

Faraj Bayrakdar

Tashriqa: Prayer for Homs

I will go to Homs shortly.

I will enter it safely,
protected by its people and
my faith in them.

For almost twenty years, only
absence, obsession, delusion.

For twenty years,
abandoned at its crossroads,
the guards overwhelmed me with weapons
I did not see,
tore at me with weapons
I did not see.

But I will come to the city
any way she accepts me.
Won't even a few herbs, spices,
buy me a welcome?

I will come to the city even as a refugee,
if the meaning of 'refugee' has changed,
deleted from the old dictionary.

But how could I create
a dictionary of Homs,
when I have no *imam* whose prayers could
remove my doubt?

Though I have a God
to whom I recite His verses privately
until dawn reveals the city's face,
and tells us:

You are safe from whatever you say or don't say,
believers and nonbelievers,
all those who lit up the city's promises
with candles in their fingers
so it can see its tomorrow, our people.

Homs, whose mother is Syria,
is above all suspicion.

I will go to Homs alone,
I will come to her with love and affection.

It's Homs that baptised me
and Islamised me.

It is only fitting I belong to her:
a thousand loves, sorrows and a river of memories
for her to recover and for me to heal.

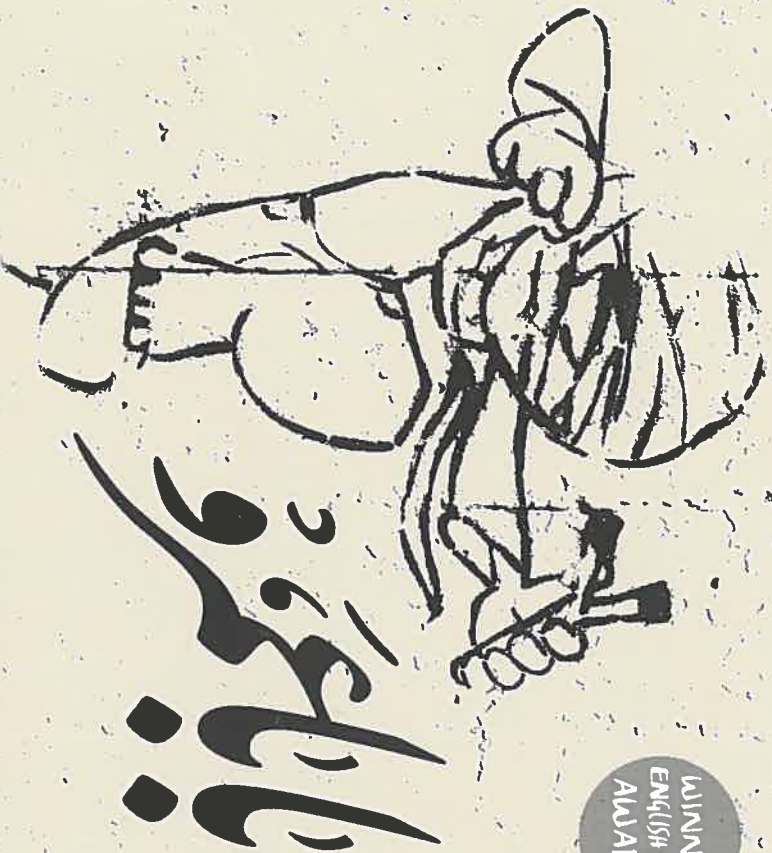
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