

An East-West Dialog

1.

Háfiz-Hammer I.1–2 Elif 1:

Ela ja ejuhes — saki edir kasen ve navilha.

/xx /xx /
/xx /xx /
/xx /x /x
x/ x/ x/ x/x

Give me the goblet, my boy,
Hand it around to the guests,
Love at the start is easy,
But then the difficulties follow.

Came the aroma of musk
Robbed from the curls of your hair,
Stol'n by the smiling East-wind:
With how much pain the heart flows over!

Hark to the innkeeper-mage:
Color the carpet with wine.
Travelers know the roadways;
Acquainted, they, with posting-stations.

How can I relish delight,
Ent'ring the tent of my dear? —
Calling me always, "Ready!"
Are bells: the caravan is leaving . . .

Gloomy the shadow of night!
Whirlpool and wind of the sea —
How can you ev'n conceive them,
Who lightly on the banks are dwelling?

Yes, for well-gratified love,
I was a legend in town:
How can a thing stay hidden
When gossip flies abroad unhindered?

MARTIN BIDNEY

Háfiz, if peace you require,
Follow the valued advice:
Find your beloved; travel,
And leave the world, and never worry.

Reply

Here at the start of our trip,
All of the themes are in place:
Lover becomes a pilgrim
When even drink proves unavailing.

Roadway and station and stops,
Mystic the lore of the mage —
Traveling, for a Sufi,
Alone may grant a happy answer.

Now the procession may halt,
Briefly be given to thought —
Starting again, determined
The outward bound to seek unyielding.

Then, should the energy flag,
Spirit be falling asleep,
Caravan-bells on camels
The wander-group will, warding, waken.

Many may fail, and their goal
Seem but a guttering flame . . .
Never surrender, goaded
By duty on the heart incumbent.

Six are the days of the week
Lent for the mercy, the search:
Seventh arrives, and shining,
We pray, will be the bliss awaited.

Hope be a spur as we ride
Covered in cloud or in sun,
Holy the rolling motion,
And heartened by the breath of heaven.

A

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2.

Háfiz-Hammer Elif 1.3–4 Elif 2:

Ei Furughĭ mahĭ husn es ruĭ rachschanĭ schuma.

x/ x/ x/ x/
x/ x/ x/x

The moon of beauty borrowed light
Your brilliant face emitted;
It radiated gleams of grace —
Your chin's attractive dimple.

The thoughts that I would shape, collect —
How might I well unite them
With locks of your resplendent hair
So touseled and disheveled?

My spirit, as when dying, rose
Up to my lips to see you:
Shall it escape? Or go back down?
Declare your lordly pleasure!

Should you pass by, lift up my cloak
Now dusty all and bloody,
For many sacrificed to you
Are fall'n upon this roadway.

My heart is orphaned. O, proclaim
To friends the grievous tidings!
With you, O friends, my spirit cries
In fellowship of sorrow.

What good is self-restraint to him
Who has beheld your glances?
The light upon your countenance
Was for his eye a lightning.

Let East-wind bring me a bouquet
From cheeks, of roses, ruddy,
Perhaps aroma to convey
With pollen of his gardens.

MARTIN BIDNEY

May you live long, and may your wish
Be ever granted, inn-boys!
Although my glass, when I was there,
Was never full, I'll say it.

Then listen! Háfiz now will pray.
And say amen, he's praying:
Give me this day my daily bread
From — sweet! — the lips of friendship.

O Morning-wind, depart for Yazd!
And tell the local people:
The head of any ingrate will
Deserve your polo mallet.

Though I from you am distant far,
Yet is my spirit nearer:
For I'm the servant of your Shah
And glad to laud your merit.

I'm heartened, and I beg the Lord
You, king of kings, may help me!
I kiss the ground before your tent,
The vault of Háfiz' heaven.

Reply

A torn-out page of daily life
With maelstrom-changed emotion:
Despair, entreaty, prayer, hope,
Then grateful, riddling homage.

The Shíraz friend, the Shah of Yazd —
They have no clear connection.
And none can tell what justified
The sudden shift in focus.

The friend — a king implored in vain
Who yet requires allegiance?
A rebel seems in conflict here
With a most humble subject.

An East-West Dialog

And yet the clear-obscure appeals,
Each thought or mood a current
Borne by a swift and riddling wind
Upon a stormy crossroads.

A

MARTIN BIDNEY

3.

Háfiz-Hammer I.5–6 Elif 3:

Saki benurı̄ bade ber efrus dschami ma.

/x /xx /x /x /x

Tavern-keeper, with wine the goblet lighten;
 Singer, sing, for our deepest wish is granted;
 I perceive, in the glass, loved cheeks' reflection.
 Listen, you that have felt no joy in drinking:
 Drunken frenzy befits the eyes of comrades;
 Drinking boldly removes the reins and bridle.
 I will favor the handsome men, but only
 Till the slenderer cypress-man approaches.
 He whose tongue is ensouled by love's immortal:
 In the Book of the World I'm famed forever.
 I am fearful that, come the Day of Judgment,
 Wine and "bread of the wise" will not prove equal.
 East-wind, passing the rose-grove in your travel,
 Send a word to my dear one from his comrade.
 You, ethereal flood, and you, O moon-boat,
 Sink unseen in the ocean of his kindness.
 Scatter eagerly, eye, the seed of teardrops:
 I would catch in my net the bird of pleasure.

Reply

Steady tread, with a risky leap of daring:
 Dactyl, faster, amid the plodding trochees.
 Here's a man who confronts the Day of Judgement
 Not with fear, but a loving speculation:
 Wine is better than all the pious offer.
 Who's the judge that would grant the novel thesis?
 One magnanimous, big in mind, with spirit
 Wider spread than the very heav'n above us,
 Where the moon, little viewed, would sink forever,
 Tells of pleasure to kindred wine-believers.
 We that hunt for a sermon allegoric
 Baffled halt for a moment — never longer!
 Joy and love in their wider acceptance
 Blend, for us, with a higher bliss abounding.

An East-West Dialog

Don't forget: when a lyric gift is added,
Which the Book of the World enriches, lending
Immortality of the tongue well-honeyed,
Glory-ways are complete, the soul in Eden.

A

MARTIN BIDNEY

4.

Háfiz-Hammer I.7–8 Elif 4:
Sofi bia ki ájne safest Dschamra.

/xx /xx /xx /xx /xx /x
/xx /xx /xx /x

Sufi, come here! and look down in the mirroring depth of the goblet;
Pleasure behold of the wine, of its purple!
Looking for hidden significance, ask of the adepts of drinking;
High-ranking Sufis have never attained it.
No one has caught the Simúrg, so your trap you had better cast farther;
Swelling the net are but winds of the morning.
Up! make the most of the day; even Adam our father, in Eden,
Couldn't get wine any longer when fallen.
Knock back a couple of cups at the feast of our life, and then onward!
Seek not a steady delight under heaven.
Youth went away, O my heart! and the flowers unplucked and unsampled;
Virtue, repute, you must covet when aging.
East-wind, awake! for a faithful disciple of drinking is Háfiz;
Greetings convey to the lord of the tavern.

Reply

Anka, Simúrg are the names of the bird-king who since the beginning
Hour of the world has endured un beholden.
Solomon had him in service for taming the jinns while they labored;
Then to the mountain of Kaf he retreated,
There to partake of a tranquil philosopher-peace unremitting,
Ever transcendent, a cloud-rounded summit.
Seek in a goblet simurgal a wisdom eluding the Sufi;
Emblemed, a mystery. Fleeting contentment!
Wines of the Highest are only prepared for the righteous in Eden;
Duty and work are required of the servant.
Háfiz might want to impress on the mind the enlightening moral;
Yet his two-minded crepuscular vision
Militates here, as throughout the hedonic collection, against it:
Dawning is winelike, of rubious color.

A

*An East-West Dialog***5.****Háfiz-Hammer I.8–9 Elif 5:****Sa kia berchis ve derdich Dschamra.**

/x x/, x/x x/
x/x x/x x/

Taverner, up, and hand me the glass,
 And bury the worries in wine!
 Give me the glass, and pour me the drink,
 Away with the wearisome cowl!
 Bad will it sound to wise-guided minds,
 But why be concerned with repute?
 Bring me the cup! The rest we'll forget —
 A waste of our fugitive time.
 Smoke from the glow aflame in the breast
 Has molten the cold folks away.
 Heart of a fool! In people I find
 Not one to be trusted like you.
 Surely no comfort's needed by me,
 For everything vanished at once!
 Háfiz, be patient, early and late;
 That all may turn out as you wish.

Reply

Blue was the shade a Sufi would wear
 When scolding our poet in scorn.
 Goethe would later loudly complain
 That cowl-wearing critics were harsh:
 Color might change, but habit would not;
 With rebel opinion it clashed.
 Háfiz regretted, many a time,
 The Sufi-adherent constraint;
 Yet, as the bard belonged to the group
 That followed the leader Hassán,
 They would exhort him, like it or not,
 The rule of the order to guard.
 Sufi charisma blossomed in love;
 And morals, the afterthought, stung.

A

MARTIN BIDNEY

6.

Háfiz-Hammer I.9–11 Elif 6:

Dil mereved si destem sahibi dilan Modara.

/xx /xx /xx /xx /xx /x
 /xx /xx /, /xx /xx /

Out of my hand flew my heart, O you folk that have heart in abundance!
 Woe, by the Lord, is my fate! Now is the mystery fled!
 Yesterday Nightingale sang of the rose and the wine, and so purely —
 Bring me the wine of the morn, sleepyhead drunkard, at once!
 Look in the goblet, the miracle-mirror of great Alexander:
 There you'll be spying on plans wily Darius had laid.
 Grace-bearing Master, accept all my thanks for the blooming well-being;
 Ask how your dervish may feel, also, if leisure you have.
 Here and beyond, our tranquillity rises from heeding two mottoes:
 Friends magnanimity give, friendship dispense to a foe.
 Entry I'm roughly refused to the land of the good reputation;
 Trifler, if you are denied, struggle to alter your lot!
 Bitter the drink that a pious one labeled the mother of vices —
 Lovelier-tasting to me, far, than a virginal kiss:
 Times are unfriendly? Well, here is a friend, an arousal to relish!
 Alchemist, beggars it turns richer than Egypt's Karún.
 Never be stubborn, your candle-flame glowing will gutter, extinguished,
 Rock turning wax in one's hand, whom the fond lover would please.
 Beauties of Persia with language melissal new energy lend you,
 Taverner, give the good news, quick!, to the pious and old.
 Ah, it's not willingly Háfiz a garment had soiled from the goblet;
 Shah who in splendor are dressed, pardon your servant the flaw.

Reply

Now I'm beginning to see why our Emerson valued the poet
 Háfiz so greatly he claimed Shakespeare and he were at one:
 Loved for reluctance to preach, they are paired in the Emerson heaven;
 Shining the choirs who commence, viewing their entry on high.
 Hear but the verses I've rendered — they're motley, disordered, peculiar,
 Humanly varied and strange, wise and eccentric, alive!
 Lover and sinner and drinker and beggar and singer, implorer,
 Learned in legend and lore, pouring a life into lines
 Destined for centuries; ever-refreshing, the pulse of the moment.
 Memories come into mind, Will, of how many a play!

An East-West Dialog

Falstaff and Henry, and how many yearners, and how many doubters!
Jester and monarch and more. Pen-wielding, spear-shaking twain!
Apt-emblematic the wine-mark, so maculate, labile the speaker;
Penitent, rebel entwined; hapless and witty entwined.
Rumi in rising became overpowered by mystical brightness;
I, in imagining, brought comic Nasreddin to aid
Balance in thought, as a man that some humor can add to the brilliant
Air getting thin on the height — warmer the “fool” that we need.

Háfiz I like for complexity, comic and tragic combining;
Here is a toast: may you rule seven more centuries! Hail!
Emerson knew he had gained irreplaceably from your acquaintance;
Credit to him as to you, fellow delighters in life.

A

MARTIN BIDNEY

7.

Háfiz-Hammer I.11–12 Elif 7:
 Prewnaki ahdi schebab est diger bistanza.

x/ x/ x/ x/ x/x
 x/ x/ x/ x/ x/x

The gardens, fresh in youthful grace, are blooming,
 And Rose gave Nightingale a gladsome tiding.
 O morning wind, to meadows young you're coming,
 I hail the rose, the basil, and the cypress!
 When he caresses me, the kindly cupboy,
 With eyelash-broom I'd gladly sweep the threshold.
 Player of polo-ball with amber mallet,
 I'm hit! you needn't strike me any harder.
 I fear that those who mock the steady drinker
 Will lose their own belief within the tavern.
 To be God's friend to men will mean resistance
 Like Noah's to the overwhelming flood-tide.
 What good's a palace towering to heaven
 To one who shortly in the dust will slumber?
 O Canaan's moon! Yours be the throne of Egypt:
 Joseph, it's time you left your gloomy prison.
 Desire no bread, but leave the worldly hostel!
 The earthly publican each guest will murder.
 I don't know what you're doing with your hair-locks,
 It only made the musk-aroma stronger.
 Háfiz drinks wine; drink up! — enjoy the morning.
 Make the Qur'an no hypocritic mind-trap.

Reply

Háfiz would be a Joseph out of prison,
 A Noah who dismissed the flood — a droplet!
 The surest means of evermore escaping
 The danger of a jail or threat of drowning,
 Sentence of death or long incarceration
 Resulting from rejection of a lover
 (In poetry not giv'n to understatement,
 For Háfiz would luxuriate in symbols
 Equating him with heroes in the scripture),
 Would be to leave the inn of earth completely.

An East-West Dialog

Did not the musk of hair remain enticing,
Where not the wine (reprovable allurements)
A sweet alternative to sequestration
Within the cold monastic walls' withdrawal,
Well might he wish to flee the ark, the tavern,
And, flying skyward, seek the very heaven.
The polo-game, the love-humiliation,
The failure of the nightingale that's likely
(For though we seem to hear a hopeful tidings,
Roses are known to doom to disabusal),
Might drive a troubadour to desperation
Were not the melody itself a comfort.

A

MARTIN BIDNEY

8.

Háfiz-Hammer I.13–15 Elif 8:

Eger am Turkī schirasi bedest ared Dilī mara

/xx /xx /xx /xx /xx /x
 /xx /xx /xx /x.

I, if the youth from Shiráz took my heart in his hand, for his beauty
 Mark would bestow Samarkand and Bokhara.
 Taverner, hand me the wine, for in heaven you'd vainly be seeking
 Roknabad's flowery bank, or Mosella's.
 Woe! for the rogues with enticing black eyes and with gestures endearing
 Rob all restraint from the heart, as the Turks do.
 Love, when ungratified, doesn't require all the beauty my friend has,
 Faces alluring will need no adornment.
 Stay with the poet, the goblet, and seek not the things that are hidden;
 No one has found them, and no one will find them.
 Joseph's enravishing beauty explains the enchantment of loving:
 Love tore apart the chaste veil of Zuleika.
 Heed my advice; be aware that a youth of a high, noble breeding
 Treasures the reverend words of an elder.
 Ill have you spoken? Forgiven! 'tis fitting the ill had been spoken;
 Bitter goes well with your lips and their sweetness.
 Háfiz, you've lined up your melody gems; they're the beads on a necklace,
 Pleiad-like, worth a bestrewal in heaven.

Reply

(1)

Thrilling, the distich that opened a lyric where love spoke to power!
 Timur the Great didn't find it amusing.
 Legend proclaims that he summoned the singer to court with a query:
 "What may it mean, your colossal presumption?
 Dare you belittle the splendor of realms your omnipotent ruler
 Conquered in lightning-like triumph of battle?
 You Samarkand and Bokhara would grant, and without hesitation,
 Both, for a beauty-mark? Better explain it."
 Háfiz replied (in the version von Hammer presented and relished),
 "Sorry, my writing was badly reported.

An East-West Dialog

Here's what an accurate transcript will show you I plainly had written:
 'Gladly I'd give, from Bokhara, two pastries.'"
Aptly he sprang from the trap with agility all have applauded;
 Many the ways they re-tell of the triumph.
Don't be surprised the temerity's loved, for a "fool" to Czar Ívan,
 As to King Lear, in a madness poetic
Spoke, with a boldness incomparable, to a monarch besotted:
 Touched by the God they were gifted, permitted.

(2) On Hammer's Praise of Háfiz, Elif 8

for Katharina Mommsen

Honored by princes, loved by friends,
Resting in bloomy-bowered garden,
To Háfiz learning pleasure lends,
Flower-dew mercy, Allah's pardon.

Dynasties, moved to battle by
Mutual turbid hatred rose:
Laid waste in tow'ring flames would lie
All Asia from the striving foes.

The empires in their turn were doomed
To fall, and by the selfsame law:
When, at the last, grave Timur loomed,
The gazing nations quaked in awe.

The sovrán welcomed Háfiz now
With grace, though in a lyric he
Wrote as a man who would not bow
Despite how great a king might be:

Bokhara, Samarkand, he claimed
(The main adornments of the realm),
Or other prize that might be named,
Were he to hold the empire's helm,

He would exchange, right gladly too,
For but one thing: the beauty-mark
That his Beloved let him view:
Simple as that! Let rulers hark.

MARTIN BIDNEY

The more the rumbling thunders crashed,
Kingdoms collided, rife with rage,
In riving brilliance lightnings flashed,
The sweet-serene Iranian sage

The more appeared both calm and wise:
Half-mystic, smiling in the night,
He sang of the unsleeping sighs
Of Nightingale for rose-delight.

Then let the horror of the storm
That would convulse the Orient
Roar on! Affinities that form
A stiller wisdom had been lent

To him who caroled Love and Wine:
Abounding chaos would but free
One dowered by this gift divine
Of inward-lighted liberty.

For had he waited till the time
Long-envied peace at length might come
We'd never hail that halidom
We feel in every healing rhyme.

Now therefore let us learn and long
Cherish the lesson we have heard:
Who sings of Wine and Love a song
Can make which like the holy word

Beyond the bound of mortal bane
May last, on lips to hover — ah! —
When the high names of Tamerlane
And Jenghiz Khan and Nadirshah

Will only as burning scar
Be known in mankind's memory:
A warning and a mark to mar.
Hearken instead to Háfiz. He

Joyed by the morning-evening star
Embroidered clear and lyric hymn
To Love and Wine, twinned lights that are
Eyes of the choiring seraphim.

A

An East-West Dialog

9.

Háfiz-Hammer I.16–17 Elif 9:
Saha belutf bügu an ghaselî ranara.

/x /x /x /x

Say caressingly, O East-wind,
To the fleet gazelle, the slender:
Fevered love for you has driven
Me to mountains, to the wasteland.

Why does not the sugar merchant
(Life to him by God be granted)
Ask about the mood and feeling
Of the candy-wanting parrot?

When you're sitting with the dear one,
By his side the wine imbibing,
All the other friends remember
Wand'ring like the wind bewildered.

Rose, the pride does not beseem you
Which you flaunt in all your beauty,
So that haughtily you never
Of the nightingale take notice.

Only recommended measures
Serve to capture the beloved,
Clever birds avoiding deftly
Fowler-trap or net well hidden.

Who will tell me why with features
Nobly shapen of the faces
Moonlit-bright, the eyes in darkness
Will not lend me their attention?

In your beauty I discover
Not a flaw that's worth the naming,
Save, as in so many handsome,
Lack of faithfulness in loving.

MARTIN BIDNEY

For the boon of dear companions,
For the friendship-favor grateful,
Have regard that many, distant,
Over wilding heath are roaming.

What the wonder, then, in heaven
When, by Háfiz' song awakened,
To the mellow lute of Zohra
The Messiah's gladly dancing?

Reply

Pilgrim angels Hárut, Márut,
Clothed in garb of walking mortals,
Met the saintly woman Zohra
And attempted to seduce her.

They were punished, hanged in fetters
By their feet, a doom disgraceful,
Near a Babylonian fountain.
For reward the blameless lady

In the fourth of spheric heavens,
Had assumed the form of Venus,
Playing on her lute forever,
Star of evening, soul of morning.

Planets roundelay are making
As enraptured by her music
They the harmony are sounding
That on earth was rudely sundered.

In her sphere the prophet Jesus,
Named Messiah by Muhammad,
Joining gladly in the dancing
Pays the maiden-virtue homage.

How remarkable that Háfiz'
Love lament aroused the prophet,
Who a countervailing gladness
With the lady might awaken!

An East-West Dialog

Holy, as a dance-companion,
Is the prophet to the poet:
Boon to both — poetic ardor
Lauding daily the Creation.

Nine the strophes of the singer,
Nine the lordly orbs of heaven,
Nine the Muses whereby Grecians
Adumbrated later Eden.

I this hymn would fain not finish
Till I've praised the poet also
For compassionate remembrance
Of the friends in desert moaning.

A

MARTIN BIDNEY

10.

Háfiz-Hammer I.18–19 Elif 10:

Dusch es mesdschid sui mechane amed prima.

/x /x /x /x

Yesterday our Sufi elder
Left the mosque to try the tavern.
O you pious men, inform me:
How should we direct our actions?
How can we, disciples faithful,
To the Kaaba turn our faces
When the sheikh who is our father
To the inn is gladly going?
Let's make common cause together
With the the genial tavern-keeper!
In the Book of Fate it so was
Immemorially written.
See! a breeze, through hair-locks rushing,
All the world for me has darkened!
There's the sum of the advantage
That your tresses long have brought me.
When my heart at last had captured
Rest within its spirit-netting,
You unrolled your fragrant hair-locks,
And my prisoned prey had vanished.
If the intellect could fathom
How the hearts are caught in tresses,
Held, infatuate, in bondage
It would lose that understanding.
Of the fair Qur'an of Beauty
Was your face a revelation:
Therefore now my lines are breathing
With a graceful higher beauty.
How could fiery sighs, the glowing
Of my breast in lover's ardor,
Through the night continue burning
With your stony heart immobile?
See: the arrow-sighs of Háfiz
Flown away into the heaven!
Have compassion for the sender;