

Yet picturing your fairness --
 The pearl-and-coral of your teeth and lips;
 The sunlight in your face, on which night falls in cloudy tresses;
 Your beauty's veil, which clothes your eyes
 As you are clothed by silks and embroideries
 (Though none's the needlework that vies with Nature's splen-
 dor, Nature's grace) --
 Yes, when I think of all the youths and maidens
 Who, though freborn, would rather be your slaves,
 And know that even stars and constellations
 Are of your sisters and your brothers envious --
 Then all I ask of Time's vast hoard is this:
 Your girdled waist, the red thread of those hips
 That were my honeycomb, and your two breasts,
 In which are hidden myrth and all good scents.
 O would that you wore me as a seal upon your arms
 As I wear you on mine! May both my hands
 Forget their cunning if I forget the days,
 My dearest, of our love's first bliss!
 Hard for the heart made vagrant are the memories
 Of your ambrosia on my lips -- but could I mix
 My exhalations with their perfumed essence,
 And each piece twisted into curlicues.

O swear by Love that you remember days of embraces
 As I remember nights crammed with your kisses,
 And that, as through my dreams your likeness passes,
 So does mine through yours!
 Between us lies a sea of tears I cannot cross.
 Yet should you but approach its moaning waves,
 They'd part beneath your steps,
 And if, though dead, I heard the golden bells
 Make music on your skirt, or your voice asking how I was,
 I'd send my love to you from the grave's depths.
 That you have shed my blood, I have two witnesses --
 Your lips and cheeks. Don't say their crimson lies!
 What makes you want to be my murderess
 When I would only add years to your years?
 You steal the slumber from my eyes,
 Which, would it increase your sleep, I'd give you gratis.
 My vaporous sighs are stoked by passion's flames,
 And I am battered by your icy hoes,
 And thus it is that I am caught, alas,
 Between fire and the flood, hot coals and cold deluges.
 My heart, half sweetness and half bitterness,
 Honeyed kisses mixed with hemlock of adieux,
 Has been shredded by you into pieces,
 And each piece twisted into curlicues.

FOLD

..... FOLD

FOLD

I would have a way to kiss you always.
 Are women praised for their perfections?
 Perfection in you is praised for being yours.
 The fields of love have many harvesters --
 And your harvest is bowed down to by their sheaves.
 God grant that I may live to drain the lees,
 Once more, of your limbs' sweet elixirs!
 Although I cannot hear your voice,
 I listen, deep within me, for your footsteps.
 O on the day that you revive Love's fallen legions
 Slain by your sword, think of this corpse
 Abandoned by its spirit for your travels!
 If life, my love, will let you have your wishes,
 Tell it you wish to send a friend regards.
 May it bring you to your destinations,
 And God return you to your native grounds!

WHY, MY DARLING, HAVE YOU BARRED ALL NEWS

YEHUDA HALEVI

Why, my darling, have you barred all news
 From one who aches for you inside the bars of his own ribs?
 Surely you know a lover's thoughts
 Care only for the sound of your hellos!
 At least, if parting was the fate reserved for us,
 You might have lingered till my gaze had left your face.
 God knows if there's a heart caged in these ribs
 Or it has fled to join you in your journeys.