



MEDIEVAL ENGLISH AND ARABIC RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

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- How might Islamic and Christian literatures have influenced one another in the Middle Ages?
- Devotional (especially **mystical**) Christian and Islamic texts: **Shushtarī** and ***The Wooing of Our Lord*** (anonymous)

Some of the kinds of influence...

- Christian hermits in the Middle East
- Big translation project in Europe of Arabic medical and philosophical treatises
- 'Al-Andalus' & Sicily: multicultural & multilingual regions

‘Christian ascetics and hermits who inhabited places in Iraq and the mountains of Lebanon are mentioned frequently in Sufi stories—and in pre-Islamic poetry there were already allusions to the light shining forth from the Christian hermit’s cell’.

◀ (Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), p. 34.)

Averroes/ Ibn Rushd (d. 1198)



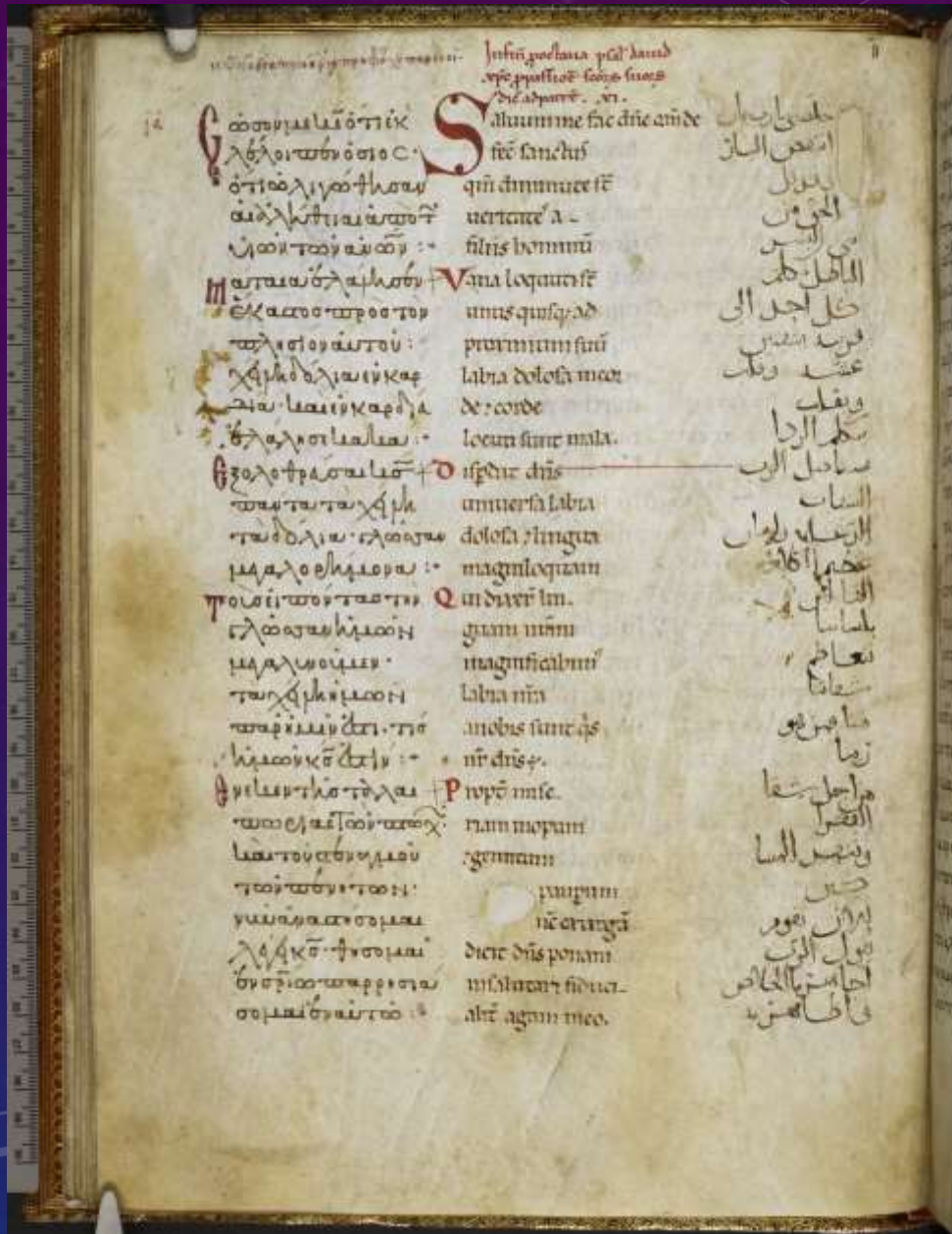
Avicenna/ Ibn Sina (d. 1037)



'AL-ANDALUS'



<https://www.andalucia.com/cities/seville/monasterio-la-cartuja.htm>



‘Harley Trilingual Psalter’

You can search for images and blogs about this & other medieval manuscripts here:


<https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/collection-items>

Copyright at British Library:
<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-harley-trilingual-psalter>



Abū al-
Ḥasan al-
Shushtarī
(d. 1269)

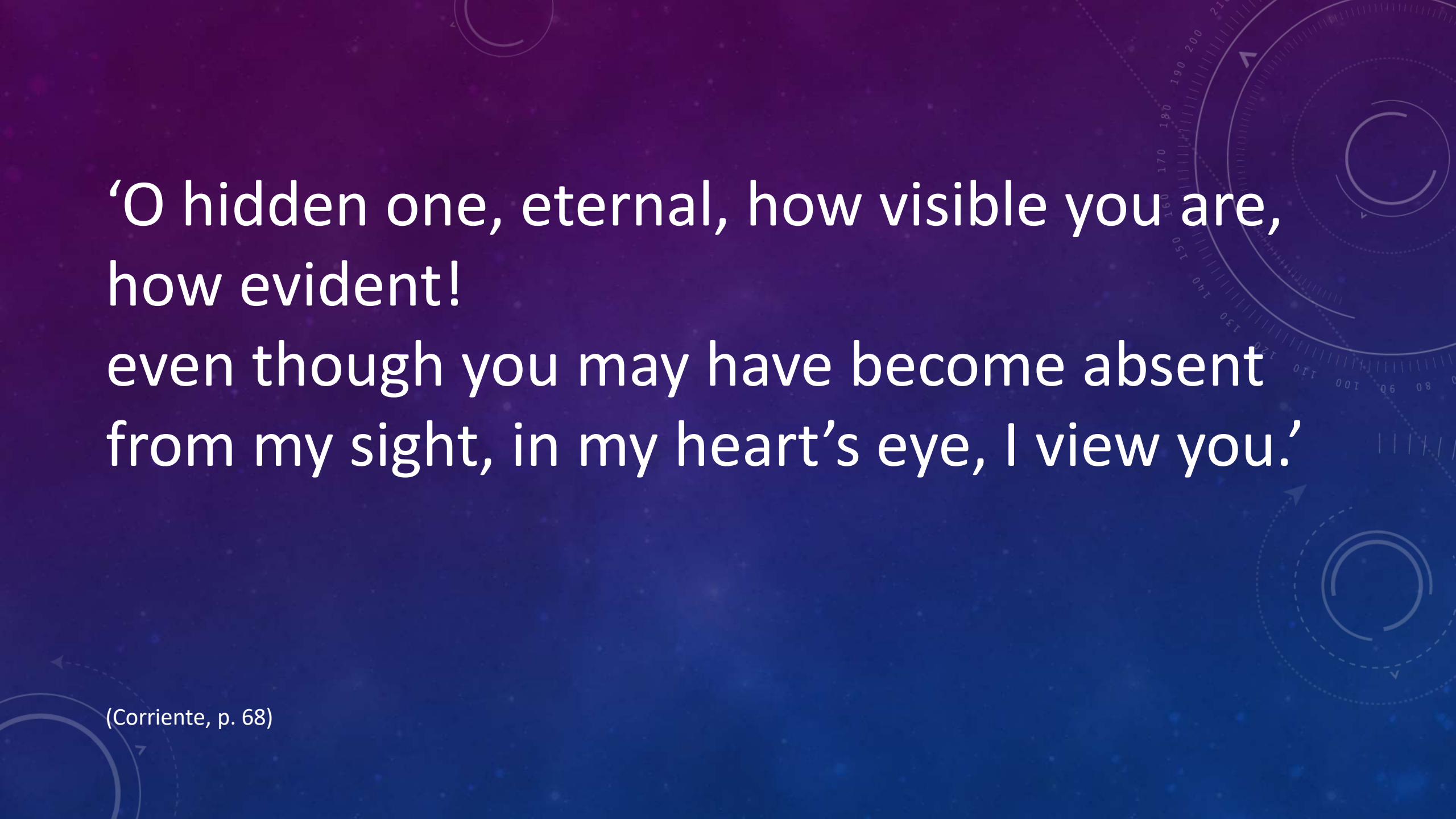
Shushtarī,
Valle de Zalabí,
Spain

The background is a deep blue gradient with a subtle pattern of white stars and dots. Overlaid on this are several faint, white geometric shapes: concentric circles and arcs, some with arrows indicating a clockwise direction. These shapes are positioned in the corners and along the right edge of the frame.

Lourdes María Alvarez,
trans., *Abu al-Hasan al-
Shushtari: Songs of Love and
Devotion* (Mahwah, NJ:
Paulist Press, 2009).

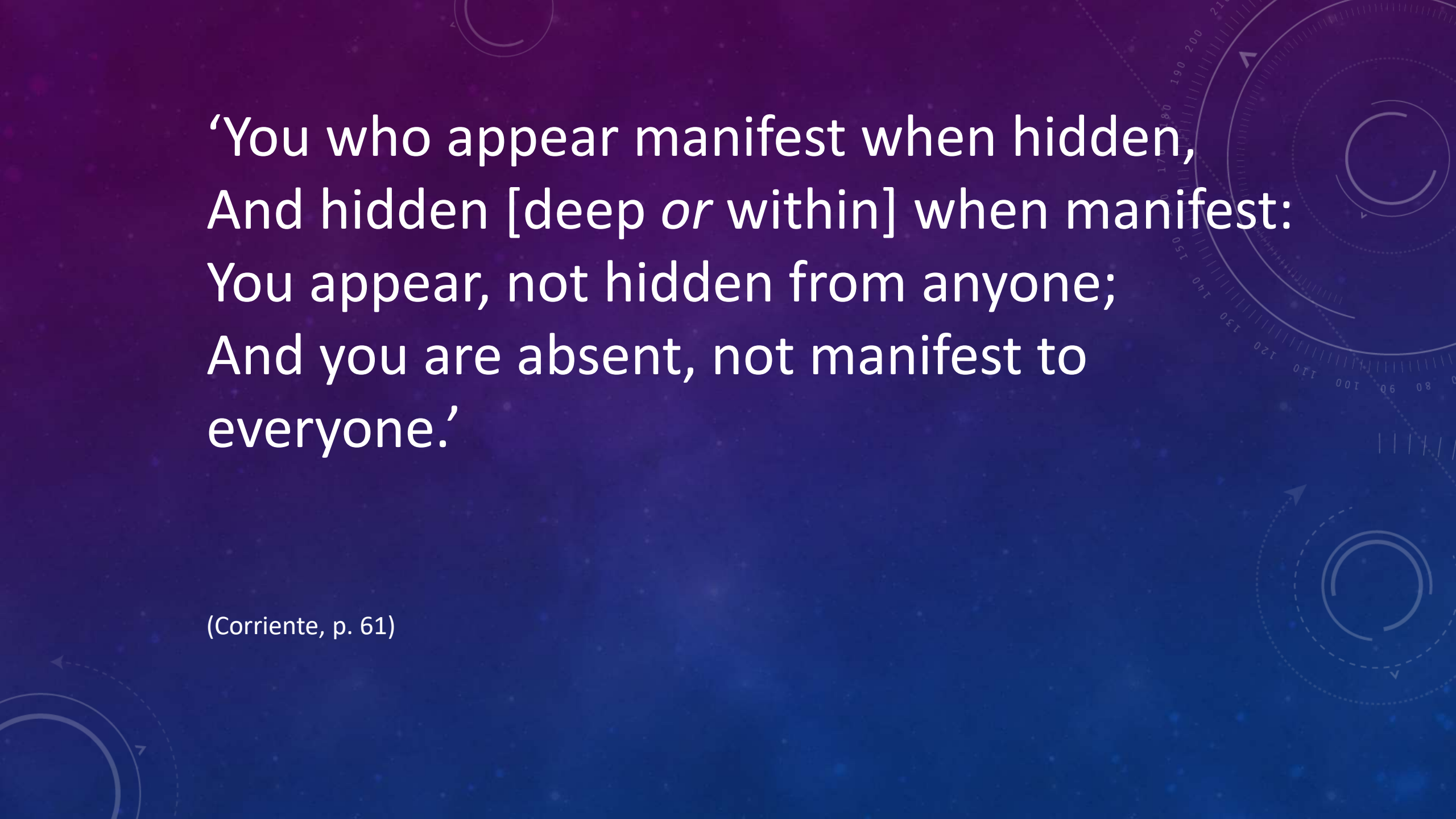
‘Do not complain of the distance when you
know your beloved is not far.
Someone whose beloved is always present,
tell me, how could he pine?
His glances give beauty, fulfilling all desire
[*muna*]; he is rejuvenated.’

(Translated from Corriente, *Poesía Estrófica*, p. 79)

The background is a deep blue gradient with faint, glowing particles. On the right side, there is a large, semi-circular scale with markings from 0 to 210. Several concentric circles and dashed lines are also visible, some with arrows indicating a clockwise direction.

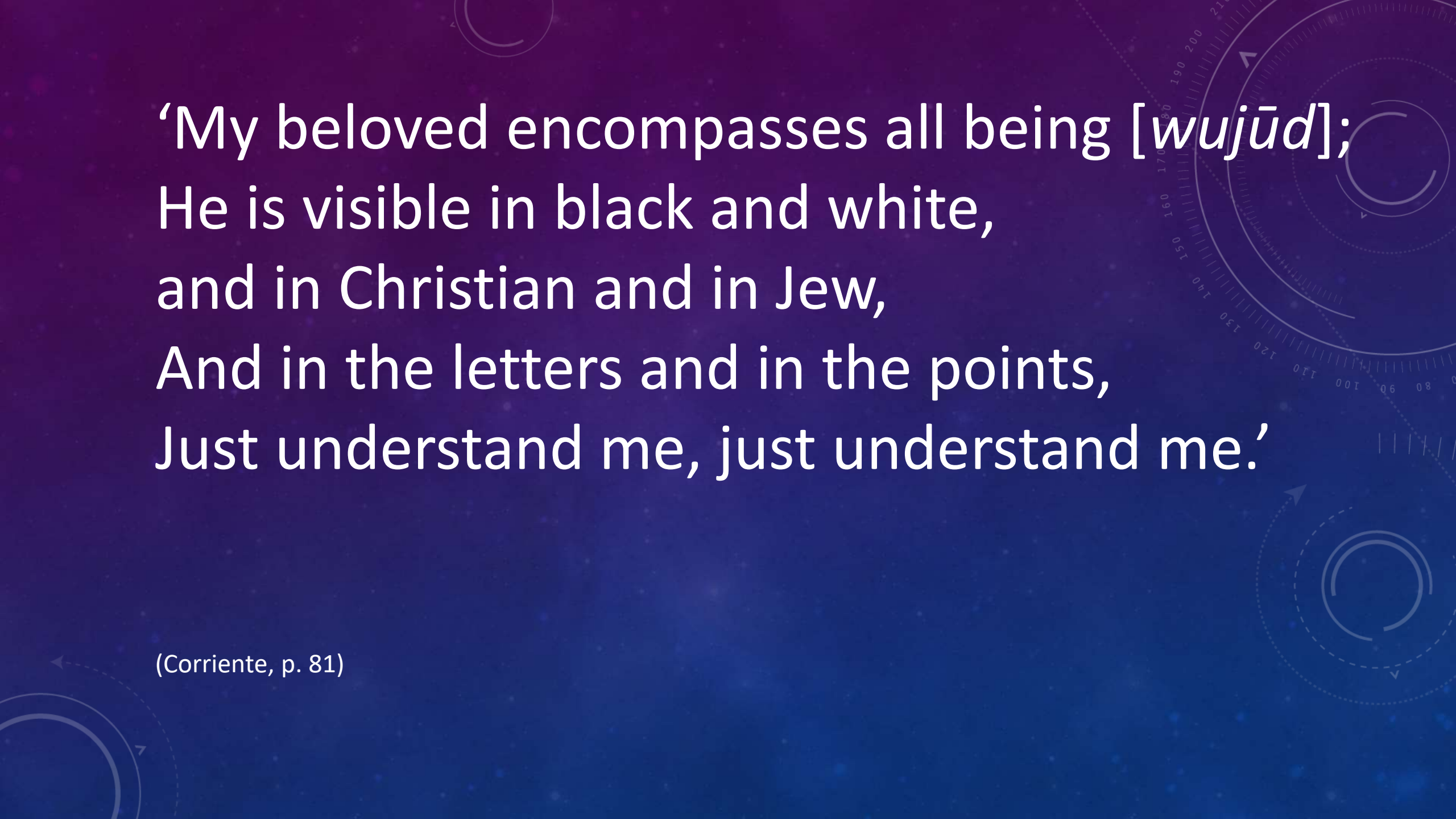
‘O hidden one, eternal, how visible you are,
how evident!
even though you may have become absent
from my sight, in my heart’s eye, I view you.’

(Corriente, p. 68)



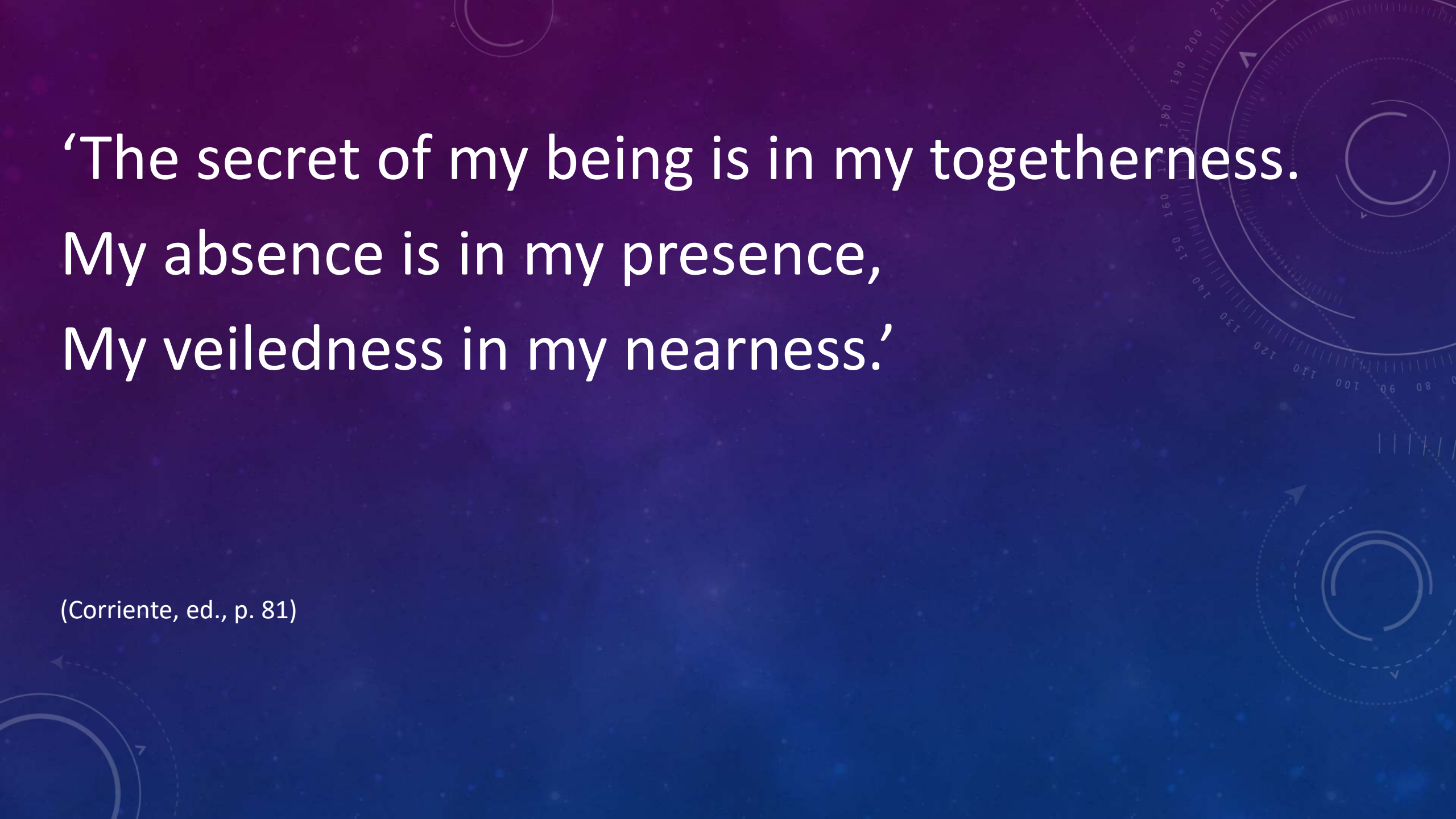
‘You who appear manifest when hidden,
And hidden [*deep or within*] when manifest:
You appear, not hidden from anyone;
And you are absent, not manifest to
everyone.’

(Corriente, p. 61)



‘My beloved encompasses all being [*wujūd*];
He is visible in black and white,
and in Christian and in Jew,
And in the letters and in the points,
Just understand me, just understand me.’

(Corriente, p. 81)

The background is a deep blue gradient with a subtle pattern of white stars and faint, light blue geometric shapes. These shapes include concentric circles, arcs, and a large circular scale with numerical markings (0, 90, 180, 270) and arrows, resembling a compass or a celestial map. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

‘The secret of my being is in my togetherness.
My absence is in my presence,
My veiledness in my nearness.’

(Corriente, ed., p. 81)

‘My drink comes from a vessel, but it tastes like
roses [*al-wurūd*],
Wine that was not pressed by the presser, nor
taken from a trellis.
How it has intoxicated great ones before us! For
this kind of drink, one thirsts.’

(Corriente, p. 80)

‘In the religion of love [*dīn al-hawa*]
there are firm commitments,
covenants held without deviation,
established through the conscience,
written and engraved in the inner
depths’

(Corriente, p. 80)

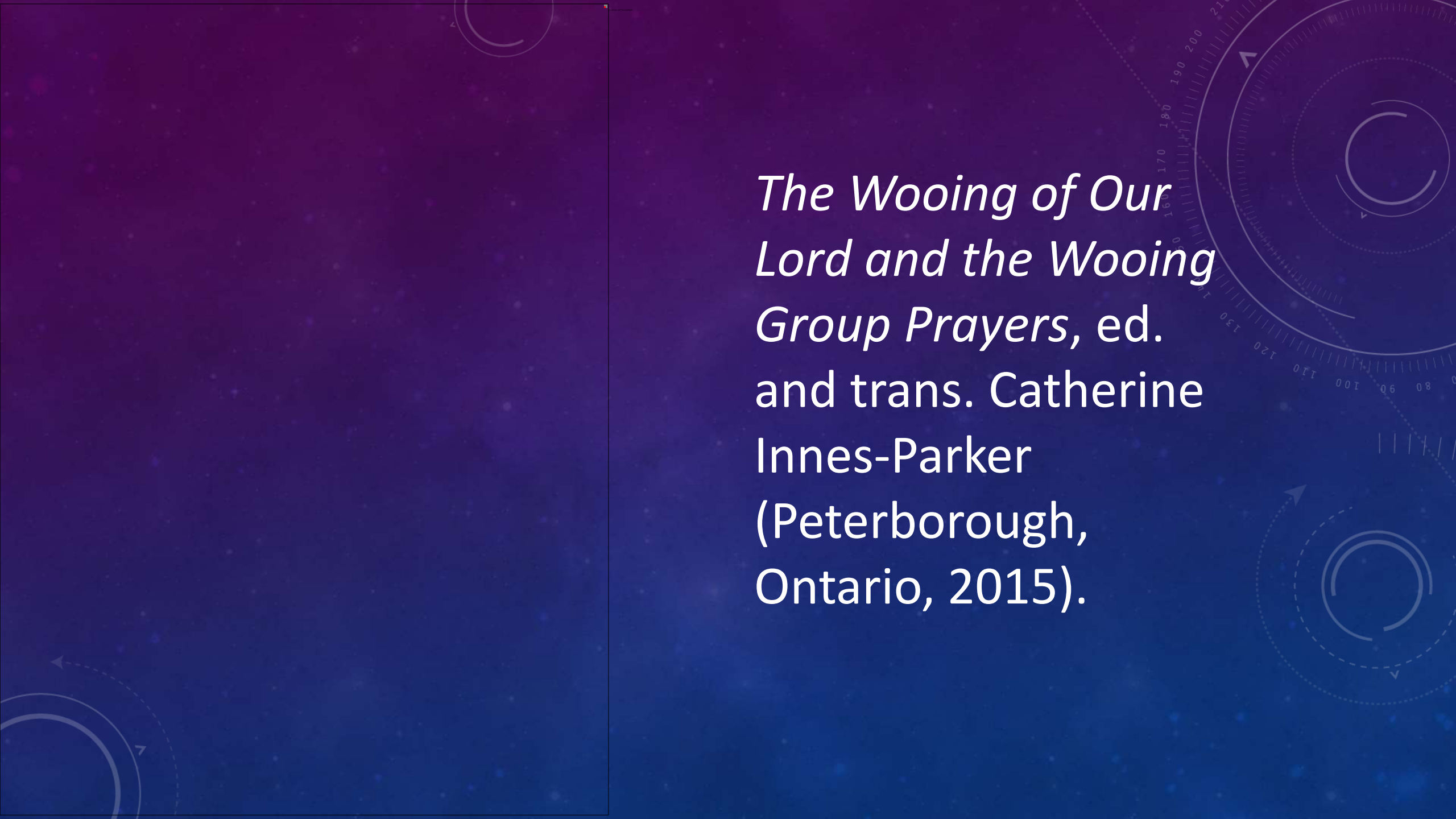
'*Alif* at the start of the name [*ism*],
And two *Lams* without body,
And a *Ha*, the inscribed sign.
With two letters is a secret spelled.
There is a name without a whereabouts.'

'Inspect all these letters together,
You will find that in them the heart is cleansed,
and is relieved after its suffering,
and moves forward between two shrouds,
shielded by two subtle symbols ['*biramzāyni raqīqayni*'].'

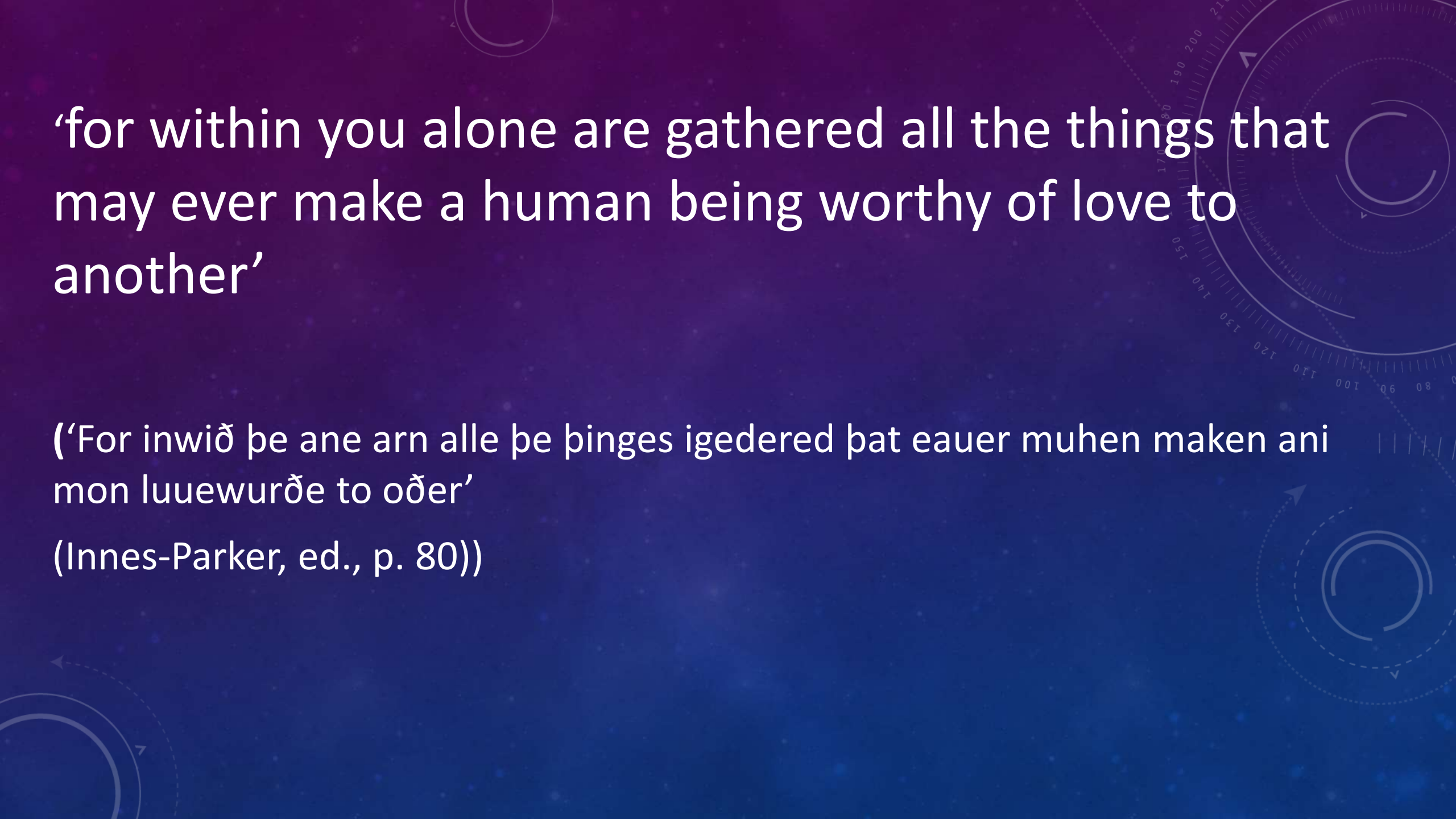
(Translated from Corriente, p. 110)

‘The doubled *Lam* at the centre of the word becomes a focus of the poem, the space between the two letters compared to a cleansed heart shrouded on two sides, a sun between two moons; that is, meaning, essence, resides in the blank space in the heart of the word [...].’

◀ (Alvarez, pp. 84-85)

The background is a gradient of deep blue and purple, speckled with small white dots resembling a starry sky. Overlaid on this are several faint, white geometric patterns: concentric circles, arcs, and dashed lines, some of which form circular paths with arrows indicating direction. These patterns are more prominent on the right side of the image.

*The Wooing of Our
Lord and the Wooing
Group Prayers*, ed.
and trans. Catherine
Innes-Parker
(Peterborough,
Ontario, 2015).



‘for within you alone are gathered all the things that
may ever make a human being worthy of love to
another’

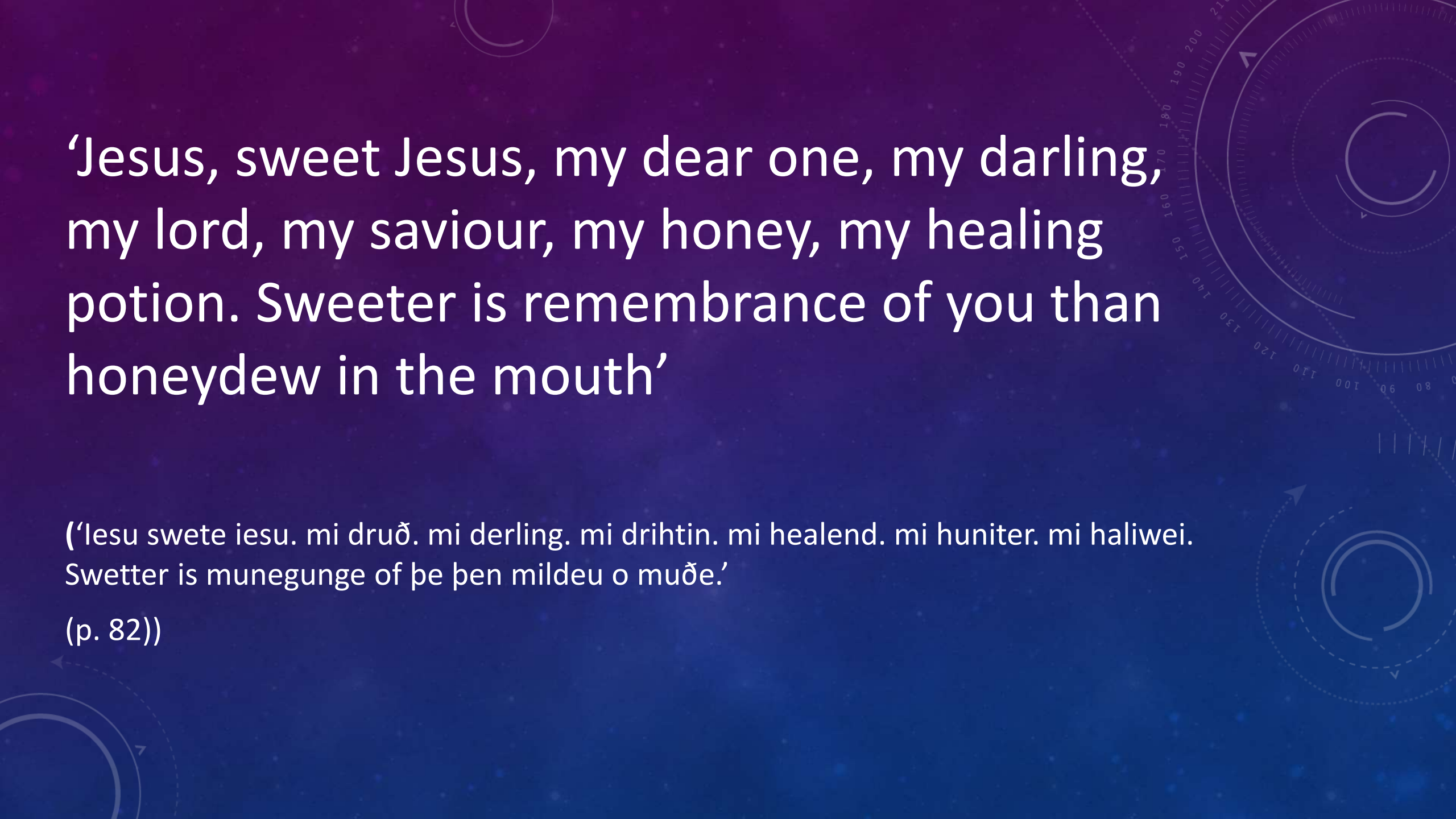
(‘For inwið þe ane arn alle þe þinges igedered þat eauer muhen maken ani
mon luuewurðe to oðer’

(Innes-Parker, ed., p. 80))

‘Then you with your fairness, you with richness, you with generosity, you with wit and wisdom, you with might and strength, you with nobility and courtesy, you with meekness and mildness and great gentility, you with kinship, you, with all things with which a man may buy love, have bought my love.’

(Þenne þu wið þi fairnesse, þu wið richesce, þu wið largesce, þu wið wit ant wisdom, þu wið maht ant strengðe, þu wið noblesce ant hendeleic, þu wið meknesse ant mildeschiþe ant mikel debonairte, þu wið sibnesse, þu wið alle þe þinges þe man mai luue wið bugge; haues mi luue chepet.

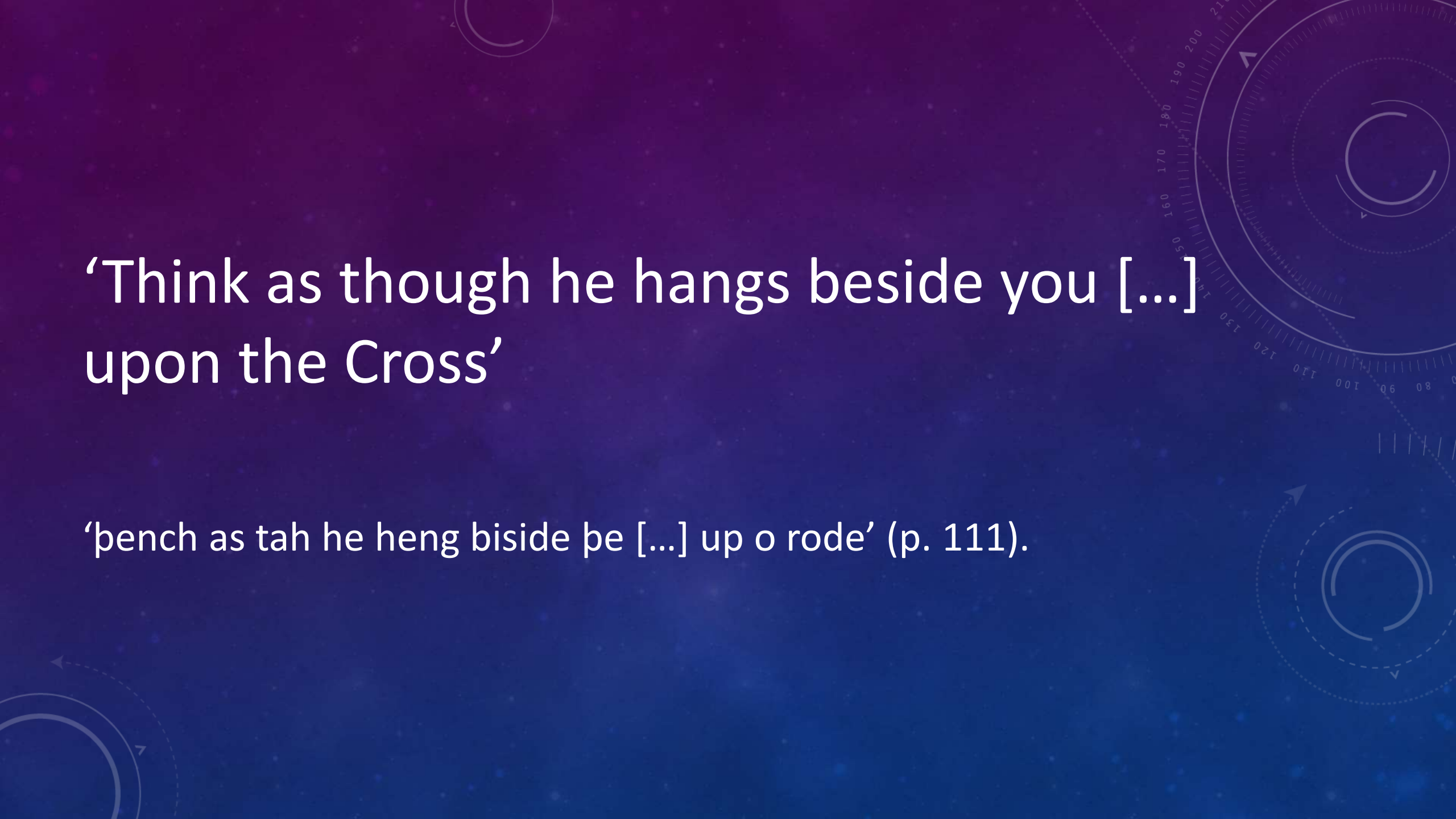
(p. 92))



‘Jesus, sweet Jesus, my dear one, my darling,
my lord, my saviour, my honey, my healing
potion. Sweeter is remembrance of you than
honeydew in the mouth’

(‘Iesu swete iesu. mi druď. mi derling. mi drihtin. mi healend. mi huniter. mi haliwei.
Swetter is munegunge of þe þen mildeu o muðe.’

(p. 82))



‘Think as though he hangs beside you [...] upon the Cross’

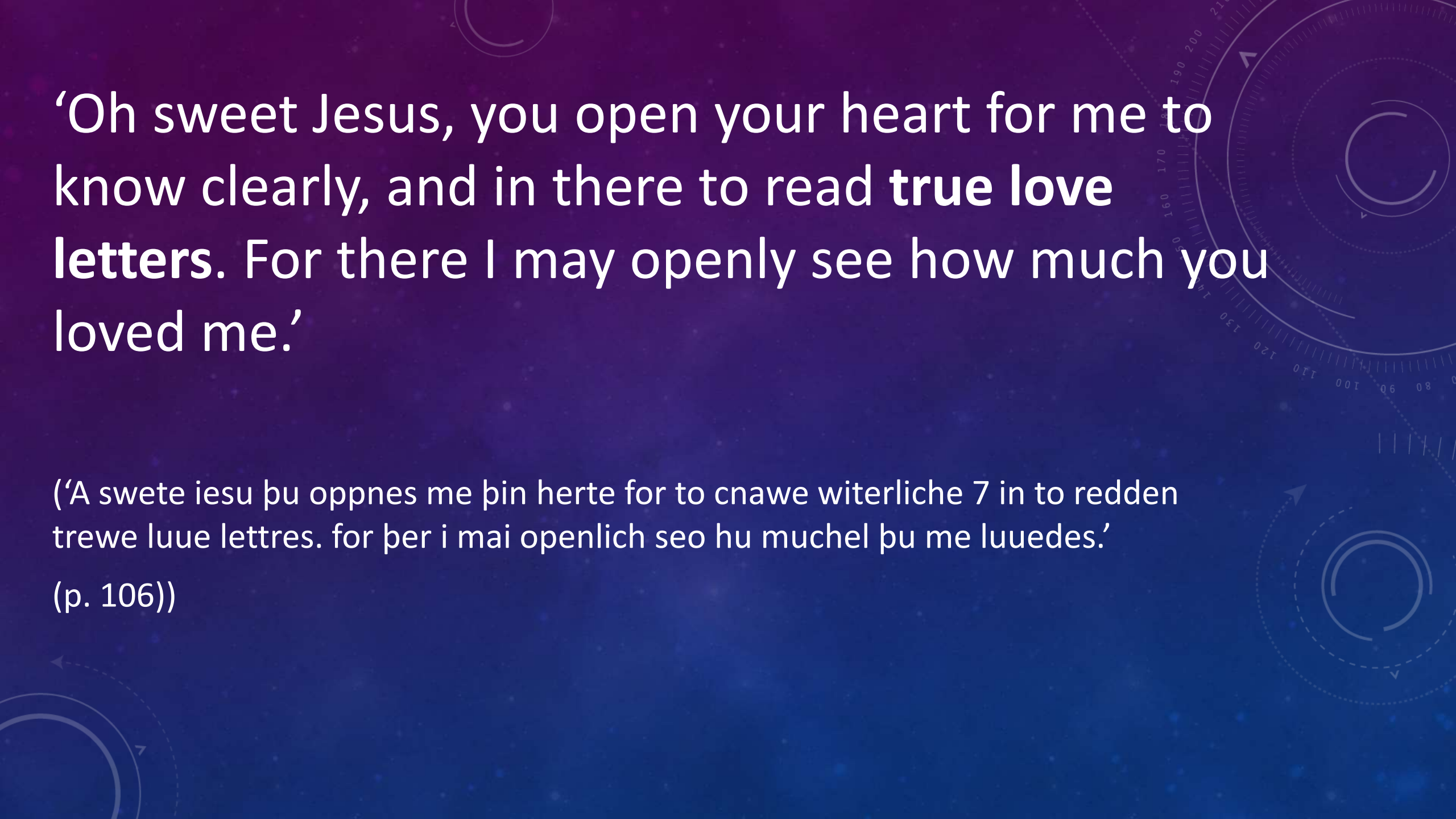
‘pENCH as tah he heng bside þe [...] up o rode’ (p. 111).

‘Ah Jesus, my sweet Jesus, grant that the love of you
be all my pleasure’

(‘A ihesu mi swete ihesu leue þat te luue of þe beo al mi likinge’ (p. 82))

‘What heart may not break?’

(‘hwat herte ne mai to brek’ (p. 102))



‘Oh sweet Jesus, you open your heart for me to know clearly, and in there to read **true love letters**. For there I may openly see how much you loved me.’

(‘A swete iesu þu oppnes me þin herte for to cnaue witerliche 7 in to reddenn trewe luue lettres. for þer i mai openlich seo hu muchel þu me luuedes.’

(p. 106))

- The Divine as the perfect lover, but one who can be both absent and present
- Very sensorial devotion: knowing the Divine is like tasting sweetness
- Written texts on the heart

Happy future reading! 😊

