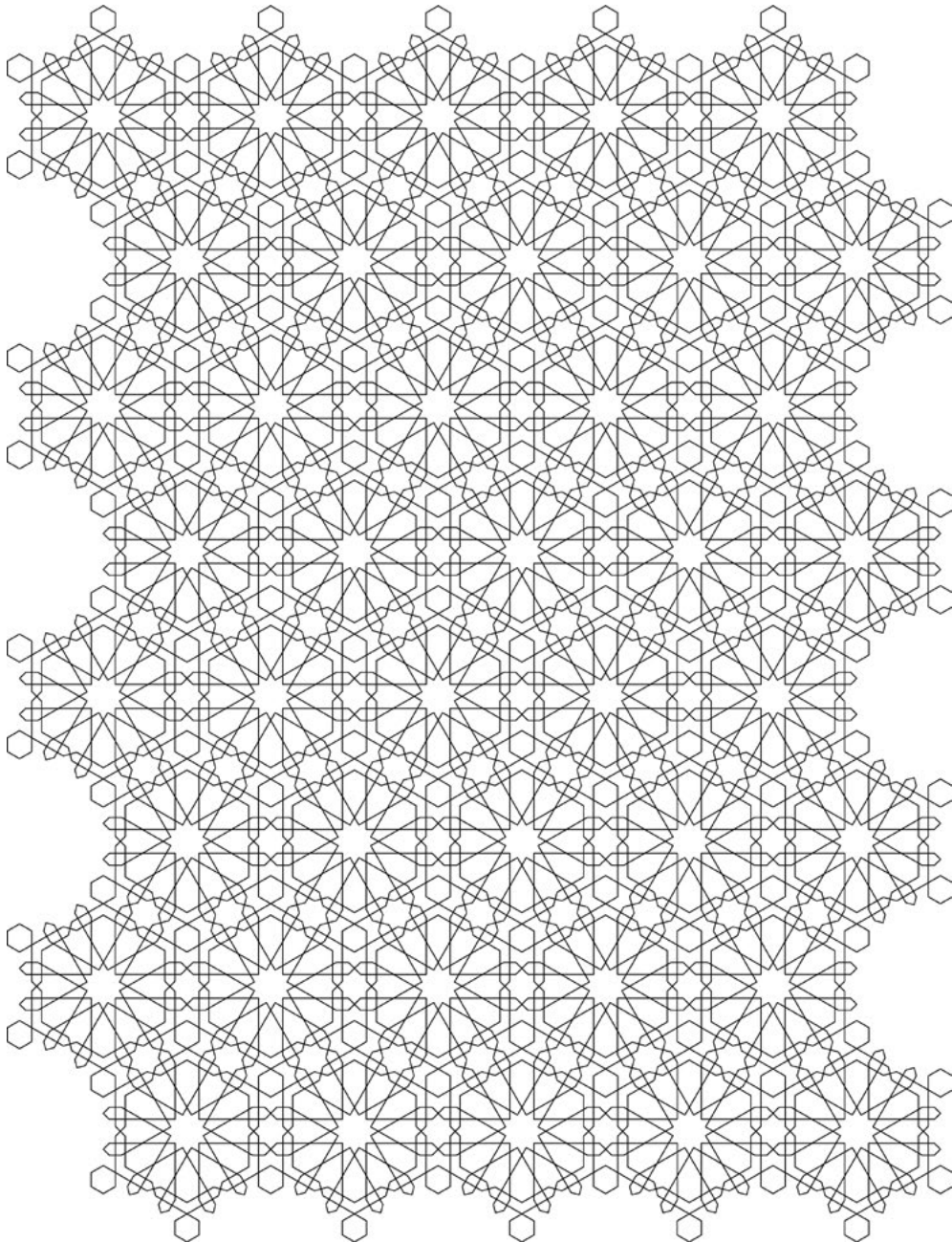


⋮

REMEMBERING MARIA GABRIELA LLANSOL

Christine Gruwez (Anthroposophical Society)



I came in close contact with Gabriela Llansol and her husband Augusto Joaquim in Louvain in the late sixties. We met through common friends, most of them with the post-doctorate status, at the University of Louvain. This contact lasted throughout their whole stay in Belgium (Louvain, Jodoigne and Herbais) and went on till in the late eighties, when we visited each other after they had returned to Portugal.

During the period 1972-1976, those contacts became intensified due to the fact that our daughters went to the school both Gabriela and Augusto founded first in Louvain and later in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium). Often, I met Gaby after school time while the children went on playing in one of the classrooms and we were sitting on a small and low chair, a children's chair facing each other. On one of those 'sessions' I asked Gaby what the purpose of the 'Intellect' was. The intellect not as 'ratio' but as *vouç!* An insight that takes its source in the spiritual heart on the condition that we develop it.

She answered that the intellect allows us to practice patience. For patience is what forms us into a 'receptacle' where the One can for a moment choose His dwelling.

Very often, in the course of the day some 'inspiration' had come to her, and while we tidied up the place, she sat quietly in some corner, meditating and writing.

I had become deeply interested in the world of Islam through my studies in Philosophy and also Comparative Linguistics, where I had chosen Iranian Languages as a specialization.

Already in high school I had developed a keen interest in the different mystic movements in the West, as the one that emerged in the Rhineland area, with Meister Eckhart as a culminating moment in its history. Among those figures was a woman mystic who wrote in Flemish, Hadewijch, (Brabant, Belgium, 13th century) who offered a particular mixture of spirituality and eroticism. In school, we read some of her poems and I offered Gaby a translation of those poems in French, by Suzanne Lilar. In the first books of Gaby, Hadewijch appears as one of the central figures.

During a course of classical Arabic, I had a talk with the docent at that time, as he had dropped word about his being interested in Islamic mysticism. He vividly recommended me to read Ibn 'Arabī and gave me his own copy of *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* in the French translation of Titus Burckhardt. That is how the work of Ibn 'Arabī came first to Gaby. And was welcomed by her all over the years.

As a postscript to *Finita*, her husband Augusto Joaquim mentions in what way and at what time in the course of her life as an author Llansol came to meet Ibn 'Arabī – better to say: Ibn 'Arabī came to meet her –, as she herself describes in her notes. Many meetings of that same nature with other great individualities had preceded this event. As was the case for most of them, it was a meeting in the 'ālam al-miẓāl, the in-between world where the spirits are to take form and the forms are on the verge to become spirit. 'Where the corporeal bodies spiritualize and where the spirits corporealize', as we read and contemplated during our encounters.

⋮

The well-known episode of the meeting between Averroes and the young Ibn ‘Arabī – ‘*imberbe-beardless*’ – often turned up in our conversations in which sometimes also Augusto took part. In her description of Ibn ‘Arabī, how he came in to meet her, Llansol uses the term ‘*imberbe-beardless*’ several times. Where to define this place between a yes and a no? Was this what Ibn ‘Arabī called the *barzah*?

But Gaby, sometimes in a very playful way, avoided our conversation to turn into theological or philosophical discussions. It was the heart, the organ of inner perception that had to speak in a language beyond words. A language which only she herself was able to create words for.

Christine Gruwez