

Andalusian Love Poems by Women

Mariam Bint Abu Ya'qub
(d 1010)

What does one expect from a woman
Of seventy seven made of cobwebs?
She crawls like a baby to her stick,
And stumbles, a convict in shackles.

Hafsa Bint al-Haj
(d 1190)

I send my poems to call you,
As they sing they'll please your ear.
A garden waiting to be seen
Floats its perfume on the air.

If you were not a star
The world would be dark
As I praise your beauty
I look for your light.

The garden didn't smile when we walked in its lanes
But displayed green envy and yellow bile.
The river didn't ripple with pleasure when we stood
On its bank; and the dove cooed with dislike
You mustn't think the world is lovely and kind
Just because you are good. Look how the sky
Switched on the stars to spy on our embrace

Wallada
(d 1091)

Will this separation end so we can
Share our love? Last winter when I waited for you
To call, the coals of desire burned my skin.
You've been away so long. How do I feel?
I endure my worst fear: the night has passed
But the absence stays. Patience hasn't untied
The thongs of need. I hope rain blesses your land.

Translated by GBH Wightman and Abdullah al-Udhari,
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