of Human Belonging and Ibn 'Arabi's Theory of perpetual Transformation' .

Salman Bashier: 'Radical Vision and Universal Religion in Ibn 'Arabi' follows Moses, Medusa and the post-modern philosopher John Hick in his quest for meaning.

Berkeley, October 27-28, 2007

The US Society's 20th annual symposium will be held at the Faculty Club of the University of California at Berkeley, focusing on the theme "Unified Vision – Unified World?" Speakers include:

Pablo Beneito, from Seville University, who has published several editions and translations of works by Ibn 'Arabi.

Vincent Cornell of Emory University in Georgia, who has published several books, including "The Way of Abu Madyan".

Suha Taji Farouki, whose translation of Ibn 'Arabi's "A Prayer for Spiritual Elevation and Protection" (*Hizb al-wiqâya*), was published in 2006.

Pilar Garrido, from Seville, a researcher who who is currently writing on Tustari, Ibn Masarra and Ibn 'Arabi.

Angela Jaffray, whose translation of *al-Ittihâd al-kawnî* was published in September 2006.

Gregory Lipton, from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, who is researching a 17th C Indian Chishti Saint, Muhibb Allah Ilahabadi, who is known in India as "the second Ibn 'Arabi"

Peter Yiangou, an architect who lives in the UK and is a student of the Beshara School.

All are welcome. There is no registration fee, although a suggested donation is appreciated.

Annual General Meeting, Oxford

The Annual General Meeting of the Society in the UK will be held on Sat. 3rd November 2007 at The Friends Meeting House at 2.30 pm. All are welcome. Further details will be posted on the website.

Other events

Granada, Spain Conference organised by The New York Open Center, "An Esoteric Quest for The Golden Age of Andalusia - Sufis, Kabbalists and Christian Philosophers in Medieval Spain." September 15-20, 2007.

Oxford The University of Oxford Department of Continuing Education is offering a course entitled, "Human Universality in Islamic Mysticism: An Introduction to the Thought of Ibn 'Arabi", led by Stephen Hirstenstein and Jane Clark. October 3 - December 12, 2007.

Oxford Symposium 2008. The Society's 25th annual symposium in the UK will be held at Worcester College on April 26 – 27, 2008.

Jakarta, Indonesia - Wednesday evenings Paramadina continues its course entitled "Introductory Study of Ibn 'Arabi's *Fusûs al-Hikam*," which began in 2006. The Teacher is Dr. Muhammad Baqir, a graduate of Madarasah Hujjatiyyeh, Qom, Iran.

For details of these and other events see the News page of the Society website: www.ibnarabisociety.org