

On Love

Al-Katib al-Masri, February 1946

Some will smile at this title and others will frown, and among those who smile there will be those who do so with pleasure, because they wish to read something about love, and those who smile with a smirk, because they are displeased that love should be the subject of a discussion in a journal from which they expect earnest rigour and have no wish to see it given over to idle chatter. As for those who frown, their frowning will be pure displeasure, for talk of love is frivolity through and through — and heaven knows there are enough newspapers and magazines that babble in frivolity and drown in it!

And yet our life in the early era was more generous than all this, and more at ease, and talk of love used not to provoke displeasure or frowns, but rather satisfaction and delight, calling often enough to reflection and thought. There passed in our literary and intellectual history an era when love was neither a jest nor a pleasantry, but was a wholly serious affair, not without a measure of rigour and gravity on many occasions. The love of the poets of northern Hijaz and Najd was not a pastime, nor licence, nor a source of banter and wit; it was rather a part of life's earnestness, called forth by circumstances of politics and religion, so that the love poets were drawn into something of mysticism — perhaps the finest thing in our ancient Arabic poetry that still merits survival. We read it today and find in it a repose and a pleasure unmarred by licence and unconnected with any inclination toward frivolity and diversion; the soul finds in it, rather, a spiritual nourishment that elevates it above the pettiness of life, and consoles it for those daily trivialities that drag it down from the high station it aspires to for itself. Moreover, this ardour that swept the Arab soul in Najd and northern Hijaz did not hesitate to invade the stern and severe religious and scholarly circles of Mecca and Medina: the poetry of Jamil, Kuthayyir, and the two men named Qays was recited in the Sacred Mosque and recited in the Prophet's Mosque, and was enjoyed in these two hallowed sanctuaries by men who had devoted themselves to the transmission of religious learning, who found no scruple or impropriety in this; and some of them perhaps went beyond this enjoyment of love's discourse and the poetry recited therein to love itself — suffering, if love meant suffering, and rejoicing, if love meant joy, and tasting its painful sweetness and its bitter delight, if it is permissible to say that delight can be painful and sweetness can be bitter.

'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi 'Ammar al-Jushami was a man of Quranic recitation and of hadith transmission, of devotion to asceticism and piety, of dedication to worship and obedience, so that the people of Mecca gave him the epithet al-Qiss — the Priest. Yet none of this prevented him, when he beheld Sallama and heard her singing, from loving her with a love that ended in infatuation and made of him an amorous poet like other love poets. He found in this no scruple and no wrong, for it did not involve him in sin or transgression; and 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi 'Ammar al-Qiss is the man who, speaking of Sallama, composed these two exquisite lines:

*Sallama — is there no one among you to help me,
or any to restrain my heart from you?*

*The people have heard of my longing for you —
among them are the blamer and the one who pardons.*

The transmitters claim that Sallama came to love al-Qiss and that he was made to love her too, and that she resolved one day to kiss him, or to press her mouth to his, as the transmitters say; but he refused her, preferring the purity of heart and clarity of conscience, fearful that were he to enjoy her love in this world he would suffer for it in the next and become one of those intimate friends turned enemies whom the Holy Quran has described.

Ibn 'Abbas — God have mercy on him — as all people know, preferred listening to the love poetry of Ibn Abi Rabi'a over listening to the questions of Nafi' ibn al-Azraq on jurisprudence, hadith, and Quranic exegesis. The ancients were more generous of soul than we are and more receptive to the affairs of life; they took themselves to task where self-reproach was fitting and were lenient with themselves where leniency was fitting, and they did not burden themselves with that fatuous rigour and bigotry that signify nothing. And I, for my part, after all this, do not wish to speak of love so as to commend it or discourage it, to praise it or censure it; indeed, I do not wish to speak of love as a thing in itself at all. What I wish to do is speak of it insofar as it was the subject of inquiry, study, and composition by two great men of letters — one an Arab Muslim of the past, the other a European Christian of the modern era. The first is Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi, and the second is Stendhal the Frenchman. The first lived in the eleventh century, the second in the nineteenth; between them lie some eight centuries, and for all that they differ most profoundly and can scarcely be said to agree on anything but the very slightest of things.

For Ibn Hazm was a Muslim of deep commitment to Islam, believing in it with sincere and unshakeable faith, a faith that elevated him to something approaching asceticism; he devoted his life, or most of it, to the study of the Islamic and Arabic sciences. He was a precise transmitter of hadith, a skilled jurist, a specialist in theology and a master of dialectic, well versed in the affairs of the Islamic sects, attacking most of them and defending the few, championing Islam, criticising what the Christians and Jews had inherited from Christianity and Judaism, challenging every religious question with study, analysis, and critique, setting forth his view upon it and supporting it with what he considered conclusive proof and irrefutable demonstration. He was thus a man of religion — of those men of religion who consecrated themselves and their lives to its study and investigation, to defending it and standing in its service.

He held a particular religious doctrine that was not that of the majority of Muslims: he was a Zahirite, a literalist, championing the explicit text and abhorring allegorical interpretation, neither given to such interpretation himself nor inclined toward it — and for that reason he was disputed not only in theology but in jurisprudence as well, and for that same reason he was the most exacting of scholars in matters of the Arabic language, profoundly versed in every branch of knowledge connected with it. He was a philologist, a genealogist, a transmitter of poetry, literature, and historical reports; and before all else he came from a family that had held ministerial office, been associated with the court, worked in the government bureaux, and directed the affairs of state, and he participated in some of the burdens borne by that family — yet he turned himself away from politics, or was turned away from it by circumstances toward scholarship, until he encompassed everything that constituted Islamic and Arabic culture in that age, and then was not content to be an eminent scholar, but wished to be an eminent teacher as well, and an eminent author too. Such was Ibn Hazm.

As for Stendhal, he was born in the era of the French Revolution, took part in the political and military tribulations that filled the age of Napoleon, fought at more than one of that great commander's battlefields, and witnessed the major events that convulsed France, then convulsed Europe, then convulsed the whole world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By upbringing, environment, and the age in which he lived, he was Christian in complexion, liberal in conscience, vast in culture to the furthest possible degree — yet he was neither a

minister nor did he aspire to be, neither a teacher nor did he aspire to be; he lived for himself first of all, and was endowed with a subtle mind and a fertile intellect, a quick conscience, a refined sensibility, and an outstanding artistic gift, so that he could not but paint his own life and the life of those around him and the life of the age in which he lived.

The difference between these two men is remote to the furthest extreme, yet for all that they meet in certain respects: both were European in birth and upbringing — Ibn Hazm was born, grew up, and lived in Spain, and Stendhal was born and lived in France and elsewhere in the European lands.

I mentioned just now that Ibn Hazm was an Arab Muslim; by his Arabness I did not intend that narrow meaning that pertains to lineage and blood — it might be said that Ibn Hazm was not an Arab by pure lineage — but rather the Arabness that pertains to culture, politics, religion, language, and upbringing, those characteristics that are a thousand times more important than nationality and race.

The two men were thus both Europeans, yet one lived an Arab life and the other a French life, one was a son of the eleventh century and the other a son of the nineteenth; and there was another point on which the two men met: both lived in ages of trial and upheaval. Ibn Hazm lived through the collapse of the Umayyad state in Andalusia and the dissolution of the political order in that portion of Europe — or, if you will, in that portion of the old Islamic world — and he witnessed the transfer of power from the Umayyads to their chamberlains, then the collapse of authority around those chamberlains, then the rise of the party kings, the intervention of the Berbers in the affairs of the Arab-Spaniards; and he did not witness all this from his ivory tower, but as a participant, scorched by its fires, bearing its consequences — he tasted imprisonment, was expelled from his lands, was tossed from city to city across Andalusia and indeed across the cities of the western Islamic world; he crossed to Ifriqiya, crossed to the Balearic Islands, and throughout all this suffered varieties of tribulation and afflictions of misfortune.

Stendhal lived through the era of the Revolution and the wars that Napoleon stirred up or that were stirred up against him; he took part in those wars, triumphing when Napoleon triumphed and routed when Napoleon was routed, and those wars compelled him to wander through the regions of Europe — to Germany, Austria, and Russia — and he

settled in Italy for a long stay before finally returning to France.

What matters in relation to these two men is not merely that they lived through an age of trial and upheaval and were affected by it in their outward material lives; what matters is that both were endowed with a fine and delicate sensibility, a surging emotion, a sharp and elevated taste, and were affected by this trial and by this upheaval, and lived a life of displeasure, eccentricity, and unease — not a life of satisfaction, composure, and eagerness to conform to the generation in which they lived.

Ibn Hazm was an eccentric in turbulent Muslim Spain, and Stendhal was an eccentric in turbulent Christian France; both were displeased by what they saw, critical of what they witnessed, retreating into themselves and consoling themselves with their learning and their writing for the calamities taking place around them.

In all this the two men differed and agreed, and from this Ibn Hazm turned his attention to the linguistic and religious sciences, while Stendhal turned his to narrative and purely literary prose. It may be useful to pause with these two authors for a moment; for it may be instructive to see how the old Muslim man of letters and the modern Christian man of letters concerned themselves with this weighty matter that is love.

And when I say that love is a weighty matter, I speak on the authority of Ibn Hazm on one side and of Stendhal on the other, and have no need to speak on the authority of the poets' verse, or of the men of letters, or of life itself — for I am not writing an essay on love as such, but an essay on love as these two men of letters portrayed it.

It seems evident that love was truly dangerous in Muslim Spain in the days of Ibn Hazm, and nothing better attests this than that this hadith scholar, jurist, theologian, philosopher, and exile from his homeland devoted himself to writing a treatise on it — and he would not have devoted himself to writing that treatise had not a friend among his fellow jurists and hadith scholars and men of letters asked him to write it; for had the matter not carried something of danger, that scholar and man of letters would not have asked Ibn Hazm to devote himself to it and write on it, nor would Ibn Hazm have responded to what was asked of him when he was on the wing of a journey, having been uprooted from his homeland and settled in Jativa only to move from it to yet another place of exile.

Then we read Ibn Hazm's book and find that love preoccupied Ibn Hazm throughout his life just as jurisprudence, exegesis, hadith, and theology preoccupied him; and we read Ibn Hazm's book and find that love preoccupied not him alone, nor him and the friend who asked him to write the book together, but evidently all the people of Muslim Spain in Ibn Hazm's day — and it perhaps preoccupied the cultivated and distinguished more than it preoccupied ordinary people.

As for France — love is a dangerous thing there at all times, and that needs no demonstration; but you will come to see that Stendhal did not regard love in the way his French compatriots had accustomed themselves to regard it.

I am tempted to believe that the image in our minds of Muslim Spain during the fifth century of the Hijra — at the very least — is not fully faithful to the actual reality. We read jurisprudence, philosophy, hadith, theology, and philology, and we read the chronicles of civil strife and war, and we come away with the impression that Muslim Spain in the fifth century was a land of gloomy earnestness, vile upheavals, and corrosive discord that damaged souls — and we can scarcely exempt from this picture anything but those special circles that stood out for their cultivation of pleasure and their devotion to poetry, music, and song. But Ibn Hazm gives us in his book *Tawq al-Hamama* another image of Muslim Spain in that era — the image of a homeland in which all the people tasted love, were tested by its delights and pains, were exposed to it as they were exposed to life's other trials, indeed exposed to it as they were exposed to death, with no distinction in this between the serious-minded among them and the light-hearted, between those who devoted themselves to learning and religion and those who devoted themselves to literature and art and those who devoted themselves to politics and war.

In all likelihood the affairs of all people everywhere run in this same way, but the degree of freedom people have in depicting and expressing it varies according to country, environment, and circumstance; and it appears that Muslim Spain enjoyed an extraordinary latitude — not in love alone but in speaking of love as well. It is true that Ibn Hazm felt some scruple, or very nearly felt some scruple, about writing on this subject, but he did not delay in relieving himself of that scruple by citing precedents in the opening of the book and urging obedience and discouraging transgression, and recording an encouragement to jurisprudence at the end of the book. For Ibn Hazm transmitted with his connected chain of transmission to Abu al-Darda' — God have mercy on

him — that he used to say: "Give the souls some measure of the frivolous, that it may be an aid to them in the service of the true." And he transmitted other precedents from a company of the pious early Muslims.

This was something like a request for permission to enter this weighty subject, which it appears Ibn Hazm pondered and lived with from his youth until his death. What Ibn Hazm and Stendhal most have in common is that neither wished to write of love in the manner of the dilettante and the affecter, but each wished to write of it in the manner of the scholar who prefers inquiry and investigation, who relies on observation and witnessing, and who derives from all this principles and rules that are more akin to science and closer to it than they are to literature. What concerns them is not to recount stories, nor to invoke imagination, nor to philosophise where philosophy does not belong; what concerns them is to look at reality, to turn toward it, and to take from it without affectation or artifice. They both seek knowledge and rely on observed phenomena — but one lives in the eleventh century and the other in the nineteenth, and between the life of the human mind in these two eras lies a great distance: Ibn Hazm lives in the age of kalam and metaphysics, while Stendhal lives in the age of science and experiment, so it is no surprise that Ibn Hazm should be a philosopher when he interprets observed phenomena, while Stendhal should be a pragmatist when he interprets those same phenomena.

And from this Ibn Hazm set about defining love as people in his era set about defining everything, defining it in the philosophical manner of the logicians: he first establishes that love is an actual reality from which there is no turning and no escape, and that it is therefore a thing permitted, which neither religion nor custom can condemn so long as it does not transgress the bounds of religion and custom; and he mentions the love that afflicted certain princes of the Umayyad line in Andalusia and certain princes of the Fatimid line in Egypt, and the love that afflicted some jurists who were descendants of the Companions and Successors and what Ibn 'Abbas ruled in certain matters connected with love, and then he mentions what he calls "the quiddity of love" — a term he derives from the word "what" (ma), equivalent to the term mahiyya used by the eastern logicians: as if the easterners derived their term from "what is it?" (ma huwa), while Ibn Hazm and his Andalusian colleagues derived theirs from "what" (ma) alone, making the alif into a hamza in forming the relative noun. The quiddity of love, as Ibn Hazm says — or its mahiyya, as the easterners say — is, according to Ibn Hazm: "the union

between the portions of the soul that in this creation have been divided at the root of their noble element."

Ibn Hazm subscribed to the view held by certain ancient Greek philosophers, that there exists a noble element from which a single soul is constituted, whose portions have been distributed among all created beings possessed of souls; a union may occur between some of these portions distributed among people, and love results, and a separation may occur, and hatred results; and in proportion to the strength or weakness of the union, love grows strong or weak, and in proportion to the strength or weakness of the separation, hatred intensifies or abates.

This union is nothing but a correspondence of form, a similarity of nature, and a longing of one part of the soul for another part of the soul; and it is the contingent accidents that distance these portions from each other or allow them to draw near and unite. Ibn Hazm does not like to follow the doctrine of his master Muhammad ibn Dawud al-Zahiri and that of other philosophers who hold that souls are independent spheres settled in created beings for a time; rather, he holds that souls are portions of a single soul that have been distributed among created beings for a time and then return to their origin — though Ibn Hazm did not explicitly state this return in the present book. The essential point is that love, in Ibn Hazm's view, does not come from bodies but from souls; bodies in reality are nothing but intermediaries and means that allow souls to draw near or draw apart. The evidence for this is that there are people who love someone who lacks a certain attribute or certain attributes of physical beauty, and they know full well that there are others who possess all or most of those attributes and surpass their beloved in them; and if physical beauty were the source of love, it would not be possible for a person to love someone who is ugly or deficient in beauty — and we know that lovers of those who have not attained the fullness of beauty, or who are burdened with ugliness, are not few. For Ibn Hazm there is no explanation for this but that love is a phenomenon connected with souls and connected with bodies only incidentally; so we are here before a philosophical inquiry that relates to metaphysics more than it relates to nature itself — or say rather that it takes nature as a ladder by which it ascends to what lies beyond nature. None of this is strange, for Ibn Hazm lives in the eleventh century, and knowledge for him is what was inherited from the philosophers and the theologians.

Stendhal, however, does not proceed to definition and does not think in terms of logical deduction; he proceeds rather to induction and

investigation. He does not define love as a whole but investigates the kinds of love among individual people and their various types; he lays down a principle at the beginning of his book that he has scarcely established before he finds himself doubting its precision and reopening the door to induction and inquiry from the start.

There is therefore not one love, but four kinds: the first is passionate love, which seizes the soul's passions and emotions, its sensation and feeling, and which rushes like a torrent, bending to nothing and leaving its possessor no share of patience, deliberation, or thought; the second is refined love, engendered by affectation and by what refined, elevated civilisation demands in the way of exquisite taste and delicacy in the arts of enjoyment, a love that scarcely connects with the soul or the heart, scarcely affecting the emotions or feeling, being rather one of the hues of taste and one of the arts of luxury, with its principles and foundations laid down and people fully acquainted with its secrets and subtleties, ascending in it with knowledge and arriving at its ends with discernment; the third is physical love, driven by the instincts, shared between man and beast; and the fourth is vanity-love, which arises from pride and the preference of oneself, from those deceptive appearances by which a man exalts himself before himself even when he does not exalt himself before others. Stendhal illustrated these four kinds of love with examples that portray them faithfully and indicate them plainly: the famous lovers of history depict the first kind; the refined French of the eighteenth century depict the second; the hunter who desires a peasant girl he has seen wandering in the forest and is taken by her form depicts the third; and the mass of the French people in Stendhal's era depict the fourth. Stendhal soon notes, however, that this classification is not precise or definitive, and that it is possible for each of these four kinds to dissolve into other sub-kinds denoted by other terms, so matters of love are more complex, more various, and more elusive than can be definitively or exhaustively enumerated; and what matters to Stendhal is not that love's kinds be enumerated, but that we understand how love is born, how it grows, how it weakens, and how it dies — and Stendhal holds that all this unfolds according to laws that he sets out in the course of this book.

Admiration is the first rung on the ladder of love that the soul ascends when it passes beyond its innocent, heedless gaze at the person destined to be its love, beginning to move from indifference to a particular attention that is barely complete before admiration arises from it, fixing the soul upon that person; and admiration is barely established

before the soul rises to the next rung — that of yearning and longing, or aspiration if you will, the stage at which a person says to himself: "How I would love it if I were to kiss this person, or they were to kiss me!" — a yearning for physical contact after the psychic contact has been achieved.

Then the person ascends to the third degree, where you can yearn and long and aspire — but all this is one thing, and awaiting the fulfilment of what you aspire to is another; and when you pass from aspiration to hope, you have ascended to the third degree in your quest for love, and the hope has barely settled in you, or you in the hope, before you reach the fourth degree — the degree in which love is consummated. You have now admired, and then longed, and then hoped, and all this is transformed in your soul into an intense pleasure that arises at the mere sight of your beloved, or at hearing them, or at touching them, or at any connection with them; and you are, whenever you find this pleasure, exposed to finding pain if the threads connecting you to your beloved are cut. Nor do you reach the fourth degree without being torn between what love produces of pleasure and pain, of bliss and torment; and when love comes to be, it must grow — unless it is killed on the day of its birth and growth. This begins when you reach the fifth degree — what Stendhal calls the first crystallisation — arising from the preoccupation of your thought with the person you love: you do not think of them as they were before you attended to them, but rather invest them with something of your admiration and longing and hope; you attribute to them qualities you claim no one else possesses, and you intensify your feeling of elation when you are with them in proportion to the qualities you invest in them — so they alone can satisfy what your soul aspires to of the highest ideals of pleasure, happiness, and bliss, and no one else can bring you any of this, for all of it is bound up with what you have draped upon your beloved of graces and qualities that distinguish them in your eyes from all people; and so your soul is connected to them by a firm, unbreakable bond, and you are at your most anxious to preserve this connection and increase it in every moment that you are able to — and when you have reached this anxiety, you can only ascend to the sixth degree: for anxiety is the source of fear and doubt; and when anxiety has reached its goal, you cannot but doubt whether you are succeeding or not, and in this sixth degree you ask yourself from moment to moment whether your love finds an echo in your beloved's soul or does not; and not content with this question, not reassured by this doubt — for when was a person reassured by doubt? — you are compelled to seek conclusive proof that you did not

err in your judgment, did not fail in your quest, and that your beloved exchanges love for love and ardour for ardour; you thus ask your soul and then answer it, then doubt the answer and resume the question, and when this has gone on long enough and you have obtained a telling sign or a promising glance or a convincing token, you are carried up, despite yourself, to the seventh degree — what Stendhal calls the second crystallisation — convinced that you are loved, adorning for yourself this love that you find and in which you feel assured of an echo in the soul of your beloved, draping upon it whatever qualities of strength, breadth, depth, and beauty you choose, until this love becomes the life that possesses all of you, commands all your attention, and takes hold of all your paths — and you have now arrived at the summit of love, where nothing remains but the connection of your bliss or your suffering, susceptible as it now is to weakness and decline.

Thus Stendhal presents the preliminaries of love, its birth and growth and attainment of its furthest ends, and he then returns to these degrees and studies them in detail, deeply, illustrating them with examples and supporting them with facts. He is, as you see, utterly remote from metaphysics, utterly close to nature itself; he seeks no definition of love, no description or formula, but distinguishes its most prominent kinds and traces each one from the moment the soul is readied for it until the soul is consumed by it. It is perfectly clear that when Stendhal follows this path he follows the method of the scientists contemporary with him who were influenced by the rise and development of the experimental sciences and relied on direct observation more than on anything else.

Ibn Hazm, for his part, intended to follow this same path — indeed, he followed only this path, the path of direct observation. He does not invent his accounts of love, nor does he devise them, nor fabricate them out of his own imagination; he barely touches on philosophy except when he tries to define love; he lays down no principle and no rule except as drawn from what he himself has seen, or what he has found in his own heart, or what he has heard from those in whose reports he has no cause to doubt. Ibn Hazm thus relies on direct observation as Stendhal relies on it, but Ibn Hazm does not profit from his direct observation as Stendhal profits from his, for between the two men lies a great age during which the human mind developed, the schools of inquiry evolved and their methods with them, and the means and instruments of observation advanced in far-reaching ways; so Ibn Hazm's observation is as precise as

Stendhal's observations, but confined and scarcely capable of going beyond itself — because Ibn Hazm did not obtain the tools of inquiry, investigation, and depth that the modern French writer obtained.

There is yet another difference between the two men: Ibn Hazm, for all his eccentricity that attracted the attention of his contemporaries across the East and the West — indeed that attracted those who came after him a long while later — was unable to free himself from the habitual modes of thought and deduction, thinking as the people around him thought, indeed as the people before him and after him thought, and deducing as they deduced; he could not transcend this, for the time for transcending it had not yet come, and the means of doing so had not yet been discovered.

It may seem strange that Ibn Hazm declared himself more explicitly than Stendhal did, for Stendhal — honestly or dishonestly, and it is established that he was dishonest — claims he did not take his own self as the subject of observation in any chapter of his book, that he never speaks of himself or his emotions and feelings by any means. Ibn Hazm, on the other hand, speaks of himself with admirable frankness, and his accounts of himself are perhaps the finest thing contained in the book, nor is there anything wrong with this, for he tells us honestly beyond all doubt that he did not transgress in love and that love did not involve him in any grave sin.

He therefore speaks of himself with candour and openness, relating to us from his personal history what excites in our souls much compassion, sympathy, and tenderness for him. We see him in his father's house — his father being a minister — his soul captivated by a slave-girl of the household, a girl of radiant beauty and brilliant grace, strong in character, resolute, serious-minded, no lover of frivolity or given to jest, absorbed rather in earnestness to a degree that almost made her severe. One day the household gathered for some business or other, and a guest had come among them, so they ate and enjoyed themselves and looked out from some of the galleries of the house onto the garden, then to the river, then stretched their gaze further still, to the city of Cordoba and its environs, a wondrous sight; and the slave-girl stood at a door of one of the galleries gazing out on this magnificent and beautiful scene, while Ibn Hazm manoeuvred, moving about to draw near to her and stand not far from her position — but she sensed no manoeuvring and noticed no proximity until she drew back and moved to another door; and Ibn Hazm followed her, attentive and constant, ever manoeuvring and pressing,

while she drew back whenever he drew near and moved away whenever he came close; then someone proposed that the company descend into the garden and sit on its green grass amid the trees and flowers, so they descended, and Ibn Hazm tried to approach, but she drew away; then someone proposed to the slave-girl that she sing — for she was skilled in playing and surpassing in singing — and she played and sang, and this was all Ibn Hazm managed to win from that slave-girl. Then the days passed and events occurred and misfortunes fell and time moved on, and Ibn Hazm returned after years to his homeland in Cordoba and saw that slave-girl worn down by the vicissitudes of fate, compelled by adversity to resort to what others of her refinement would never resort to, the bloom faded, the beauty dimmed, and hardship apparent or near-apparent — and we see Ibn Hazm paint for us a picture of himself gripped by love for a girl who had seized his heart as no girl ever had before, love having joined them, and then death snatching her away from him. Consider the grief that knows no greater grief, the longing that knows no greater longing, the torment that knows no comparable torment — and there he is spending days without putting on his clothes or tasting food or drink, remembering his beloved while awake and dreaming of her while asleep, composing poetry about his love for her in his waking hours and in his sleep, the days passing until they become years and years, and his youth advancing in small degrees until he becomes middle-aged and then moves toward old age — and his love for that girl remains young in his heart, untouched by the passage of time, unvisited by consolation.

Ibn Hazm thus relies on direct, free, candid observation, observing himself and his close companions, observing the people around him — but for all that he is fettered and clipped of wing, scarcely able to deepen his inquiry or rise above what surrounds him; for his means of deepening and investigating were limited, not going beyond the surface or what tended toward the surface.

Ibn Hazm organised his book with a broadly logical structure, but was averse to executing it in the logical order he had planned before he began composing it, preferring to diverge between the plan drawn up and the execution of that plan, placing the chapters of his book wherever their occasions required them to be placed rather than where logical order required them, and this too is evidence that Ibn Hazm tried to shake off the burdens of his age and free himself from the constraints of thought that prevented his contemporaries from the free movement — as we understand it today — but he attained only the least and smallest part

of what he sought.

Another sign that Ibn Hazm sought to free himself from these constraints and went further than Stendhal — yet for all that did not reach what he sought — is that Ibn Hazm was averse to grounding his discourse on love in the store of amorous accounts and love poetry that fills the books of literature, and refused to be concerned with all that had been said of the Bedouin poets, and the love poets of Najd and the Hijaz, and the affectation that later poets devoted to the arts of love; he would restrict his observation to himself and to what he had seen and heard from his contemporaries. Stendhal meanwhile did not confine himself to what he had seen and heard, but relied also on what he had read — on accounts of the ancients in southern France itself and in Christian and Muslim Spain, including what he had read from Arab books themselves; for he had come to know the *Kitab al-Aghani* and quoted from it episodes of the love poets, and the story of Jamil and Buthayna in particular — and the curious thing is that we admire Ibn Hazm for declining what he knew of the ancients and refusing to rely on anything but direct observation, while we simultaneously admire Stendhal for seeking out what he did not know of ancient love, investigating the love poetry of southern France and its debt to the civilisation of the Muslims of Andalusia, then tracing this Andalusian love back to its roots until al-Aghani brought him to early Islam and then to the pre-Islamic era; he made errors and hit the mark in what he understood of this, but he attempted what others of his kind had not been accustomed to attempt — just as we admire Ibn Hazm for leaving what others of his kind had not been accustomed to leave.

Both men sought to excel in study and to master inquiry and thorough investigation, but one was granted what was not granted the other because he possessed tools, instruments, and the means of learning and culture that were not available to his companion.

Yet there are aspects in which Stendhal excelled and that never occurred to Ibn Hazm: both men attempted to study the human soul from certain of its angles, and both took this study as a means to the criticism of the social life surrounding them, and both gave us a precise or approximate picture of that life; but Ibn Hazm stopped at this limit. Stendhal went beyond criticism to prescription: he criticises French life with a bitter criticism, and not content with that he addresses the education of women, tracing many of the afflictions of love among the French and indeed among Europeans to their defects, and then is not content with that but proposes a new approach to the education of

women so that she may love with a pure, healthy, genuine love and inspire in the young man a pure, healthy, genuine love; then he goes beyond this to marriage, criticising its system and proposing various reforms to bring love and marriage closer together — all matters that never occurred to Ibn Hazm, for as I said he was weighed down by the constraints of his age, clipped of wing, unable to deepen his inquiry or rise above what surrounded him.

In Stendhal's book there is yet another dimension of inquiry that never occurred to Ibn Hazm and could not have occurred to him: Stendhal inquires into the connection between war and the character of peoples on one hand, and between love and the system of government on the other; and this dimension of Stendhal's inquiry is genuinely rewarding, especially when he addresses certain characteristics of peoples and governments. Love in England is constrained, cold, deeply languid, because the nature of the climate, the nature of the people, and the nature of the aristocratic government all require that English love be a bashful, self-effacing thing that barely shows itself; while love in Italy is headlong and irresistible, yielding to nothing and concealing itself nowhere, neither hesitating, nor self-effacing, nor blushing, but appearing openly and freely as the sun appears — because the nature of the Italian climate, the nature of the Italian people, and the dispersal of sovereignty in Italy in Stendhal's day all require that Italian love be bold and impetuous; and love in France is vain and hypocritical, barely stable or settled, because the character of the French people, the climate of France, and the systems of government in France after the fall of the Empire all require that French love be ostentatious and garrulous, saying nothing and portraying nothing. How far are we from Ibn Hazm, who never extended love beyond his Andalusian homeland — though it occurred to him once or twice to carry it across the Strait of Gibraltar, and he did so, telling us of an Andalusian who sold a slave-girl he loved to some of the Berbers, and his soul followed her and he could find no consolation, and the Berber refused to release him from the sale, so he raised the matter to the Sultan in an affecting and charming tale.

Ibn Hazm carried love eastward and went far, reaching Baghdad — but he tells us of an Andalusian scholar who ended up in a dead-end alley there and saw in that alley a slave-girl who told him it was a dead-end, and the slave-girl was unveiled; her beauty struck him and love for her gripped his heart, and he feared for himself and his religion in this temptation — so he travelled to Basra and died there, a martyr to this

love.

It is as if Ibn Hazm did not intend in his book to address any love but the Andalusian: he studied it in its homeland, then followed it occasionally to its places of exile in Ifriqiya or Baghdad.

Yet there is a question that I believe to be of greater moment than anything I have so far raised in this discourse — why did Ibn Hazm write his *Tawq al-Hamama*, and why did Stendhal write his book on love?

The simplest answer to this question is that a friend of Ibn Hazm's asked him to write this treatise for him and he did so, and that Stendhal spent all his life tracing love in its various forms and manifestations and then wrote a book about it; but this does not convince me, and I imagine that there is another answer, perhaps more significant and more far-reaching in its influence: neither Ibn Hazm's book nor Stendhal's book was directed at love in itself, but rather at the art of depicting and expressing love. Ibn Hazm wrote his book in rhetoric, and intended by it to teach poets and writers — and poets in particular — how to conceive of love and how to portray it and how to describe it in verse and prose; the evidence for this is those literary models that he scatters throughout every chapter of the book — models he himself composes rather than taking from others, and it is most likely that he crafted many of these models expressly for this book.

Stendhal, for his part, wrote a book of criticism and aesthetics, intending by it first to expound his doctrine as it appeared in his treatment of love in his various works, and by it next to teach novelists how to conceive of love, how to portray it, and how to present it in the long and short works they compose; the evidence for this is those narrative models he added to his book after setting out his theories of love.

We are thus before two books of knowledge whose authors intended by them neither frivolity nor diversion nor mere experiment, but instruction above all else.

The ancients admired Ibn Hazm's book, but viewed it only as a literary monument — an end in itself, not a means to the art of poetry; and Stendhal's contemporaries were not taken with his book on love when it was published in the early decades of the last century — his first edition sold only a few dozen copies in ten years; when twenty years had passed since its publication, Stendhal himself told us that he did not

believe those who had tasted and understood it had reached a hundred. Now, however, the study of love has advanced from its various angles to a remarkable degree, so that Ibn Hazm's book and Stendhal's book have each acquired their weight in literary history — which is no inconsiderable weight.

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