

*Praise*



# HAFIZ'S

## Little Book *of* Life



Made new by  
ERFAN MOJIB & GARY GACH  
Based on adaptations by Abbas Kiarostami

HAMPTON ROADS

Foreword by Ari Honarvar



Copyright © 2023

by Erfan Mojib and Gary Gach

Foreword © 2023 by Ari Honarvar

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC. Reviewers may quote brief passages.

Cover design by TK

Cover illustration © TK

Map by Ali Nader-Mohamadi

Interior by TK

Typeset in TK

Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc.  
Charlottesville, VA 22906

Distributed by Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC

[www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com)

Sign up for our newsletter and special offers by going to [www.redwheelweiser.com/newsletter](http://www.redwheelweiser.com/newsletter).

ISBN: 978-1-64297-046-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available upon request.

[LCC info TK]

[Printer location TK]

[Printer TK]

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## *Publisher's Note*

We are aware that the local Persian pronunciation of the poet's name is closer to Hafez rather than Hafiz. Yet we have bowed to the spelling initially recommended by the Library of Congress and as used today in the field of Islamic scholarship.





## CONTENTS

Foreword,	0
Introductions,	0
Poetry of Hafiz,	0
Translators' Notes,	0
A Sample Ghazal by Hafiz,	0
Divination: The Tongue of the Hidden,	0
Glossary,	0
Bibliography,	0
Acknowledgments,	0

---

## FOREWORD

It isn't unusual for children in Iran to utter Hafiz's poems before they can read or write. Most people know certain *beits* (verses) of *Divan e Hafiz* by heart and recite them in festivities, in welcoming dismay and despair, and even in everyday conversations. Born into a family with several generations of poets in Hafiz's hometown of Shiraz, my own relationship with his poetry began long before I was born.

By the time I left Iran at the age of fourteen, I had memorized many *ghazals* by Hafiz and recited them at gatherings. As an adult in the U.S., my love affair with poetry was rekindled and I began translating Rumi, Sa'di, and Omar Khayyám's poetry. This presented a daunting task as stories, wisdom, history, and religious references have been brewing for hundreds of years in Persian culture and are often distilled into a pithy phrase or even a solitary word in a given poem. It takes translators who are enmeshed in the cultural milieu to not only decipher the hidden meanings of these references but to attempt to convey them in an aesthetically pleasing manner to a new audience. But even when infused with deep love, skill, and care, there is still the risk that the translated version will pale in comparison to the original. If this is true for Persian poets in general, it is doubly true



for Hafiz's poems, which are in an entirely different category of difficulty. Hafiz was a true wordsmith, possessing a preternatural ability to play with both beauty and word economy and compose unparalleled verses that compel poetry lovers to memorize them in their entirety. He was a living contradiction—as the court's poet, Hafiz was an official government employee, yet the poetry that flowed from him was subversive, mischievous, and wild. He was dubbed the Interpreter of Mysteries and belonged to the Malamatian (the blamed ones) Sect. In a time of tremendous religious hypocrisy and the false piety of many clerics, this group intentionally committed acts that would draw criticism as a way of breaking their own arrogance. Hafiz and his compatriots traded popularity for the purity of their love affair with the divine.

Given these realities, I had long agreed with the notion that Hafiz's work was untranslatable. The popular bodies of work attributed to him have been disappointing at best, as they were conceived solely from the Eurocentric gaze. I couldn't recognize a single iota of the enchanting Hafiz ghazals I had grown up with and loved.

When I learned about this book, I was understandably skeptical. But as soon as I delved into *Hafiz's Little Book of Life*, my heart leaped and I am delighted to say that my perspective has changed. It occurred to me that perhaps the "recipe" for Hafiz translations wasn't a lost cause, but required the unexpected alchemy of two astute chefs, one steeped in Persian culture, and

the other well-versed in radical mysticism, both master translators in their own right. Mojib and Gach first found an ingenious approach to introducing Hafiz to the English-speaking world. Then, over many months and a thousand email exchanges later, they managed to distill Hafiz's message so that his signature essence is not only recognizable to Persian sensibilities but delivers the poet's balm for the English speaker's soul. The glossary and in-depth explanations authenticate the translators' painstaking effort in preserving the true meaning of each *beit*. The chapters are lovingly divided into "gardens," a perfect setting in which to offer this gift.

Hafiz's poetry aims to close the gap between mortal humans and the divine, and this book opens a door to the poet's gardens. From the first page, you are invited to settle into a sublime sanctuary and partake in enchantment until you feel the Beloved inside your beating heart and running through your veins.

—Ari Honarvar, author of  
*A Girl Called Rumi*

## INTRODUCTIONS

Have you met Hafiz?

Ralph Waldo Emerson called him the only man he wished to see or be. Queen Victoria consulted Hafiz as an oracle. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's great detective Sherlock Holmes quotes his poetry. Goethe composed a book in his honor, calling him "the Celestial Friend."

His full name is Shams al-Din Mohammad Hafiz-e Shirazi. *Shams al-Din* is an honorific, meaning The Sun of Religion. He is commonly known by his pen-name *Hafiz-e Shirazi* (Hafiz of Shiraz). "Hafiz" means one who has memorized the Qu'ran. It was believed he knew fourteen different editions of the Qu'ran, plus twenty-five sets of commentaries.

Outside of that, his life story can be indeterminate, in the same way as his poetry is ambiguous. The presence of various blanks in his biography leaves his poetry to be scrutinized by scholars. (Married? Children? Travels? etc.) But it may be fruitless to expect his poetry would yield clues as to his private life. Hafiz was gifted with an active imagination. Moreover, classical Persian lyric poetry isn't intended to stand as a confession of an author's personal experience so much as to evoke a particular experience in the reader's own life. Still, we can cover a few key points of possible interest to his sketchy biography.





Achaemenid Empire (500 BC)	●
Ilkhanate Empire (1256–1335)	●
Present-Day Iran	▨
Shiraz (Capital of Fars Province)	★

To locate him within the Big Picture, we see him as an heir to the mighty Persian Empire (Achaemenid), ruled by Darius the Great and Xerxes (circa 500 BC). This was the largest empire in history, ranging from Central Asia to the Mediterranean Sea to Central Asia, from Arabia to the Black Sea to Arabia, and from the Balkans and Eastern Europe to the Indus Valley. It was decimated by Alexander the Great, then Arab Muslim conquest, and, next, invasions by Genghis Khan, who was building an even larger empire.



Hafiz came on the scene during the Ilkhanate dynasty (established 1256, fifty-nine years before he was born). He was thirty-eight when it collapsed in 1353. Then, several dynasties (Injuids, Muzaffarids, Chobanids, Jalayirids, Kartids, etc.) gained power and declared independence, dividing Persia into smaller, regional states. Of these, Hafiz lived under the reign of the Injus and Muzaffarids. Persia was not united again until the Safavid dynasty (1501–1736) in the 16th century.

His dates are possibly 1315–1390 (716–791 AH), but this isn't absolutely certain. (Please note, too: Muslims of his time didn't celebrate birthdays.) It's safe to say Hafiz was a contemporary of Chaucer. Yet Hafiz is more like Shakespeare, two centuries later. Both were immersed in cosmopolitan as well as local culture. Their affinity might even bear direct influence. Scholar Ernest Fenollosa points out that “the freedom of the Elizabethan mind, and its power to range over all



planes of human experience, as in Shakespeare, was in part, an aftermath of Oriental contacts,” encounters with Iran included.

He was a native of Shiraz, the capital of the province of Fars, from which come the words Farsi and Persian. Throughout the Islamic world, for centuries, Shiraz had been considered as the House of Knowledge, comparable to the Athens of Iran. Situated for both land and maritime trade on the Silk Road and the Spice Routes, it was a major international trading center, and, as a regional political center, its economy was self-reliant. In Hafiz’s time, Shiraz was comparable to Florence under the de Medicis. Scholar Leonard Lewisohn describes it as home of “learned theologians, eloquent preachers, pious ascetics, ecstatic Sufis, erudite scholars, specialist theologians, great calligraphers, famous scientists, and adept men of letters.” Such a varied cultural and economic climate helped Shiraz survive intense periods of political violence.

Within that background of artistic and intellectual brilliance, Hafiz’s grasp of the philosophies, poetics, and politics of his time provided solid, rich grounding for him to reach beyond any other Persian poet, before or after.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Hafiz is considered the zenith, the acme, the pinnacle, the apex of

---

1 His dates place him a century after Rumi. Where Rumi wrote of one lifelong theme, Hafiz’s vast scope make him all the more universal, and deserving of no less attention. As scholar Omid Safi has put it, if Rumi is a tumultuous ocean of love, Hafiz is an illuminated and many-faceted diamond.

classical Persian literature of all time. In his lifetime, his lyrics captivated the soul of his people. His latest ones would be copied by hand and distributed for minstrels to sing and for people to read after performances. While written words were slower to travel, song is immediate. So his audience in his lifetime extended across Iran, from Fars to Khorasan and Azerbaijan. And, attesting to the reach of extending beyond national borders, his devotees could be found in such Persian-speaking communities as India, Turkistan, and Mesopotamia.

Someone suggested he gather his lyrics together—following the common Persian practice of collecting and publishing a poet’s works into a book (*divan*) in his or her lifetime. But, no. His gears seemed to know no reverse, only various speeds of moving ever onwards. His refusal to commit to a *divan* meant his work remained to be collected and arranged by others, beginning a dozen years after his death. His poems weren’t dated, although some clearly refer to contemporary events. But *divans* weren’t typically arranged chronologically nor even thematically but, rather, by the syllables rhyming at the ends of lines. What’s important to note here is that Hafiz’s *divan*, some five hundred lyric poems, is half or a third less than his peers. This reflects his “soul-digging, hard-working” commitment to craft, seen in each lyric’s high degree of polish.

Today, you’re likely to find two books in homes in Iran, a Qur’an and Hafiz’s *divan*. Sometimes the latter is more dog-eared than the former—as people commonly memorize his poetry, and quote lines to each other. As for *this* little edition

of Hafiz, let's flesh out a bit more of his biography—as part of Garden of the World—then proceed to his other gardens.

## *Garden of the World*

Hafiz knew precarious times, first-hand. While in his twenties, within five years (1339–1344), Hafiz lived under eight rulers of the province of Fars, none of whom came to a natural end. The first, Abu Ishaq Inju, was religiously tolerant and a patron of artists and sages. Shiraz flourished under his reign, and Hafiz found a patron in one of Abu Ishaq's wealthy, imperial officials. Some say this patron created a college just for him, where Hafiz taught Qur'anic exegesis (interpretation and commentary) and accepted commissions for his splendid calligraphy. He also served as a political consultant, without being himself attached to the royal court, remaining both in and out of the game.

Abu Ishaq's reign was relatively brief (1343–1357). One of his expeditions against the House of Muzaffarid had failed. Abu Ishaq was beheaded, and the Muzaffarids took over the lands of the Injuids. In three decades, Mubariz al-Din had expanded his family's power as far as Tabriz.

Hafiz had to endure Shah Mubariz al-Din Mohammad's violent reign. Under Mubariz al-Din, studies in science (astronomy, mathematics, medicine) and philosophy were banned. Related books were burned. Taverns, gambling houses, brothels, and opium dens were boarded up. Music couldn't be played in

public. Hafiz countered with poetry. In his lyrics, he proclaimed his righteous indignation at this tyrannical, self-appointed Chief of Morality Police, while also praising harps, sensual desire, and divine inebriation.

Besides Mubariz al-Din's oppressive religious fundamentalism, he was also known for his bestial cruelty. It was said he'd interrupt his recitation of the Qur'an when enemies were brought before him, whom he'd personally put to death, then go right back to his recitations of scripture. Legend has it that his son, Shah Shujah, asked him if it was true that he'd personally executed 10,000 people, to which he replied, "No! 8,000, maximum."

It didn't end until Shah Shujah had his father blinded and imprisoned. After this coup, education and the arts were encouraged once more. Like Hafiz, Shah Shujah wrote poetry and could recite the Qur'an. The two of them bonded. Hafiz mentioned him in thirty-nine poems, praising him but not hesitating to publicly criticize him, in poems which became the talk of the town. Covering his back in this period also meant navigating the turbulent waters of Byzantine rivalries for the throne, seething amongst the relatives of his new patron and friend.

Towards the end of his life, Hafiz heard of the Turko-Mongol army once again invading Iran, tens to hundreds of thousands of skulls rumored to be left in the wake of these massacres. Now they were gobbling up more and more turf neighboring on Shiraz. Their leader, Timur (known in Europe

as Tamerlane), had visited Shiraz during Hafiz's lifetime, staying for two months. Shiraz didn't fall under his thumb until three years after Hafiz's death.



Hafiz offers us such a lucid, unflinching gaze at the state of his world, that much of it still resonates today. Seeing through the eyes of a poet, we bear witness to the almost palpable soul of the world in our hearts. This world is not without wisdom and hope. Yet, when we yearn for “the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible,” we may lack a path, a way. We'd be justified were we to cry out, like Symbolist poet Charles Baudelaire, “Anywhere! anywhere! just as long as it's out of this world!” Indeed, if life can be changed, we might we feel ourselves here at a life-changing threshold . . .

### *The Garden of Wine*

Readers of Rumi or *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam* will be familiar with the occasional wine-stains, as it were, on pages of classical Persian poetry. Some say they refer to literal wine, nothing more. Others disagree, saying they are obviously symbolic. If so, here we come upon the gates to a method, a path of awakening, awakening from the toxins and mass insomnia of the world. But guests of Hafiz's garden needn't be constrained by either/or logic. Here, the rectilinear world of historical phenomena can be understood as intertwined with the timeless realm of

the Beloved. For instance, Hafiz might address Shah Shujah in a poem as his lover (a mode of writing known as panegyric). The soul of the world can be considered our lover too. In the Garden of Wine, amidst the mundane, we find paths beyond conventional reason, paths of deep feeling and fertile imagination.

Of course, to speak of divinity in terms of wine, Hafiz was obliged to be familiar with real wine pressed from mortal grapes. That wouldn't have been a stretch, as Shiraz was famous for its winemakers. Indeed, Hafiz might well have been familiar with the finest of wines, made exclusively for the retinue of the rulers and wealthy with whom he mingled. Courtly wine parties were held in many venues in Shiraz—from palace to hunting lodge, bucolic gardens or urban pop-ups.

He also seems to have been familiar with local taverns, in rugged neighborhoods at the outskirts of town. Zoroastrians or Christians ran them, and thus not liable to Islamic law (*shariah*) which, then as now, forbids alcohol. They also provided a small public sphere for a counter-cultural society to develop.<sup>2</sup> Thus Hafiz sometimes speaks of discovering a jewel amidst the ruins. And he felt a kinship with the taverns' most passionate patrons, and for whom he coined the phrase *dregs-drinkers*.

For Hafiz, grapes' elixir can yield a spectrum of meanings. Their truth is up for us to test; to taste and see. For example,

---

2 Shiraz had its opium dens as well. A verse of Hafiz refers to opium, and one by Rumi to cannabis. Use of such substances dates very far back in Iran, both for therapy and for getting stoned. Smoking was not originally the common method of consumption (introduced by Uzbeks). Wine or yogurt were common delivery devices.

we've noted wine's associations with both the imperial and the marginal. The intoxication of wine could also be likened to that delicious delirium known by lovers (whose garden is up ahead, next). An even more exalted level of interpretation is the supreme intoxication: spiritual knowledge of the light and beauty of the Divine, radiant in every atom. So one might then see special meaning in the chalice, and the community of imbibers. But how many tavern goers have yet to really get to know the tavern keeper? And, be careful! Your wine server (saqi) might steal your heart away, transporting you to . . .

### *The Garden of Love*

What is love? A parade of media minstrels croon, "*This is the way love is.*" But the passing, superficial, popular songs of today can never scratch the surface of that timeless, wordless, primal sense of love pulsing in our heart of hearts. Such love bears unspoken marks of separation. . . isolation. . . yearning. . . and union. And it has been ever thus, since before the dawn of time. Blessed is the one who recognizes, understands, and realizes this.

Hafiz speaks to us of our universal human condition. Through his big, open heart, he understands us all—and embraces all the phases of our love affairs. Our pursuit of love can lift us to dizzying heights, and drag us down through the mud, plus everywhere in between. Listening deeply, we can hear his lyrics of love mirroring aspects of spiritual devotion.

And, of course, it's reciprocal: the path of spiritual devotion can be spoken of in terms of phases of a love affair. If God is love, imagine this: from time to time, the Divine flirts with us. (Hello!)



We recognize again a range of possible meanings of the "You" in Hafiz's lyrics—our world, the environment; living beings, a soulmate (of any gender); the Ultimate Identity.<sup>3</sup> All three are intertwined. This is so deep, why not bestow a human face upon the numinous? After all, we're human, and need to see and understand within ourself, first, before we can expand our horizons outwards.

As we become aware of our exile from and longing for the beloved, primal Garden—we might recognize we've never left. It could take just a sip of ambrosial wine. . . a slight shift of perception. . . a snap of the fingers. . . a few notes from the Bard, singing like the nightingale serenading the rose. Our Beloved whom we yearn for is no further away from us than the vein in our own neck. Such realization leads to, and from . . .

---

3 A single truth has multiple names: Sacred Unity. . . A Love Supreme. . . The Friend . . . The Unborn; the Deathless. . . The One of Ninety-Nine Names. . . The Nameless . . . Absolute Reality. . . Source. . . Nature. But, if you prefer, you might fall in with filmmaker Luis Buñuel who declared, "Thank God I'm an atheist!"

## *The Garden of Wisdom*

There are many paths to the Garden. For Hafiz, poetry is primary. A poet is keenly aware how just a small word can refer to so much. Translator Geoffrey Squires notes references in Hafiz's poems to alchemy, astrology, astronomy, chess, commerce, falconry, farming, medicine, mining, and so on. And Hafiz's world-embracing art is a testimony to how poetry can take us beyond the inherently dualistic framework of words in and of themselves. Sufi poetry can open the Eye in the Heart. . . lifting the veil from the Face of God. . . awakening the Mind of Love.

Hafiz the Eternal Lover embraces all of life's encounters and opportunities without attaching for too long to any one. He's thus free to roam the entire compass—ambiguity and paradoxicality included. Alongside his worldly knowledge, his range of spiritual know-how also seems as wide as the sky. He lived in a nonsecular society, so of course religion was everywhere. Yet trying to tag him to any one lineage might be like trying to trace criss-crossing rings of raindrops rippling on the surface of a calm, deep ocean.

He knew the Qur'an inside and out. Through the Qur'an, he was on familiar terms with such figures as Adam, Jonah, Joseph, and Jesus. He was also friendly towards the pre-Islamic teachings of Zoroaster (aka Zarathustra), prophet and founder of one of the world's oldest religions. Then there's the perennial undercurrent of Sufism. Hafiz quotes Sufi poets that came before his time, and Sufis, since, have quoted him like a brother. Yet we have no records of his affiliation with any particular

Sufi school nor guide (“*pir*”).<sup>4</sup> In his day, it had been common for Persian poets to be initiated into Sufism—then follow the Way on their own. Then, too, if one practices the Sufi Way, one doesn't necessarily announce, much less brag about it. Plus, his was an epoch that saw Sufism establishing formal Orders. This institutionalization made it vulnerable to bureaucracy and corruption. So, more often than not, Hafiz's direct references to Sufism express salty, righteous indignation at shameless hypocrisy and sanctimonious piety.

Whatever his spiritual inclination, initiation, and training, Hafiz knew how to get out of his own way, and refined that art at . . .

## *The Garden of Ecstasy*

A lyric poet and a mystic poet, Hafiz is also an ecstatic poet. Singing of pain and of joy, Hafiz also touches something deeper than either. A member of the school of Islamic philosopher Abu Hamid al-Ghazali once said, “For his lovers, God pours out a draft from the cup of His love, and by that draft they are intoxicated, rapt away from themselves.” In this rapturous vin-

---

4 Author Dariush Ashouri makes a case for Sufi influences on Hafiz from its Khorasani school, extending back to Ahmad al-Ghazali and Rashid Al-Din Meybodi, on to Najm al-Din Razi, Owlad al-Din Kermani, and Fakhr al-Din Eraqi. Some say he studied with Pir Muhammad Attar. Others say he was a follower of Sayyid Abu al-Wafa Shirazi. Iranologist Henry Corbin posits him as an initiate of Ruzbehān Baqli (1128–1209), whose mystical tradition – The Religion of Love – also links to a vein of the European troubadour tradition, of which Dante, most famously, was heir.

tage, we can taste the Greek roots of *ecstasy*: going beyond self (ex, to displace and *histemi*, I stand).

Dissatisfaction with the world, the intoxication of wine, the surprise and transport of love, and recognition of the value of methods of living in harmony and joy, are each points of departure from the illusory view of the limited, isolated self (“the skin-encapsulated ego”), into a realm of silent ecstasy. But, enough prose! It’s time to saddle up the camels and journey to. . . Hafiz.

## Poetry of Hafiz





# Garden *of the* World



Between these two doors

This caravan





Everyone  
Drives by  
While I  
Walk on alone



To cut off my desire for life  
Would be easy, next to cutting off  
Dear  
Friends



Commemorate  
The ones who are gone  
&  
Those who love


Be in harmony  
With the spring clouds

Here I am  
&  
Over there  
The idle know-it-all



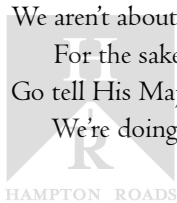
Our fate  
Was in the hands  
Of some two-year-old wine

The desert is up ahead

Which  
Does patience  
Look like  
  
& where  
Is sleep

The city is in the dark  
As the Eagle of Oppression  
Spreads its giant wings


We aren't about to beg  
For the sake of our daily bread  
Go tell His Majesty  
We're doing fine without him

The logo for Hampton Roads, featuring a stylized 'H' and 'R' with a bridge-like structure between them, and the text 'HAMPTON ROADS' below.

Let's face it  
The people of our time  
Have no sympathy for the poor

I behold hundreds of thousands of flowers  
Yet no bird sings –  
Where have the birds all gone  
& what happened to the nightingales

Once, this was a city of friends  
In a land of kind people –  
What happened to the love  
& where are the compassionate leaders

The logo for Hampton Roads, featuring a stylized 'H' and 'R' with a bridge-like structure between them, and the text 'HAMPTON ROADS' below.

The chief cop  
Has chopped off  
The lovely hair  
Of the harp

Vanity, my dear  
Is merely proof  
Of sheer ignorance

Hey, fly  
The realm of the simurgh  
Is not your arena

The tavern door's been closed up Oh God  
May this not open the door  
To the house of hypocrisy & lies



The town is empty of love  
Until one person  
Acts beyond their self

Those preachers  
Who appear glorious  
In pulpits & on altars  
Yet in private  
Act totally the opposite

Speak not to the  
Imposters  
Of the wonders of Love's intoxication

Let them die in arrogant ignorance  
& the agony of self-cherishing

Whether I'm good or evil  
Mind your own business  
Everyone will harvest  
What they've sowed  
Eventually

You might think those who speak harmfully  
Will get away with it  
But they're being monitored by  
The Recording Angels



Strive to be truthful  
& the sun will be born  
From your breath

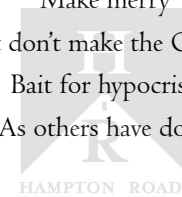
Do you know what the harps  
& the ouds proclaim ?

“ Drink liquor in privacy –  
Or be whipped ”

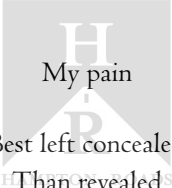


Dear Hafiz

Drink up  
Be a free soul  
Make merry  
But don't make the Qur'an  
Bait for hypocrisy  
As others have done



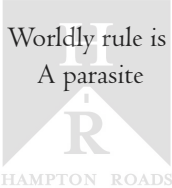
How may  
Fresh poetry  
Come  
To a heart heavy with sorrow



My pain  
Best left concealed  
Than revealed  
To dubious do-gooders

Last night  
In the Alley of the Tavern  
The local imam  
With his perennial prayer rug on his back  
Was carried out on somebody else's back

Along the Way of Love



Worldly rule is  
A parasite

The Alley of Prestige  
Is not for us

If you don't like it  
Try changing Justice

Adam gave up Paradise  
For just one nice ripe apple  
What if our world is only worth  
One hard stale raisin  
?

Our hands are short

The dates  
High up on the tree



While you slept  
The caravan has moved on

The desert is up ahead

Good were the times  
Being with the Friend  
All else – fruitlessness  
H& ignorancedS



Harvests of spirituality could burn  
Right on down to the ground  
In the flames of self-denial  
& the bonfires of hypocrisy



Alas for the mockers of those  
Who drink life to the very dregs

Only to abandon their own beliefs  
At the open door of any tavern  
Where their faith will be restored

In our neighborhood we care  
Only for broken hearts

If you are peddling ego  
Take it to the other side of town



I'm not the color of hypocrisy  
Either I am a red lion  
Or a black serpent

Peace in both realms  
Depends on your interpretation  
Of these two utterances

“ Be merciful with friends ”

“ Be tolerant of foes ”



Forgive the warring of the 72 nations  
Not having seen the truth  
They've gone down the road of fantasy





The sanctuary of the heart is no place  
For the company of antagonists

Where a demon departs  
An angel arrives

Doing good work  
There's no room  
For hesitation



Life's conditions  
Constantly  
Vary

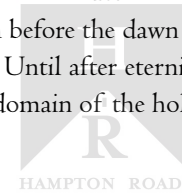
Do not despair



Try

Otherwise on this path  
You'll get nowhere

From shore to shore  
The armies of tyranny rule  
Yet  
From before the dawn of time  
Until after eternity  
Is the domain of the holy beggars



In our Path  
Taking offense  
Is heresy

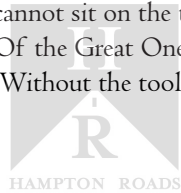
Let us keep the faith  
Endure rebuke  
& be happy



Is it the fault  
Of the garden  
If one plant  
Never blossomed  
?

Never again  
Will I complain about strangers  
All the trouble  
I've ever faced  
Came via a so-called friend

Just by boasting  
You cannot sit on the throne  
Of the Great Ones  
Without the tools



If you pick flowers from the garden  
& gather them in your skirt  
Why care  
If there's moaning & yelling  
From the gardener



Let us pour wine into a punch bowl  
Hurl roses into the air

Crack the ceiling of the heavens  
& cast a new design

If you'd be a friend  
Be one everywhere

Both at home  
& at the baths & in the gardens

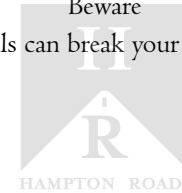
To dance to fresh poetry  
& the moaning of a ney-flute



It's a pity  
Such a nightingale as me  
Now  
Caged, as you can see

To be a captive of Love  
Is my way to Liberation


Hey you  
Passing through the Alley of the Beloved  
Beware  
Its walls can break your head too



Look  
How  
Local beggars  
Now  
Rule parliament



Although danger awaits  
Back at the way station  
& your destination  
Is still a far way off  
There is no road  
Without an end  
Do not despair



In the way station of the Dearest  
How fleeting might pleasure seem  
For me, because  
At any moment  
I'll hear the bell roar

“ Saddle up the camels ! ”



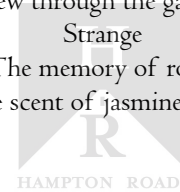
Beneath this  
Turquoise dome  
No one sits  
Happy

F  
o  
r  
e  
v  
e  
r



True wealth is  
Whatever comes our way  
& leaves no scars

After the typhoon  
Blew through the garden  
Strange  
The memory of roses  
& the scent of jasmine remain



Enjoy all the blossoms  
& the cool breeze  
of this new day



Your finest quality  
May it always amplify



A scent  
Of betterment  
Permeates  
Our world

If the work of the world  
Seems closed like flower buds

Become  
A knot-opener  
Like the spring breeze





# Garden of Wine



The bright lamp of my eyes  
I cast upon the Path of Wine



I long for bitter wine  
Strong enough  
To knock a man down



These days  
No one's to be trusted  
The sorrow  
In what's going on  
Can only be expressed  
Through this goblet of wine

You've dissed all of  
Wine's downsides –  
When will you address  
Its merits as well ?

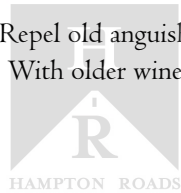


Dry asceticism  
Bores me  
Where's fine wine ?  
Show me fine wine !

Come  
To the tavern  
& make your face purple

Beggary at the tavern's door  
Is a fanciful elixir

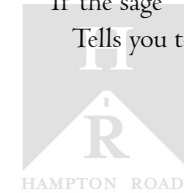
Repel old anguish  
With older wine



Winemaker  
Pour me  
The dregs of your brew

Come!  
Let's launch this boat  
In the river of wine

Dye your prayer mat  
With fine wine  
If the sage  
Tells you to





Bring on the wine  
Life's foundation  
Is built upon wind

Were it not for wine  
Making our hearts forget their sorrow  
The dread of events  
Would uproot our foundation



Let's drink wine !  
Whoever's known the plundering  
Of the autumn wind  
Would not take for granted  
The flowers in the garden of the world



O, wine server  
Come & pass the goblets

Love seemed easy at first  
But, soon, difficulties began to pour



Love  
Is a huge pearl

I  
Am a deep-sea diver

The ocean  
Is the tavern  
On the outskirts of town

Were I to see  
Your face  
In my goblet of wine  
My turban  
Would burst into space

Like a bubble

Bring on a boatload of wine !

Without the Friend's face  
Each corner of my eyes  
Is a sea of sorrow



The price  
Of the finest ruby-red wine ?

The ink of your intellect

---

Moist  
With sweat  
Hair undone

Smiling  
In a loose dress

Bottle  
In one hand  
Stoned



If wine has no other benefit  
It renders one unaware  
Of the temptations  
Of the intellect

Even if for a moment



The wardrobe of Hafiz  
Is in the pawnshop  
In hock for more wine

As ever

For three months  
Partake  
For nine  
Abstain



Drink up !  
Behold how life ends

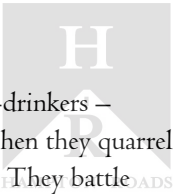
Exchange the heaviness of sorrow  
For the heft of big mugs of wine

Being drunk  
One can pierce  
Secrets



O, wind !  
Of that wine  
Bring to me  
A whiff

Don't ask a bat  
To describe the sun



Dregs-drinkers –  
When they quarrel  
They battle  
Unto annihilation

To reveal the secret behind the veil  
Ask the drunken vagabonds

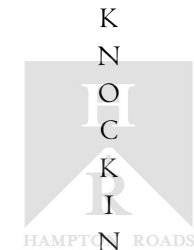
Praise to Allah, the door  
Of the tavern is open  
At whose threshold I go  
To pray



Dear Hafiz  
May you only kiss  
The lips of your Dearest  
& the lip of the chalice

Last night

I saw  
The angels



G  
At the tavern door



# Garden of Love

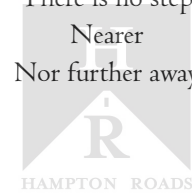


Such a sea  
Is the Sea of Love

It has no shore



Along the Path of Love  
There is no step  
Nearer  
Nor further away



Lovers' tears & laughter  
Come  
From

Otherwhere



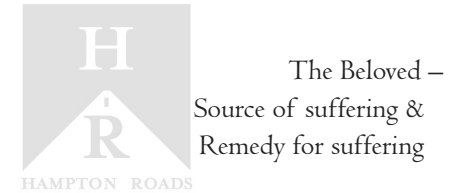
There is a town  
Filled with flirtation

Beautiful ones appear  
From all six directions



The ones I idolize –  
How much flirting does it take  
To turn their heart of stone ?

I showed the doctors my bloody tears.  
They all said, “ This is love sickness.  
“ There is a cure – but it’s a painful process.”



Bad mouth me  
Put me down  
All over town  
Still  
It’s to you I pray

My forehead  
Upon  
Your footprints  
Or  
My lips  
Upon  
Your mouth



Thy sweet  
Lips

S W E E T

L  
I  
P  
S

Your presence! &  
Its hundred hundred  
Attendants



I'd rather be begging  
Below the parapet  
Of my darling  
Than be enthroned upon  
A royal carpet

My outstretched hands will reach  
The heights of your cypress  
In the end

Unseen  
Yet your face has a thousand suitors  
A single rosebud  
Yet attracting hundreds of nightingales



In your alley  
It's not strange  
For me to be  
One of thousands of  
Other strangers  
Just like me

My heart follows no other path than the love of beauties



God's place for us was among the lips of beauties

Dear Zephyr of Dawn

Please

Pass through the neighborhood of

You-Know-Who

At the hour you think is best

Bearing a signal

Known only to you



Dear Morning Winds

When once again

You reach the budding youths of the meadow

Give my regards to the cypress

The roses &

The basil

The curls of your hair  
Are a theater  
For the North Wind

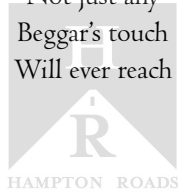


Contemplating You  
The bird of my heart  
Took wing



fallen  
like a fish  
into the ocean  
until You  
hook me  
by your thumb

Dear Hafiz  
Her waist  
Not just any  
Beggar's touch  
Will ever reach



Stop begging  
Like a servant  
Of the Beloved  
Expecting payment

Why would the color & glow  
Of a beautiful face

Need the peach fuzz of eyeliner  
?

The beauty of the Friend  
Hasn't the slightest need  
Of the imperfection of our love

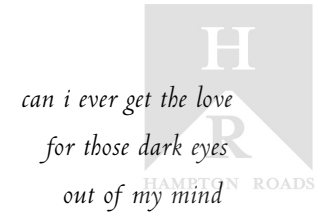


Beggars in your alley  
Have no need  
Of the Eight Gates  
Of Paradise

Captives  
Of your love  
Are free  
Of heaven & earth



From my cunning trap  
That ebony-eyed gazelle  
Broke free



*can i ever get the love  
for those dark eyes  
out of my mind*

The moon lacks  
The sheer luminosity  
Of your face

If the price  
Of our union  
Be my life  
My dear  
I'll surely pay  
In full



Hundreds of rays  
From the lamp in your hand  
Nourish the sun



I wish for your faithfulness  
Or news of your wedding  
Or the death of my rival



Every tip of my hair  
Has thousands of things  
To do  
With you



This tightness in my chest  
The burden of sadness

Over you

For heaven's sake,  
Let me dream  
Pleasant thoughts  
Of the Friend  
In my solitude



Whether it's to the mosque  
Or to a cabaret I go  
My aim is always the same  
It's to become one with You

If your hands were a bandit  
They could easily loot  
100 caravans



Were you to steal my heart  
I'd trade the mole  
On your brow  
For Samarqand  
& Bukhara

Your moist  
Ruby lips  
Mixing  
Fire & water

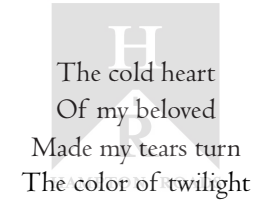


The only way  
I'd ever escape  
From you  
Would be as a candle  
Melting



What does it matter to you if  
I pick  
Just one  
Fruit  
From your garden  
?

What does it matter to you if  
I could see  
The path ahead  
With your lamp  
?



The cold heart  
Of my beloved  
Made my tears turn  
The color of twilight

*under whose roof  
are you sleeping  
now  
on somebody  
else's  
bosom  
?*



Listen, dear friends –  
To know what's inside  
Hafiz's lowly heart  
Ask the candle  
Always burning  
Always melting



My tears are falling  
From the roots of every eyelash

You stole my heart  
Your face  
Nowhere to be seen



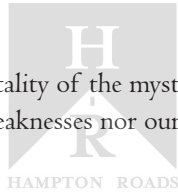
You who felt hurt  
Thru no cause of mine  
Stabbed me  
& now are gone



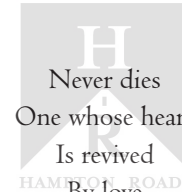
The flood of my tears  
Can never wash away  
All the hostility  
In your heart

Slayed me  
Then passed over my corpse  
Like the wind

Look at the totality of the mystery of affection  
Not at our weaknesses nor our shortcomings



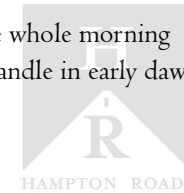
Never dies  
One whose heart  
Is revived  
By love



Behold the sheer audacity  
Of the daffodils  
Blossoming  
Before the feet of my beautiful  
Beloved



*you* : the whole morning  
*me* : a candle in early dawn's quietude



My beloved asked

“ My long-time lover  
Are you sleepy ? ”



Here's the word –

Without  
You  
We wouldn't want life

Dear Reporters –  
Listen  
& spread the news



Without the Beloved  
There wouldn't be  
Any love at all



May the universe  
Never be empty of  
The moaning of lovers



Don't expect of me now  
The patience, kindness, & wisdom  
You'd once seen in me

My sustenance  
Is now  
Blown away



During my prayers  
Remembering the curve  
Of your eyebrows  
The arch  
Of the altar's pulpit  
Cried out

No sign of fidelity  
In a flower's smile –  
Moan, nightingale  
O, lovelorn beauty  
You have every right to wail



*dearest –  
where  
are you*

Don't ask me about  
The pains of passion I've endured  
& as to the taste of  
The poison of separation  
Please  
Don't ask



Longing for the dust  
At the Beloved's doorway

The waters of my eyes flow  
Beyond words

The tale  
    Of the twists  
        In the beloved's curly hair  
Cannot be told  
    In snippets  
        It's such a lengthy affair



The tablet  
    Of my heart  
        Is blank

Except  
    For the silent initial  
    Of the Friend

Through the long nights of sorrows  
My bleak despair  
Ends among the shadows  
In my true love's hair



As to what I heard the Beloved say  
Last night  
Not a single  
Word could I utter

Love  
Arises  
From "Our Little Secret"



They say  
The secrets of love  
Best remain  
Unheard  
&  
Unspoken

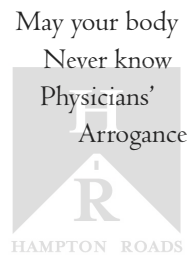
We lost our evening happiness  
By falling asleep at dawn  
Dear heart, only when you're desolate  
Can you realize  
The curative value of time



If my short reach  
Cannot touch  
Your long, flowing hair  
The misfortune is mine alone  
To be deprived so of your beloved care



Better  
Your wounding me  
Than others offer  
Their remedies



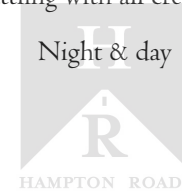
Make my eyelashes  
The broom  
Of your tavern

My patience  
In your absence  
Turns to bitterness



No one ever plucked from you  
A flower  
Without encountering thorns

My jealousy is killing me  
Everybody loves my darling  
But  
I cannot shout  
Battling with all creation  
Night & day





Your words revealed the secret  
Of your lips  
& your belt  
The secret of your hips



In the circle of fate  
We are the dot  
Where the compass  
Meets the paper

Every drop of dew  
Along love's way  
Equals 100 oceans  
Each ablaze



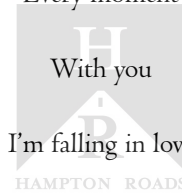
When I'm in the Garden of the World  
All I want to do is  
To pluck the flowers of your face  
With the hands of my eyes



Will you  
Be faithful  
Purely  
Out of generosity ?



Every moment  
With you  
I'm falling in love  
Anew





# Garden of Wisdom





I have a gem  
& seek an expert  
Appraiser



I feel this yen  
To tell you  
Of my heart



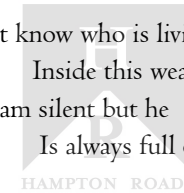
The language of love  
Remains untold  
In any human tongue



My words are veiled  
The way the rose  
Emerges from a bud



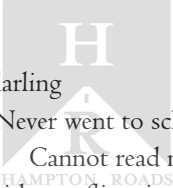
I don't know who is living  
Inside this weary heart of mine  
For I am silent but he  
Is always full of sound & fury



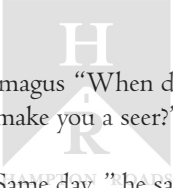
If you're our classmate  
In the School of Love –  
Drown your notebook !  
( True knowledge isn't there. )

Where is the mystic  
Who understands  
The language  
Of  
The lilies  
?

Why do they leave  
Only to return again  
?



My darling  
Never went to school  
Cannot read nor write  
Yet with one flirtatious glance  
Resolved all scriptural questions  
Of 100 teachers of religion



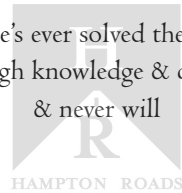
I asked the old magus “When did the All-Wise  
make you a seer?”  
“ Same day, ” he said,  
“ As the great Azure Dome was made. ”



Behind the Curtain  
of the Unknown  
what did the Painter  
of Secrets render ?

Little boy  
In the school of truth  
Listen to the tutor of love  
So one day  
You too will be  
A wise old daddy

No one's ever solved the Riddle  
Through knowledge & concepts  
& never will



The threshold  
At the sanctuary  
Of  
Love  
Is way above the one  
To  
Logic

Unrequited love

It's an old story

But every time

Anyone tells it

Amazing!

How new it seems



I seek a pearl

Beyond the shell

Of space & time

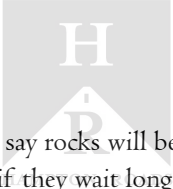
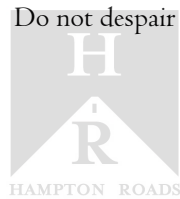


Asking  
All the lost ones  
Along the shore

Dear Young People,  
Do not stray from the wisdom of the elders

The advice of age  
Can be better than beginner's luck

Behind the curtain  
There are many secret games



Some say rocks will become  
Rubies if they wait long enough  
Yes, it's true  
But only after much  
Anguish of the heart

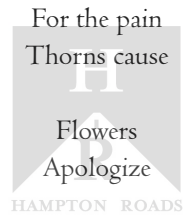
In this garden  
So many roses blossom

But nobody has ever plucked one rose  
Without the disaster of thorns

The state of happiness  
Without toil  
Yes, it's true  
Happiness  
Has been tied to disaster  
From Day One



Walking towards Mecca  
With fervor in the desert  
If you are scolded by tumbleweeds  
Do not despair



One must pass  
Beneath the scimitar  
Of sorrow  
Dancing

Conversations  
With myself &  
Damp  
Tears



Their burnt-out faces  
Were watered  
By weeping



In this black night  
The way to the goal  
Is lost

Eyes, blood-soaked tears  
Body, worn out  
Soul, departed



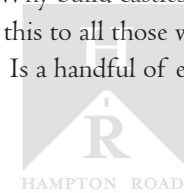
I watched  
While my soul  
Escaped from my body

I contemplated the green fields of heaven  
    & the sickle of the new moon  
I remembered what I had sown  
    & the season of harvest, soon



I have verified this point  
1000 times  
The world & works of the world  
    Are nought upon nought

Why build castles to the sky ?  
I ask this to all those whose final abode  
    Is a handful of earth





In heaven you won't find  
The banks of your hometown river  
Nor flowers from the local gardens



Oh, heart  
If the flood of extinction  
Is destroying the foundation of existence

Since Noah is there  
To steer you through the storm  
Do not despair

I would gladly trade  
The Garden of Paradise  
With the shade of its heavenly trees  
& the celestial castles  
With all of their nymphs  
In exchange for the dust  
In the Alley of the Friend



Lost Joseph  
Will return to Canaan

Do not despair

Divine Grace of the Holy Spirit  
Descend again  
To enable ordinary people to do  
As once did Jesus



Blaze, O my heart  
The flames  
Can be very beneficial

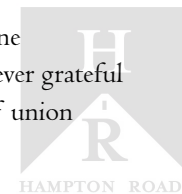
Stand like a candle  
Fear no fire



What a waste!  
Such a bird as you  
Captive in a cage

To be captive of Love  
Is the way to Liberation

So fearful  
Of being alone  
Were you ever grateful  
For the times of union



The way  
To fulfill  
Others'  
Desires

Forego  
Your  
Own

If it's the face of the Beloved you are seeking  
May the mirror of your heart be deserving



Your face isn't blurred by the mirror

( A mirror cannot sigh )

Blame the vapor

Emanating from my heart

The story of  
Me & my Beloved  
Is without an end

Whatever lacks origin  
Continues on  
Forever



Your Love

Is the seedling of wonder

A treasury of gold  
May be nonexistent

A corner of contentment  
Is always available



Don't take this moment of friendship for granted

In the front door – out the back

Then to meet again no more

To hand the mind over  
To divisiveness  
Isn't wise

Every word has its place  
& every point  
Takes a position



It had never stayed  
Thus  
Nor will it remain  
Like  
This

Sit along  
The riverbank &  
Observe life passing by

There is no barrier  
Between Lover & Beloved  
Hafiz, you are the veil  
Get out of the way

Worry not about  
What is & what's not



*Be happy!*

Every perfection  
Will end in annihilation



# Garden of Ecstasy





The Dearest is with us

What more  
Can anyone ask





A harp  
A joyous melody

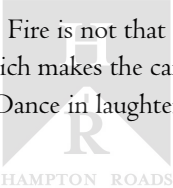
A music hall  
A dance floor



From this meadow  
Such a fresh breeze  
Right from Paradise

Better than Life Eternal

Union  
With You

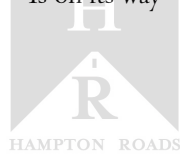


Fire is not that  
Which makes the candle  
Dance in laughter  
True fire  
Is that which is set  
In the soul of the moth

Blossoming, the red rose  
Gets the nightingale stoned

Good news  
Dear heart

Breath of Messiah  
Is on its way



I get a constant high  
From the breeze  
In the waves  
Of your hair

Spare the candles, friends  
In tonight's celebration

My beloved  
Is a moon

A very full one

HAMPTON ROADS

Tonight is the night of decree  
Closed now is the book

H  
Of

S

HAMPTON ROADS

P  
A  
R  
A  
T  
I  
O  
N

I've become  
The night watchman  
Of the heart's shrine  
Tonight  
All night long



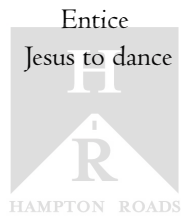
The night of separation is gone  
The welcome scent of unity has arrived

What a wonderful morning  
After such a wonderful night

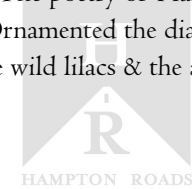


After this  
My heart  
Will beam  
To the ends of the horizons

No surprise  
If in Seventh Heaven  
Lyrics composed by Hafiz  
& sung by Venus



At the time of Adam  
In the Garden of Paradise  
The poetry of Hafiz  
Ornamented the diaries  
Of the wild lilacs & the amaryllis



In this garden  
white-haired Hafiz prays to God

“ Let me sit again by a stream  
with a lovely, tall cypress by my side ”



Make my coffin  
Of cypress



## TRANSLATORS' NOTES

*My keepers  
Are hidden  
Behind the mirror*

*Whatever the Eternal Master says  
I simply parrot<sup>5</sup>*

As Ari Honarvar confesses at the outset of our little book, a familiar word amongst lovers of Hafiz is “untranslatable.” Ordinarily, in literary translation, one might approximate thought and imagery – but music? That can be the harder part. It’s doubly challenging with Hafiz, whose texts – intended as both poems to be read and lyrics to be sung – display such virtuosic musicality. Then too as translator Dick Davis applies “untranslatability” to such authors as Hafiz, their work “. . . draws so deeply on the culture’s specific ethnic soul that it is not communicable in any other terms.” Yet, there is language beyond words. As poet Robert Kelly puts it, every language is a

---

<sup>5</sup> In ancient times, to train a parrot, the owner would sit hidden behind a mirror. The parrot repeats the words to the mirror image.

second language. In fact, we can never get away from translating, really. . . translating thoughts and feelings into action. . . translating retinal stimulation into recognizable forms. . . translating aminos into proteins, and so on. Nevertheless, the mere idea of translating Hafiz – the greatest lyric poet of a venerable Bardic civilization – seemed so audacious, so daunting to us, we'd never dream of it, ourselves. However, here, we were invited to do so, by Hampton Roads. Considering the possibility, Erfan reached for his copy of Abbas Kiarostami's book of Hafiz in Persian, and suggested we take that as our model. It proved the key that opened the gates to this little book. Here's the background.

In Iran, from 2006 to 2011, Abbas Kiarostami published books of unique adaptations of four Persian master poets: Nim, Hafiz, Sa'di, and Rumi. Placing a frame around just a line or two of a single poem, he then breaks it up into several lines, making the fragment a complete poem unto itself.

He recalls his initial inspiration occurred while browsing in a bookshop window and seeing a cover featuring a detail of fruit from a still life painted by Paul Cézanne. He later acknowledged having followed the lead of Nima Youshij (1895–1960), who'd spearheaded a movement in Persian poetry towards “free verse” (sher-e sepid, “white,” “blank”). Up until then, for roughly a millennium, Persian poetry implied complex conventions of formal patternings. Now, Persian poetry entered the Door of Modernism. Then, a half century later, Abbas Kiarostami followed suit. The beginning of his edition of Hafiz bears an

epigraph from 1873 by poet Arthur Rimbaud: “One must be absolutely modern.”

Kiarostami noted we are living today in “an age of concision.” He hoped younger readers would use his adaptations as text messages.<sup>6</sup> Gary wondered why he didn't compare poetry to the Modernist precedent of cinema: an art of brief compositions, juxtaposed through rhythmic editing. Then he realized that for Abbas Kiarostami cinema would have been like water to a fish.

At any rate, now we were freed from trying to render the breadth and delicacy of entire poems (ghazals). In the hands of Hafiz each ghazal is a unique equilibrium. . . balancing his multiple layers of meaning. . . the complexity of his associative leaps. . . and. . . his range of intertextual, cultural references (quotations from the Qur'an. . . use of Arabic phrases. . . his riffs on lines by past and contemporary poets). . . with marvelous vision. . . married to technical virtuosity. . . in a colloquial but delicate and suave diction. . . with exquisitely intricate rhythms and rhymes. . . all coming together as a cohesive unit.

We tested out a couple of random samples and were immediately hooked. As in a fractal, these isolated segments manifested the same elements operative in the ghazals but on a smaller order of scale. We immediately agreed upon two compositional principles from the outset: let each poem determine

---

6 Many could also serve today as voice-mail messages, or quotes for email signatures. We wonder what he'd make of the online image+word phenomenon known as memes. Readers are invited to visit our social media: <https://linktr.ee/FriendsoftheGarden>.



A) its own form, and B) its placement on the page. To insist on each reader's freedom of interpretation, where Persian grammar left gender indeterminate, we opted for you/yours.

We'd already collaborated on translating *The Book of Absence* by Alireza Roshan. One marvelous virtue of artistic collaboration is the chance to go beyond limitations of personal ego. So, even though one of us dwells in Iran and one in the US, we combined the use of Google Docs with Google's video-tel app (Duo, rebranded as Meet the week we reached completion). What began as a dance between four minds – Erfan, Gary, Abbas, and Hafiz – before too long became Hafiz all the way.

One of the charms of reading world literature in translation is in its extending our horizons. Our policy towards “foreign-sounding” language wasn't rigid. Sometimes, we chose an equivalent in English, and the native word in another instance, such as “holy beggars” and “dervishes.” The latter cases are in our glossary. Next, how to assemble +250 poems drawn from the *divan* of Hafiz? Simple. We took models grounded within the cultural material itself. Where Abbas Kiarostami arranged his edition in twenty-four sections, we used five, drawn from a basic sequence in Sufism. Within and across that, we drew upon rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic compositional structures of classical Persian music.<sup>7</sup> This established a framework for sequencing and arrangement that would allow each discrete,

---

<sup>7</sup> For example, as performed by such prominent musicians as Mohammad Reza Lofti, Hossain Alizade, Keyhan Kalhor, and, perhaps the greatest singer of Persian classical music, Shajarian.

autonomous poem to resonate in a similar manner as heard in Hafiz's ghazals – repeating and varying, building and releasing and building again, connecting and leaping, in multidimensional layers. Feel free to dip in, sampling whatever poetry catches your eye. Or, reading all the poems from first to last, you might hear how it all coheres as one long poem.

All in all, it's been a total gift – surprising, uplifting, enriching, regenerative, at every turn. We sincerely hope Hafiz becomes your Hafiz forever.



For those who'd delve deeper, here are three interconnected facets of the famous untranslatability of Hafiz: freedom in ambiguity + virtuosity in musicality + genius of innovation.

### *Ambiguity – A Certain Freedom*

Within ambiguity, there can be freedom. We can see this operative in the world's social dimensions. In a democracy, open to multiple points of view, citizens live within degrees of ambiguity. Under a monarchy, one might speak one way in public and another in private as a survival tactic. Then there are the ambiguities inherent in human written language. Lovers become painfully aware of the inadequacy of words to reveal how they truly feel inside. Mystics often face the paradoxicality of speaking to the rest of us about the Unsayable.

One path through some of these ambiguities can be found in the nature of particular languages, in and of themselves. In Persian, there are implicit ambiguities which allow for freedom of interpretation. For instance, as noted elsewhere, we don't always know if a pronoun refers to he/him/his – or she/her/hers. Further, not only can the object of the poem be left to the imagination but the context might be, too. Reference to the Friend/the Beloved might mean a personal heartthrob, a powerful figure in society (and society itself, personified), and/or the Divine. What the situation is, is up to us. This ambiguity, baked into Persian poetry, invites the reader to co-create the poem, through their own reading. After all, poetry occurs in what's left out, for the reader to fill in. This is also in keeping with how Islam's direct connection to the Creator allows for a personal, sacred conversation. At one point, Hafiz steps out of the frame and comments on and celebrates the intentionality of his ambiguity.

Notice how clever is the game I play  
Plying my craft in public  
To one group, I'm a Qur'an-reciter  
To another camp, a wine dregs-drainer.

To more deeply appreciate his great soul, let's continue on from the freedom of his ambiguity, and explore the virtuosity of his musicality, and the genius of his innovation.

## *Musicality – A Language Beyond Words*

In the West, it is commonly taught that poetry is made of image, music, and thought (sight, sound, and mind). Poetry's musicality refers to not only sonic rhythm, melody, pitch, register, harmony, cadence, and tone, but also pictorial and intellectual. That is, imagery and thought can also express themselves and interrelate with each other musically, through the poem's underlying music. In fact, music is so important to poetry, it's what most often gets lost in translation. This is no less true in Persian poetry. For the reader unfamiliar with Persian, here are a few glimpses of the importance of the music of Hafiz's poetry in its original form.

Here's an example of how music of thought can underlie imagery:

In the hooves of your palomino  
The shape of the new moon is shown  
&  
From your tall stature  
The height of a spruce is flat

*Low — high*  
*High — low*

Lowly, dusty horseshoes ascend the clouds. The imagination measures the beloved taller than trees – but perhaps not

higher than the cypress. This subtle ordering of high and low gives the poem a sine wave form and consequently more depth.

## 2

Goft *aan yaar* kazoo gasht sare *daar* boland  
Jormash *aan* bood ke *asraar* hoveyda mikard

The Magus told Hafiz

The friend who  
Made the gallows  
Hold its head up high  
Committed the crime  
Of making secrets  
Obvious

Literal word play can be seen here in the literary expression of “elevating someone’s head,” making them proud (“head-high”). In this case, it’s the head of a hanged man on the gallows. Hafiz is alluding to Sufi martyr Mansour Hallaj (858–922; 244–309 AH). When Hallaj said “I am the Truth,” it could be interpreted as declaring the annihilation of his ego (*nafs*) allowing God to speak through him, while the Abbasid court took it as the heresy of saying he himself was God.

The abundant internal rhymes and words with long vowels (transcribed with *aa*) are in italics. We also note nine words that end in a silent consonant: *goft*, *aan*, *yaar*, *gasht*, *dar*, *boland*, *bood*, *asrar*,

and *mikard*. This is an exceptionally high percentage of words that end in a silent consonant, lending the poem an appropriately haunting aura.

## 3

**dar-e meykhan**e bebastand khodaya mapasand  
ke **dar-e kha**neye tazvir o riya bogshayand

The tavern door’s been closed Oh God  
May this not open the door  
To the house of hypocrisy & lies

Hafiz is alluding to a saying by Sa’di, also alluded to in quotation by Rudaki, Abu Sa’id Abu’l-Khayr, Sana’i, and other poets:

If God closes a door out of wisdom  
He’ll open another one out of grace and compassion

These lines exemplify Hafiz’s extraordinary mastery of rhetoric. All the words in some way contribute to one kind of literary trope or another. Let us break it down:

*Dar* (door) and *khane* (house): repetition; also visual symmetry

*Bebastand* (closed) and *mapasand* (don’t allow): internal rhyme; also intellectual symmetry

*Khodaya* (o Lord) and *riya* (hypocrisy): internal rhyme; also oxymoron

Bogshayand (open) and *bebastand* (closed): oxymoron

*Tazvir* (false piety) and *riya* (hypocrisy): intellectual symmetry

#### 4

Tarsam ke ashk dar ghame ma parde dar shavad  
Vin raze sar be mohr be alam samar shavad

I fear the curtain of our sorrow  
Will be torn by our tears  
Revealing our sealed secret  
As a bedtime story to the world

In Persian, the root of the word used here meaning “to reveal” refers to both a curtain and to the act of tearing. Accordingly, he uses eight **R**s to create the sense of a curtain being **TORN/RIPPED**. After we stepped back from making our English draft together, we unexpectedly noticed many **R**s there too.

Combining the freedom available in various shades of ambiguity coupled with technical virtuosity, we come next to. . . .

### *Innovation – The Birth of the New*

Hand-in-hand with Hafiz’s freedom in ambiguity, and musical virtuosity, please consider too his stellar genius for innovation. A perfect example is his handling of the ghazal, a poetic form composed of couplets all with one particular pattern of rhyme.

For centuries, the ghazal had been the chief format for lyricism in Persian poetry. It had emerged from an earlier, traditional, narrative poetic form called the *qasida*. So a typical ghazal dwelt on a single topic, story, or theme. Occasionally, earlier poets, such as Rumi made leaps within a single ghazal. But then along came Hafiz.

In his hands, a single ghazal could become a multidimensional kaleidoscope of imagery, with multiple levels of time and space, along with varying layers of thought and feeling. One couplet could imply both the literal and figurative beloved, then the next couplet refer to only one of the two, while opening out a new point of view. And all of it will end up like a cat landing on all four feet. A couple of modern cultural examples might give a sense of the high order of the accomplishment in this marriage of virtuosity and innovation.

A contemporary figure who shares common traits with Hafiz is Bob Dylan. They both assimilated the history of their tradition, became renowned in their lifetime, and both, when need be, spoke truth to power. “Blowin’ in the Wind” (1963) poured new wine in the old bottle of ballad meter. But, from the same time period, every line in “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” could be the beginning of an entirely new song. Soon came the electrified breakthroughs of “Mr. Tambourine Man,” “Chimes of Freedom,” and “Gates of Eden,” whose imagery recalls such visionary poets as William Blake and Arthur Rimbaud. From bath then and right up to this day, Bob Dylan remains a fountain of ceaseless innovation.

There's an urgent drive and angularity of rhythm in some of Bob Dylan's songs (beginning around the time of "Subterranean Homesick Blues") reflecting the influence of another virtuoso genius innovator: Charlie "Yardbird" Parker, founder of the bold Bebop era. Bebop broke away from the big-band Swing era, abandoning the melody of standard tunes and using just the chord changes as their harmonic framework for improvisation. And, to add just one more data point, Bird's generation was influenced by the aesthetic revolution of Cubism, as pioneered by Picasso and Braque.

Previously, ever since the Renaissance painters explored the illusion of pictorial depth on the two-dimensional plane of a picture's canvas. Cubists juxtaposed multiple perspectives next to each other in the same picture. A newspaper and a guitar, a candle and a matchbox, a pitcher and a glass, all on the same table top, could be seen from different angles, all at once. In another coup, two dots for nostrils, placed on the same side of a woman's nose, implied her turning her head. Thus a two-dimensional surface could now represent not just three dimensions, but four.

Bringing it all back home, what Roman Jakobson said of Cubism, a year or so after its creation, applies to our appreciation of Hafiz's ghazals: "The correlation of volumes, constructive asymmetry, chromatic contrast, and texture enter the artist's consciousness." To dot an "i" in Cubism here, critic John Berger defines its lasting impact as not just an art movement but a shift in world view. Sure enough, Dylan, Bebop, Cubism, and Hafiz

were all master paradigm shifters. And, as translators, we aspire towards encouraging a shift too – that our efforts may not only be pleasurable and inspiring, but also good nourishment for seeds to foster the more beautiful world we know is possible.



## *A Sample Gbazzal by Hafiz*

To the recluse, what need is there of entertainment?  
In my love's alleyway, who needs scenery?

O beloved, by the need you have for God,  
Ask for a moment, please, what we need.

O king of beauty, by God, we burn.  
Ask, please, "What does the beggar need?"

We are rich with need, and have no tongue to ask.  
In the presence of God, what need is there for pleading?

If you intend to take our soul there is no need for explanation.  
Since our clothes are yours, what need is there for plunder?

The world-revealing cup is my love's luminous heart  
where there is no need to show your need.

I no longer carry an obligation to the sailor.  
Since the pearl has come to hand, who needs the sea?

O beggar lover, when your love's life-giving lip  
Knows what you need, who needs to ask?

Impostor, got, for we have no business with you.  
The friends are here, what need is there for foes?

Finish this, Hafiz, to let your talent show.  
With the impostor who needs to argue and debate?

– Translation: Elizabeth T. Gray, Jr. & Iraj Anvar



## DIVINATION

### *The Tongue of the Hidden*

The popularity of Hafiz in everyday life in Iran is ubiquitous. Stars can be heard singing his poetry on the radio. Lines of his poems are quoted by politicians and public speakers. You might find Hafiz cited on billboards and graffiti. The 10,000-*rial* banknote bears poetry by Hafiz. Your paper receipt from a merchant might bear a couplet by Hafiz, in Persian and English. You'll hear people quote him in conversations all the time.

The copy of Hafiz's work found in any average household is often memorized. A common family game is for one person to quote a line of Hafiz; the next person quotes another line, beginning with the last letter of the previous line, on and on. You might see salesmen at a bazaar playing the game with each other while waiting for customers.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> A brilliant, one-minute film that went viral online in 2020, entitled *Thursday Appointment*, by Syed Mohammad Reza Kheradmand, drew upon the practice, as a couple drives to lay flowers on a grave.

Hafiz's poetry can also be used as an oracle. One opens a book of Hafiz at random and reads where one's finger falls, a practice known as *Fal-e Hafiz* (Oracle of Hafiz). According to legend, the practice began shortly after he stopped breathing. Hardliners in the clergy had never found anything symbolic about his poetry lauding women and wine. Now they refused to give him a proper Muslim burial, branding him a heretic. This news traveled quickly. A great enough outcry arose from the people of Shiraz, such that the clergy agreed to submit the matter to Allah. Hafiz's poetry was to be assembled and cut into couplets for a public ceremony, agreed upon by both followers of Hafiz and the clergy. A young boy was called to pick a couplet from the pile at random. The couplet the boy's hand fell upon read:

Neither the body nor the life of Hafiz can deny:  
For all his mischief, only Heaven awaits him.

Eventually, a shrine was chosen in his beloved Musalla Gardens on the north bank of the Rudkhaneye Khoshk River, and which has remained a pilgrimage destination to this day.

A typical Oracle of Hafiz occurs at a celebration of Yalda, the longest night of the year. During the evening, someone might make a wish, open Hafiz, and read a poem out loud. He or she then passes the book to the next person. Of course, this can be practiced at any time throughout the year. Holding the book, some people invoke Hafiz, saying something like, "O, Hafiz of Shiraz, impart foreknowledge to my anxious heart." Then they

enter the gates to the garden of Hafiz, as it were, by opening the book, taking to heart the words their finger falls upon.

What if you don't like the oracle you receive? No problem. Pick another. Pick up to three if you feel it's really necessary. But be advised Hafiz might get irritated to be asked a fourth time.

These days, there are Fal-e Hafiz apps for the phone. If you order food to be delivered to your home, there may be a couple of Hafiz oracle cards inside the box. You'll also find Hafiz divination happening on the street in the following manner. His poetry is handwritten on cheap, thin paper, and placed in envelopes stacked on each other like a deck of playing cards. Usually, street vendors (sometimes kids) come up to you in cafes and restaurants, at street corners and bus stops, to sell you a "*fal*." You pay the vendor some 50,000 to 100,000 rials, which in Tehran, as of this writing, cannot even buy you a mediocre cup of coffee (the cheapest coffee costing around 200,000 rials, which barely equals \$0.50 USD as of this writing). You close your eyes, make a wish, and draw a card.

For example, when you make a wish, you might think of the person you love and ask Hafiz to reveal what will happen between the two of you in the future. You pick a card. Or sometimes the street vendors will have a budgie parrot friend with them. They place the deck of cards near the bird's beak, and the bird pulls a card. The card usually contains a commentary, along with the verse by Hafiz. The commentary makes the poem accessible to everybody and helps the reader associate the message in the poem to the question/wish they had in mind. (Sometimes



the commentaries are pure nonsense, designed to make the buyer feel good and buy more.)

In a nutshell, the poetry of Hafiz has an inherent productivity and self-sustaining life of its own, continuing on into the present moment. Hafiz is justly known as Tongue of the Invisible. The vital productivity of his gift for poetry still continues on into the present moment. His poetry's jewel-like brilliance, with its myriad of facets, encompasses the gamut of human experience such that, at any given time, a poem of his might seem to perch on our shoulder and whisper in our ear the voice of life itself.



## GLOSSARY

**H**afiz inherited an ancient cabinet full of cultural, historical, literary, mythical, and spiritual imagery, from which he could draw upon, like a palette of pre-given hues with which to paint. Here's a partial list.

Note: These entries may often resemble of such Western concepts as symbol, analogy, and metaphor – but also carry powerful, deep, traditional frameworks of their own, as to reception, acceptance, and application.

**Alley** – A narrow lane, or a neighborhood of such alleys, one after another. Thus, intimacy is suggested. And, if one is in the Alley of the Beloved, its dust implies humility.

**Apple** – Interpreters say the fruit forbidden in the Garden of Eden could be apples, carob, figs, grapes, pears, pomegranates, quinces, or even mushrooms. The consensus in Persia, however, is that it was wheat.

**Asceticism** – Self-denial can go beyond simplicity and austerity, and delights in its own extremism, such as self-mortification. Hafiz condemns asceticism as life denying, and boring.

**Azure** – Once, speaking of the sky, Hafiz uses a word for lapis lazuli whose color, azure, is Persianate in origin. Azure originally referred to Lajward, in Badakhshan Turkestan, where lapis was found, as mentioned by Marco Polo. Elsewhere, he refers to the dome of heaven as turquoise, using an Arabic word. Actually, at the time of Hafiz, there was no word for blue; elsewhere, he speaks of heaven as a green field.

**Beloved** – Could be masculine or feminine. Moreover, could be a mortal companion, resembling romance in a context of occurring in love poetry. Yet this love can transcend the ego, transforming the lover into the seeker of God Beloved meaning connection to the life source. Parallels can be found in such Abrahamic instances as *The Song of Songs (Shir HaShirim)* and the Bride of Christ. Sufi Master and poet Shah Ne'matullah-i Vali says:

Though they are called by three names –  
love, lover, and beloved are One

[See also *Friend* and *Love*]

**Caravan** – A word of Persian origin, a caravan is a group of people who travel together on camels. Way stations (*caravanserai*) existed where travelers could rest and exchange goods and ideas.

**Christ** – Islam is inclusive of ancestors, prophets, and divine messengers within the Abrahamic traditions. In Hafiz's poetry, Adam, Moses, Jonah, Joseph, and Noah, also make appearances.

**Cup** – (*J m*) A cup could be used in scrying (foretelling the future, as also with a crystal ball). Tales were told of a cup filled

with an elixir of immortality, believed to have been discovered in Persepolis in ancient times. Lexicographer Ali-Akbar Dehkoda mentions that all seven heavens of the universe could be observed by looking into the surface of its liquid. Its ownership was sometimes ascribed to King Jamshid (*jam-e Jam*, the cup of Jamshid). Jamshid was a primordial, mythical figure believed to have invented wine. Where one lyric by Hafiz refers to being given Jamshid's cup, we render it as being "made a seer." [See also *Goblet*]

**Cup-bearer** – (*Saqi*) A server of wine, either amongst friends or at a tavern where it would often be a good-looking boy well-trained in diverse skills and arts. A cupbearer is the necessary link between the lover to the beloved. In Allah's love for seekers of His path, his Prophet delivers blessings.

**Curls** – The illusions and allures of Creation. Florence Lederer points to "plurality veiling the face of Unity from its lovers." [See also *Hair*]

**Cypress** – A cypress can be a place for birds roosting and nesting. A cypress can also mean a beloved, particularly if tall. It might also imply reaching towards heavenly heights.

**Dervish** – A mendicant, taken vows of simplicity and poverty. In one instance, we've rendered this as "holy beggar." It is important to note such living by vow is not necessarily the same as dry asceticism, self-denial, etc., which Hafiz criticizes.

**Desert** – The desert is associated also with hardship, and being lost. In the Qur’an, hell is described as a blazing desert, and paradise as a green garden.

**Dome** – The heavens (“... that inverted Bowl we call the Sky” – Omar Khayyam), and the universe itself conceived of as a dome. In Islamic architecture, a dome might symbolize the vault of Heaven; universal creation by Allah. Some esoteric mystics in Hafiz’s time worshiped in huts with a dome-shaped roof on whose interior was painted a moon and stars.

**Dregs-drinkers** – Dregs-drinkers are recurring characters in Hafiz’s *divan*. The term can be traced back to *Khaqani* (1120–1199), but Hafiz popularized it and gave it an extra level of meaning. On the surface, these are the people who cannot afford to drink refined wine; deep down, they are honest and honorable people. They might also be considered a class of *rend*. Hafiz uses them as a foil for the hypocrites. He argues that even a low-life dregs-drinker is superior to a pretentious preacher/*mulla*/*mufti*/*muhtasib*/Imam, etc. In Persian, it’s also a pun: *dard-kesban* = dregs-drinkers; *dard-kesban* = pain-sufferers; both are written the same way.

**Free Spirit** – One of various definitions of “rend.” The opposite of ascetic. A pure hearted, free thinker. A tester of boundaries. A truth seeker, whose nature also implies fearlessness, and indifference to superficial, mundane values and *morés*. A clever person – for example being clever enough to drink in secret and not get caught.

In being uninhibited, there’s a reckless, even transgressive element to it. In scholar Julie Scott Meisama’s definition, a *rend* is “a drinker of wine, poet, lover, and something of a philosopher as well – who embodies the virtues of independence, honesty, compassion, and total dedication to love, and who has reached the state of contentment denied to the ascetic and his ilk because of their preoccupation with the affairs of this world.” She also speaks of *rend* brotherhoods, who “practiced the virtues connected with chivalry and courtesy, and opposed themselves, through the assumption of the guise of libertinism, to the interests of the religious hierarchy.”

Unlike the ascetic, the *rend* does not attempt to abolish human passions but lives in harmony and equilibrium with them. Hakim Bey writes, “On the plane of the ‘Path,’ the *rend* conceals his spiritual state (*bal*) in order to contain it, work on it alchemically, enhance it.”

**Friend** – More than a casual relationship; an intimate confidante. Can mean an actual friend. . . a loved one. . . God.

**Garden** – “*Pairidaeza*,” in early Persian – from which “Paradise” derives. Heaven, in the Qur’an, is a garden. The Garden of Eden was possibly located in the Persian Gulf. The possibilities of canals and flowerbeds amid desert landscapes are more common in Iran than Saudi Arabia, which is 90% desert, Turkmenistan 80%, and Iraq 40%. Iran is only 20% desert, yet water can still be scarce.

**Ghazal** – Originally an Arabic verse form; lyric poem, to be recited and sung. In its birthplace, it carries a range of meanings – from sweet talking and flirting, to a young, graceful doe (origin of the English word gazelle). It can also mean to spin (in the sense that spinning a yarn means telling a tale). One particular translation posits a meaning of ghazal as “the wail of a wounded deer,” which can contextualize the theme of unrequited love common to many ghazals. A ghazal is composed of seven to twelve couplets, all in the same meter. The two lines of the first couplet rhyme, and the last word of the second line of each succeeding couplet continues as a repeating, single rhyme. Can be an homage to a patron or ruler, a love poem, and/or prayer.

**Goblet** – Cup; chalice; container. The human body, as a vessel. The human capacity to love. A vehicle of self-perfection. The lip of the goblet is the kiss of the beloved. As a symbol of the human heart, the cup is a link of communication with the Unseen via nonverbal, intuitive awareness.

**Hafiz** – In Persian, Hafez. Commonly, in Arabic, it means “one who has memorized the Qur’an.” It could also imply one who memorizes songs, a minstrel, a master singer. . . and someone who knows something. It might also mean. . . one who remembers. . . one who preserves/protects (as heard in the common parting phrase “*KbodaHafez*” – may God be your protector). In his ghazals, Hafiz continues a literary custom of referring to himself in a closing stanza. Critics might take this as meta-poetry, writing himself in as a character within his own poem. It

can be an opportunity for the poet to get personal. In this occasion, he might be giving himself a little love . . . or taking a bow, outside the frame of the poem . . . or boasting, as in hip-hop, patting himself on the back. He might be speaking of himself as representative of his audience, which is to say, humanity. To speak of one’s self in the third person can also be seen as playing with the human paradox of being both subject and object, as, here, being both performer and audience.

**Hair** – Evocations of hair in Persian poetry were already traditional by the time of Hafiz. The beloved’s hair was typically dark and curly, sometimes as long as her stature, more fragrant than musk, and capable of capturing (and enslaving) the lover’s heart. From a Sufi perspective, curly tresses might be seen as the beautiful lures of illusion (*maya*). Hafiz revels in all the manifestations.

**Intellect** –If knowledge is only abstract, it’s not necessarily experiential, direct knowledge, nor intuitive or imaginal knowing. Yet consider how often we are lost in thought. Can we ever *think* ourselves out of a dilemma of heart and soul? Reason might guide us towards the gates, but the finest analysis alone cannot carry us across. Rumi advises, “Morning came and the intellect’s candle became useless.”

**Iran** – From Sanskrit, *arya*- “compatriot; noble,” the root also for “Aryan.” West Asian lands inhabited by Persians, as well as Turks, Kurds, Lurs, Arabs, Baluchis, Turkmens etc. Historically known as Persia until 1935.

**Joseph** – Jacob had twelve sons. The youngest was Joseph, who had prophetic dreams. Jealous, his brothers threw him down a well in the desert and walked away.

**Lips** – Direct knowledge. In esoteric philosophy, the word “universe” can also mean ethereal mouth.

**Love** – Hafiz scholar Peter Booth writes, “In Hafiz, Love and God and the Beloved are synonymous, with these subtle differences: God is Love with the addition of idealized human qualities; the Beloved is Love with the addition of coquettish qualities.”

**Mecca** – Birthplace of Muhammad. Muslims are obliged to make a pilgrimage there (*haj*) at least once in their life, if they can.

**Mole** – A beauty mark. The beauty of imperfection, as in carpets with intentional mistakes. A point of indivisible unity, so tiny yet signifying so much.

**Moon** – In Persian, the moon is a symbol of beauty, magnificence, and grace. It’s very common in everyday Persian to say somebody’s face looks like the moon. There are several names for women using the Persian word for moon (*mab*): *Mahsa* (“like the moon”), *Mablaqa* (“moon face”), *Mabjabin* (with forehead like a moon), *Mabroo*, *Mabsima*, etc.

**Moth** – A moth is drawn to flame, as a lover is to the beloved, and the soul to its source. Self eventually becomes annihilated

in union. The candle, itself, burning with passion, ultimately becomes extinct – eclipsed by the light of dawn. .

**Night of Decree** – (*Laylat al-Qadr*) The night in which the Qur’an was revealed to Muhammad. Also, the night in which Allah shows mercy to His creation. The night in which one’s fate is decreed. “The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months,” (Qur’an, 97:3). In Hafiz’s poetry, sometimes it signifies the night of the creation of Adam. If “last night” refers to the creation of the world, “tomorrow night” could be pointing towards the reawakening of the world; resurrection. Outside of Qur’anic context, it can signify the night when your greatest desire is fulfilled.

**Nightingale** – The human soul; the poet, typically, in love with the rose.

**Pearl** – Of all gems, a pearl is unique for being organic. In Abrahamic literature, it is attained at great price. In gnostic literature, a pearl can be a manifestation of hidden, supreme knowledge. To drill a hole in a pearl is to decipher a secret.

**Persian** – An Indo-European language, also known as Farsi, pre-dating the Semitic language Arabic. One of the oldest of human languages, it is still spoken today by 130 million people, of which 80 million are native speakers.

**Pulpit** – (*Mebrab* or *Mibrab*) A niche in the wall of a mosque indicating the *qibla*, the direction of the Ka’ba in Mecca, to-

wards which Muslims face when praying. In classical Persian poetry, it's frequently compared with the arch of the beloved's eyebrows.

**Recitation** – The common word for reading the Qur'an aloud. Recitation can range from speaking to chanting to singing.

**Recording Angels** – Recording angels are found in all three Abrahamic traditions. In Islam, they are named Raqib and Atid. Each sits on a person's right or left shoulder. One records good deeds and the other misdeeds, to be presented on the Day of Judgment. It is up to the mercy of God to judge whether the person shall go to heaven, purgatory, or hell. Elsewhere, Hafiz uses an Arabic phrase to refer to them as "respected scribes," which we have translated as "reporters," and thus "spread the news" for the Day of Judgment.

**Rose** – The default flower in Hafiz's poetry. In fact the word for flower and rose are identical in Persian. The rose is also the Beloved, and an intense object of affection to the nightingale.

**Secret** – If the Secret were to be revealed in a glossary of a book, do you think it would still remain a secret?

**Seventh Heaven** – Common to many cosmologies, the highest of all levels of Paradise.

**Silent Initial** – In the original, Hafiz compares the height of the beloved to the tallest letter of the Persian alphabet, *alif*. That visual pun doesn't carry across in English. However, *alif* is silent

– taking on sound only when used in conjunction with a vowel marking; we chose this function of *alif*, instead.

**Simurgh** – A benevolent, mythical, winged animal, with resemblances to the peacock and the phoenix. The word literally means "30 birds," referring to its enormity, and also the diversity of the colors of its wings. During its lifespan of 1700 years, nesting in the Tree of Knowledge, it gathers incalculable wisdom. It completes its life-cycle by bursting into flames and being reborn from its own ashes. It is a prominent figure in the epic *Conference of the Birds* by Attar of Nishapur and Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.

**Spring clouds** – Clouds that yield much rain. When someone "cries like a spring cloud," it implies many of tears.

**Sufism** – Mystic dimension as of Islam, with currents predating it. In Sufism, the Creator is the compassionate Beloved. The human condition of longing for union with the Beloved is primary to classical Persian poetry, and informs such landmark figures as Attar, Rumi, Sa'di, and Hafiz.

**Tavern** – (*Kharabat*). Possible combination of *kharab* ("ruinous") and *abad* ("prosperous"). Scholar Hamid Debashi points to the tavern in Persian poetry as a place "that will dismantle your beliefs, and yet, in doing so, will also restore your faith."

**Typhoon** – (*Sammoom*, from "*Sam*," the Arabic word for poison) Hurricane. A hot, suffocating wind that blows in the Saharan and Arabian deserts.

**Wealth** – (*Dolat*) Financial wealth, but also health of government (state of affairs, economic stability); fortune (good luck, being blessed). In Sufism, there is no line between the wealth that happens to you and the wealth you work for because, at the end of the day, both are something God has bestowed upon you, something that has been in your destiny.

**Wine** – The breath of life; the breath of God. In *I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed*, Emily Dickinson refers to herself as “inebriate of air.” Divine gnosis; knowledge of the Beloved. Though permissible in royal functions, forbidden in everyday Islamic life – thus a boundary crossed by rends for a higher purpose.

**Wise Elder** – In Persian, “magus,” referring to a priest of Zoroastrianism and earlier religions, and later adopted and modified in Greco-Roman and Christian usage. In Hafiz’s time, such priests would be living at the outskirts of Islamic society, thus perhaps figuratively dwelling in alternate forms of knowledge.

**Yalda** – Winter solstice. Iranians celebrate this longest night of the year by gathering together to eat, drink, and read poetry, especially Hafiz, until well after midnight.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ali, Agha Shahid et al. *Ravishing DisUnities: Real Ghazals in English*. Wesleyan University Press, 2000.
- Alston A.J. *In Search of Hafiz*. London, Shauti Saden, 1996.
- Arberry, A. J. *Fifty Poems of Hafiz*. Cambridge, The University Press, 1947.
- Aryanpur, Abbas. *Poetical Horoscope: or, Odes of Hafiz*. Golshan Publishing House, 1965.
- Ashouri, Daryoush. “Hafez & Sufi Hermeneutics.” *Iran Namag*, II 2, Summer 2017.
- Avery, Peter, *The Collected Lyrics of Hafiz of Shiraz*. Archetype, 2007.
- Barton, Nancy, *The Illuminated Hafiz: Love Poems for the Journey to Light*. Illustrated by Michael and Sally Green. Translations by Meher Baba, et.al. Sounds True, 2019.
- Bell, Gertrude Lowthian, translator. *Poems from the Divan of Hafiz*. William Heinemann, 1897.
- Bly, Robert; Lewisohn, Leonard. *The Angels Knocking on the Tavern Door*. Harper, 2008.
- Boyce, Mary. “A Novel Interpretation of Hafiz.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies*. University of London, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1953) pp 279–288.
- Boylan, Michael, *Hafez: Dance of Life*. Mage Publishers, 1987.
- Brookshaw, Dominic Parviz. *Hafiz and His Contemporaries: Poetry, Performance and Patronage in Fourteenth Century Iran*. I.B. Taurus / Bloomsbury, 2019.

- Clarke, H. Wilberforce. *The Divan-i of Háfiz*. Privately printed, 1891. Reprinted, Samuel Weiser, 1970.
- Cloutier, David. *News of Love: Poems of Separation and Unions by Háfiz of Shiraz*. Unicorn Press, 1984.
- Davis, Dick. "On Not Translating Hafez." *New England Review*. XXV:I–2, 2004.
- De Bruijn, J. T. P. *Persian Sufi Poetry: An Introduction to the Mystical Use of Classical Persian Poems*. Routledge, 1997.
- Einsboden, Jeffrey & Slater, John. *The Tangled Braid – Ninety-nine Poems by Hafiz of Shiraz*. Fons Vitae, 2010.
- Evans, E. P. "Texts & Translations of Háfiz." The Atlantic, March 1884.
- Fani, Aria. "Rewriting Hafez: Re-theorizing Untranslatability in Persian Poetry." Ajam Media Collective. July 8, 2014. [bit.ly/3DxeYb1](http://bit.ly/3DxeYb1)
- Gray, Elizabeth T. & Anyar, Iraj. *Wine & Prayer: Eighty Ghazals from the Divan of Hafiz*. Caveat Press, 2019.
- Hillmann, Michael Craig. "The Translatability of Hafezian Love Ghazals." *International Journal of Persian Literature* 3 (2018): 39–90.
- Karimi-Hakkar, Mahmood. *Your Lover's Beloved: 51 Ghazals by Hafez*. Cross-Cultural Communication, 2009.
- Lewis, Franklin, "Hafez & Rendi." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, XI/5, 2002, pp. 483-491.
- . "Hafez & Music" *Encyclopedia Iranica*. XI/5, 2002, pp. 491-498.
- Lewisohn, Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry (International Library of Iranian Studies)*. I. B. Tauris, 2015.
- Limbirt, John W. *Shiraz in the Age of Hafez: The Glory of a Medieval Persian City*. U of Washington P, 2014.
- Loloi, Parvin. *Hafiz, Master of Persian Poetry: A Critical Bibliography*. I.B. Tauris, 2004.
- Majid, Syed Abdul & Cranmer-Byng, L. *The Rubá'iyát of Háfiz*. John Murray, 1910.
- Meskoob, Shahrokh. *In the Alley of the Friend: On the Poetry of Hafez*. Translated by M.R. Ghanoonparvar, Syracuse UP, 2018.
- Ordoubadian, Reza. *The Poems of Hafez*. Ibex, 2006.
- Pezeshkzad, Iraj. *Hafez in Love*. Translated by Pouneh Shabani-Jadid and Patricia J. Higgins, Syracuse UP, 2021.
- Rain Crowe, Thomas. *Drunk on the Wine of the Beloved: Poems of Hafiz*. Shambhala, 2001.
- Rassouli. *Hafiz: Wisdom of Madness*. Blue Angel Gallery, 2019.
- Saberi, Reza, *The Poems of Hafez*. University Press of America, 1984.
- Safi, Omid. "Fake Hafez: How a Supreme Persian Poet of Love Was Erased." *Al Jazeera*. 14 Jun 2020, [bit.ly/2WQQirn](http://bit.ly/2WQQirn)
- Shabani-Jadidi, Pouneh et al. *The Routledge Handbook of Persian Literary Translation*. Routledge, 2022.
- Smith, Paul. *Divan of Hafiz*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. 2012.
- Squires, Geoffrey. *Hafez: Translations and Interpretations of the Ghazals*. Miami UP, 2014.



## Acknowledgments

There is a saying in Persian: “A lone hand remains silent.” Indeed, many hands went into making this little book. We bow, in gratitude. . . To Greg Brandenburgh for suggesting this idea to us. To the Abbas Kiarostami Foundation for their generous permission to draw upon the foundational concept of and many selections from *Hafez be Revayate Abbas Kiarostami* (Farzan Publishers, Tehran 2007). To literary agent Anna Ghosh, for sealing the deal. To H. E. Sayeh (1928–2022), whose divan of Hafiz we used as source.

To Ali Akbar Dehkhoda, author of *Dehkhoda Dictionary* and the *Vajehyab* concordance online. To poet-playwright-songwriter-novelist-biologist Michael McClure for his unique, innovative prosody which, from time to time, we drew upon.

To Jonathan Granoff, Behzad Farhadpour at Farhang Foundation, Abbas Milani, Muhammad Ali Mojaradi @PersianPoetics, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hadi Yves Saint-Pierre, and the Rumi Network, for guidance and support along the path. To Art Beck, Ken Bullock, Paul Vangelisti, and Ayelet Waldman, for insightful suggestions from advance readings. To the ByLine and Writers Conferences at The WELL (*well.com*). To contemporary orator Charles Eisenstein’s phrase “the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible,” to author-translator Maryam Mafi, for her wish that Hafiz be a reader’s Hafiz forever; to singer Bonnie Raitt for the phrase “soul-digging, hard-working” in reference to her fellow song-writers; and to philosopher Alan Watts for

“skin-encapsulated ego.” To editor Michael Pye, our Virgil. To Jane Hagaman, Christine LeBlond, and Rachel Nagengast, for impeccable eagle eyes. To poet-typographer Kathryn Sky-Peck, for performing the final alchemy of transforming our script to print. To Eryn Eaton, for energetically amplifying our voice in the world. To Ari Honarvar, for seeing clearly right to the bottom and knowing exactly what needs to be done. To Iraj Anvar & Elizabeth T Gray, Jr, for the indispensable and impeccable vetting of our translations from Persian. Any errors remain wholly our own.

Appendix A’s ghazal by Hafiz, translated by Elizabeth T. Gray, Jr., is reprinted from *The Green Sea of Heaven – Fifty Ghazals from the Diwan of Hafiz*, White Cloud Press. Copyright © 1995 by Elizabeth T. Gray, Jr. Reprinted by permission of White Cloud Press. “From shore to shore. . .” was selected by Porochista Khakpour for *Evergreen Review’s* Iran Issue, Nowruz 2023 (1402 AH).

Gary dedicates this little book to his godfather Bentley Morriss, who turns 100 this year. (Unbelievable!) Erfan dedicates it to Nasim, who has always been there for him. Our inmost aspiration is for it to nourish seeds that will encourage the more beautiful world we know is possible.

## About the Authors

**Ari Honarvar** is an award-winning writer-translator. Her writing has appeared in *The Guardian*, *Teen Vogue*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and elsewhere. She is the author of *Rumi's Gift Oracle Cards* (2018) and *A Girl Called Rumi* (2021). A native of Shiraz, of a long line of Persian poets, she currently dances with refugees on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Home: [RumiWithAView.com](http://RumiWithAView.com)

**Abbas Kiarostomi** (1940–2016) No other filmmaker has been as influential in post-revolutionary Iran. Moreover, his movies are considered among the masterworks of world cinema. Filmmaker Jean-Luc Goddard has said “Film begins with D. W. Griffith and ends with Abbas Kiarostami.” His inimitable creativity found expression also as a designer, photographer, painter, and poet.

**Erfan Mojib** Born 1984, in the desert town of Yazd, Iran. MFA, Creative Writing, UNB, Canada; and an MA, English Literature, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. Publications include works translated to / from English: *Flaubert's Parrot* by Julian Barnes; *Love Begins in Winter* and *The Illusion of Separateness* by Simon Van Booy; *The Spell Chanted by Lambs* by Reza Ghasemi; *García Márquez: The Man and His Work* by Gene Bell-Villada; and *The Passion* by Jeanette Winterson. His children's books, in collaboration with the Russian artist Oksana Baturina, have been translated into Persian, Russian, and Chinese. He

is a recipient of the David Walker Prize for creative writing. Home: [ErfanMojib.com](http://ErfanMojib.com)

**Gary Gach** Born 1947, Los Angeles. BA in English from UCLA–SFSU. Adjunct Professor at University of San Francisco. With Brother Anthony of Taizé and Young-moo Kim, he's translated three books of poetry from Korean by Ko Un: *Flowers of a Moment*, BOA / Lannan Translation Series (Northern California Book Award for Translation); *Ten Thousand Lives* (introduction, Robert Hass), and *Songs for Tomorrow*. His anthology *What Book!?! – Buddha Poems from Beat to Hip-hop* received an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation. Author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Buddhism*, and *Pause. . . Breathe. . . Smile*. Home: [GaryGach.com](http://GaryGach.com)

## HAMPTON ROADS PUBLISHING COMPANY

*... for the evolving human spirit*

Hampton Roads Publishing Company publishes books on a variety of subjects, including spirituality, health, and other related topics.

For a copy of our latest trade catalog, call (978) 465-0504 or visit our distributor's website at [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com). You can also sign up for our newsletter and special offers by going to [www.redwheelweiser.com/newsletter/](http://www.redwheelweiser.com/newsletter/).

