

Lying in a hammock
"Lying in a hammock in a Persian garden".
Gertrude Bell and the translation of
Hafez's poems



Stefania Berutti





“Say, is it not rather refereshing to the spirit to lie in a hammock, strung between the plane trees of a Persian garden and read the poems Hafiz – in the original mark you! – out of a book curiously bound in stamped leather which you have bouth in the bazaars.



That is how I spend my mornings here: a stream murmurs past me with Zoroastrian gardeners guide (...) The disctionary which is also in my hammoch is not perhaps so poetic as the other attributes – let us hide it under our muslin petticoats”

This also is pleasant: to come I at 7 o'clock in the morning after a two hours ride, hot and dusty, and find one's cold bath waiting for one scented with delicious rose water (...)”

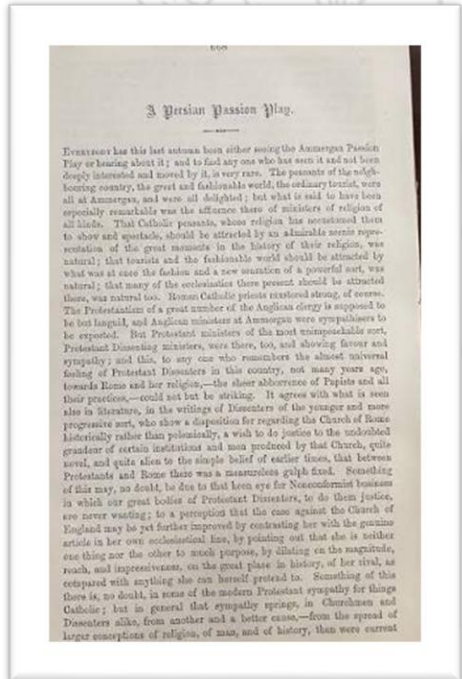
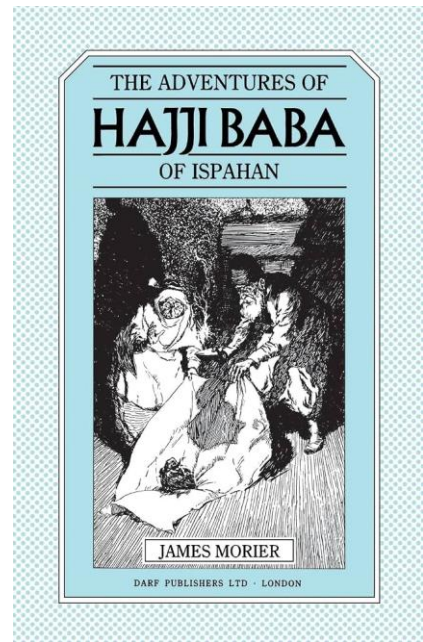
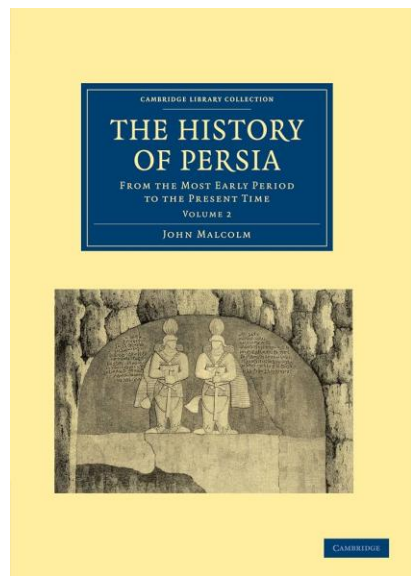
Gertrude Bell. “Poems from the Divan of Hafiz”, Read Books 2019, pp. 11-12



Sir John Malcolm, The History of Persia (1815)

James Morier, The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan (1824)

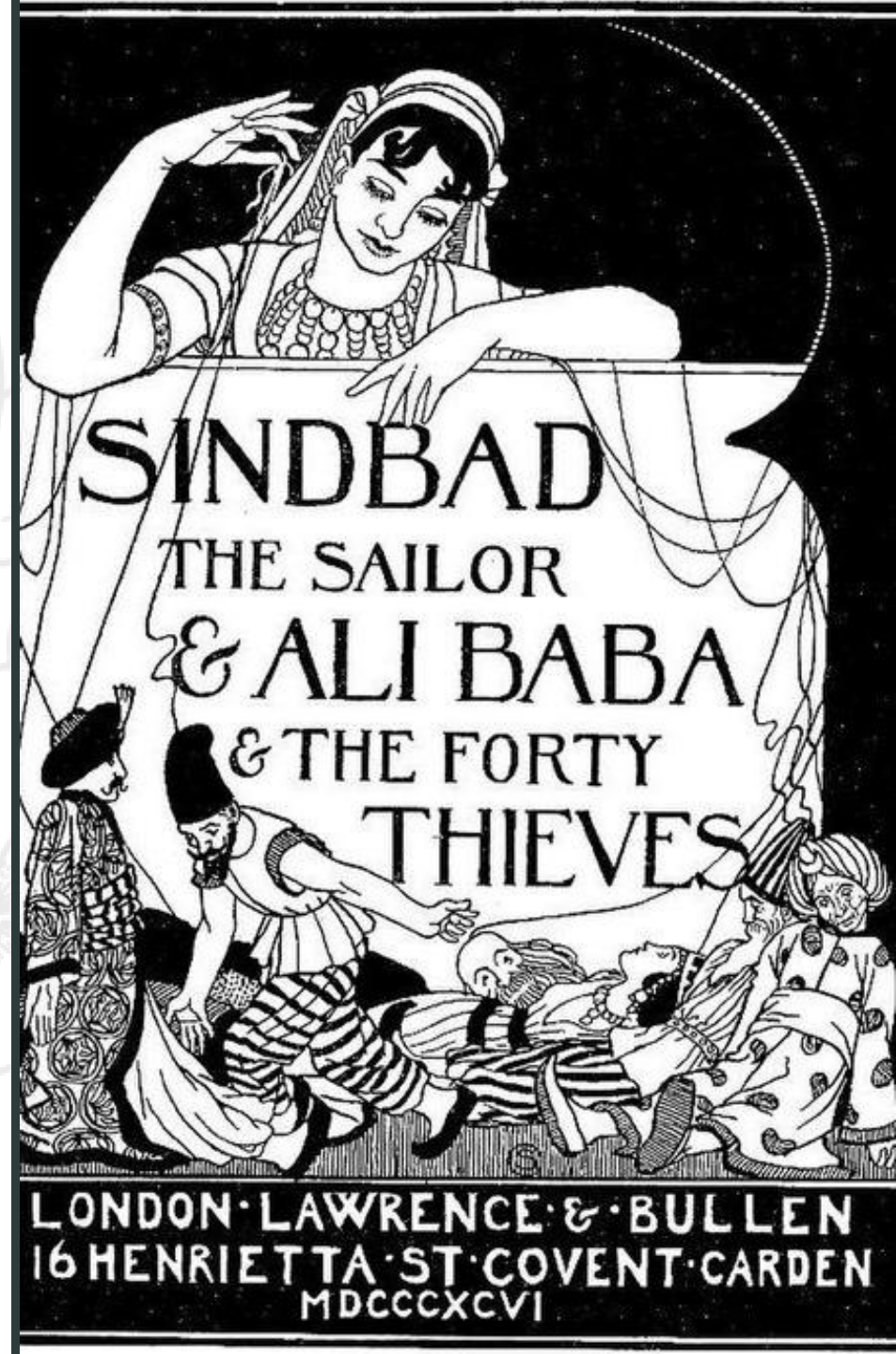
Arnold, A Persian Passion Play (1871)



1892 map – Persia, Laristan, Kherman, Afghanistan

The Arabian Nights

Jonathan Scott 1811

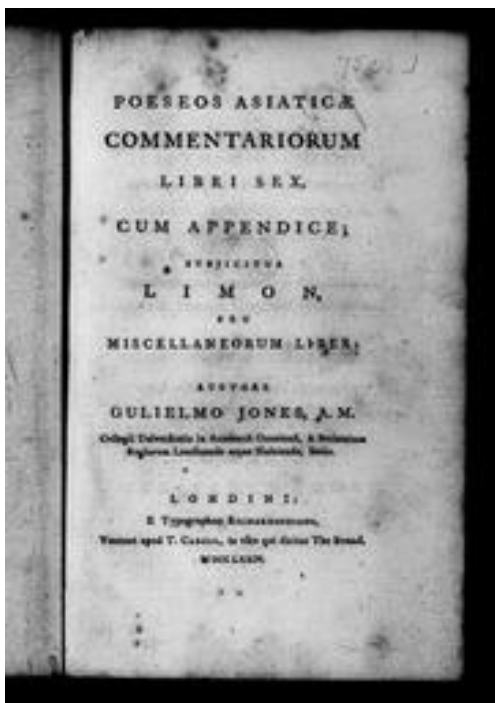


William Jones (1746-1794)



A Grammar Persian Language
1771

Poeseos Asiaticae Commentariorum
1774



283
کتاب شکرستان
در نحوی زبان پارسی
تصنیف یونس اوکسفردي
A
GRAMMAR
OF THE
PERSIAN LANGUAGE.

BY WILLIAM JONES, ESQ.
FELLOW OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND OF THE ROYAL
SOCIETIES OF LONDON AND COPENHAGEN.

چو عبدلیب فصاحت فروشد ای حافظ
تو قدر او بسخن گفتن دری بشن

THE SIXTH EDITION,
WITH ADDITIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS.



LONDON:
PRINTED BY W. BULMER AND CO. CLEVELAND-ROW,
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J. WALKER; J. ASPERNE; AND BLACK AND PARRY.

1804.

SWEET maid, if thou would'st charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold ;
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.

Boy, let yon liquid ruby flow,
And bid thy pensive heart be glad,
Whate'er the frowning zealots say :
Tell them, their Eden cannot show
A stream so clear as Rocnabad,
A bower so sweet as Mosellay,

O ! when these fair perfidious maids,
Whose eyes our secret haunts infest,
Their dear destructive charms display
Each glance my tender breast invades,
And robs my wounded soul of rest,
As Tartars seize their destin'd prey,

In vain with love our bosoms glow:
Can all our tears, can all our sighs,
New luster to those charms impart ?
Can cheeks, where living roses blow,
Where nature spreads her richest dyes,
Require the borrow'd gloss of art?

Speak not of fate:—ah! change the theme,
And talk of odours, talk of wine,
Talk of the flowers that round us bloom:
'Tis all a cloud, 'tis all a dream;
To love and joy thy thoughts confine,
Nor hope to pierce the sacred gloom.

Beauty has such resistless power,
That even the chaste Egyptian dame
Sigh'd for the blooming Hebrew boy
For her how fatal was the hour,
When to the banks of Nilus came
A youth so lovely and so coy !

But ah ! sweet maid, my counsel hear
(Youth should attend when those advise
Whom long experience renders sage) :
While musick charms the ravish'd ear,
While sparkling cups delight our eyes,
Be gay; and scorn the frowns of age.

What cruel answer have I heard !
And yet, by heaven, I love thee still:
Can aught be cruel from thy lip ?
Yet say, how fell that bitter word
From lips which streams of sweetness fill,
Which nought but drops of honey sip ?

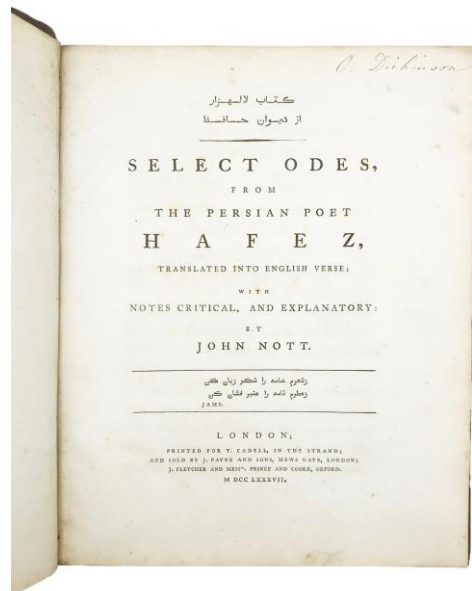
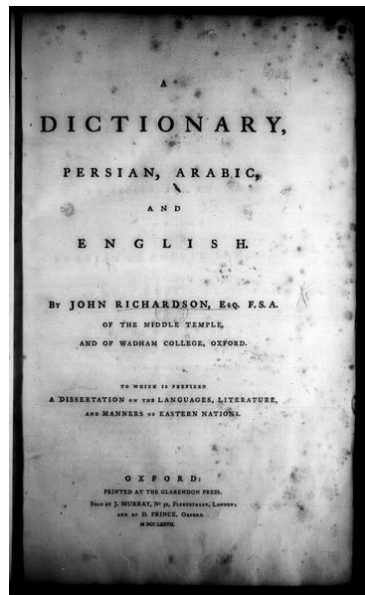
Go boldly forth, my simple lay,
Whose accents flow with artless ease,
Like orient pearls at random strung:
Thy notes are sweet, the damsels say;
But O ! far sweeter, if they please
The nymph for whom these notes are sung.

*Jones: "I have endeavored ... to
give my translation the easy turn
of the original: and I have, as
nearly as possible, imitated the
cadence and accent of the
Persian measure."*

Jones, *Works*, V, p. 316.

William Jones, A Persian Song of Hafiz 1772





The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal
1784 - 1st meeting

ASIATIC ANNUAL REGISTER; OR, A VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF HINDUSTAN, AND OF THE POLITICS, COMMERCE AND LITERATURE OF ASIA, For the Year 1799.



LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. DEBRETT, PICCADILLY,
BY ANDREW WILSON, THE ORIENTAL PRESS, WILD COURT.

PERSIAN LYRICS,
OR
SCATTERED POEMS,
FROM
THE DIWAN-I-HAFIZ:
WITH
PARAPHRASES IN VERSE AND PROSE,
A
CATALOGUE OF THE GAZELS
AS ARRANGED IN
A MANUSCRIPT OF THE WORKS OF HAFIZ IN THE
CHETHAM LIBRARY AT MANCHESTER,
AND
OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS.



John Richardson, Persian-Arabic-
English dictionary (1777)
John Nott, Select Odes (1787)
J.H. Hindley, Persian Lyrics (1800)
S. Rousseau, The Flowers of Persia
Literature (1801)

THE
FLOWERS OF PERSIAN LITERATURE
EXTRACTS FROM THE MOST CELEBRATED AUTHORS.
IN
PROSE AND VERSE:
WITH A
TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH:
BEING A
COMPANION
TO
SIR WILLIAM JONES'S PERSIAN GRAMMAR
TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
AN ESSAY
ON THE
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE OF PERSIA.

BY S. ROUSSEAU,
TEACHER OF THE PERSIAN LANGUAGE.

پیش کر خطای رسی و دلت مزن
که هیچ نفس بشر غالی از خلا نبود
"Cursed if you cease to an error, still not to reach."
"For my profit sought can be from this fault!"



Khajeh Shams-od-Din Mohammad Hafez Shirazi (1325–1390)



The date of his death is variously given (...) 1389 is the year given in a couplet by an unknown author, which is inscribed upon his tomb: "If thou wouldst know when he sought a home in the dust of Mosalla, seek his date in the dust of Mosalla". The letter of the Persian words Khak-i-Mosalla (dust of Mosalla) give the number 791, that is 1389 of our era.

Gertrude Bell, Poems of the Divan of Hafiz, Read Books 2019, p.28



The lover
The tavern
The saqi
The wine

Doublures inside a Divan of Hafiz, April 5 1842,
Iran. Hafiz offering his work to a patron, the
back doublure depicts a man offering a woman
an orange, in an indoor setting.

true profession.

Stanza 3.—Joseph is the Oriental type of perfect beauty. The story of his relations with Zuleikha, Potiphar's wife, is one of the famous love stories of the East; Jami made it the theme of a long metaphysical poem. The part played by Zuleikha in Persian tales is far more creditable than that which is assigned to her either in the Bible or the Koran.

Every translator of Hafiz has tried his hand upon this song, which is one of the most famous in the Divan. It is only right to inform the reader that the original is of great beauty.

The whole poem has received a mystical interpretation which seems to me to add but little to its value or to its intelligibility; but in case any one should wish to gather the higher wisdom from it, I may mention that the mole, powder, and paint, of which a beautiful face does not stand in need, represent the ink, colour, dots, and lines of the Koran; and this is the explanation given to the couplet concerning Joseph and Zuleikha by a thorough-going Western mystic: "By reason of that beauty daily increasing that Joseph (the absolute existence, the real beloved, God) had, the first day) knew that love for him would bring Zuleikha

OH Turkish maid of Shiraz! in thy hand
If thou'lt take my heart, for the mole on thy cheek
I would barter Bokhara and Samarkand.
Bring, Cup-bearer, all that is left of thy wine!
In the Garden of Paradise vainly thou'lt seek
The lip of the fountain of Ruknabad,
And the bowers of Mosalla where roses twine.

They have filled the city with blood and broil,
Those soft-voiced Lulis for whom we sigh;
As Turkish robbers fall on the spoil,
They have robbed and plundered the peace of my heart.
Dowered is my mistress, a beggar am I;
What shall I bring her? a beautiful face
Needs nor jewel nor mole nor the tiring-maid's art.

Brave tales of singers and wine relate,
The key to the Hidden 'twere vain to seek;
No wisdom of ours has unlocked that gate,
And locked to our wisdom it still shall be.
But of Joseph's beauty the lute shall speak;
And the minstrel knows that Zuleika came forth,
Love parting the curtains of modesty.

When thou spokest ill of thy servant 'twas well—
God pardon thee! for thy words were sweet;
Not unwelcomed the bitterest answer fell
From lips where the ruby and sugar lay.
But, fair Love, let good counsel direct thy feet;





Binding of a Divan
of Hafiz, April 5
1842, Iran.



- *The lapwing*
- *The nightingale*
- *The rose*
- *The tulip*

• Safavid painting (17 th cent), two lapwings
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2016/arts-islamic-world-l16220/lot.51.html?locale=de>

“It is the interminable, the hopeless mysticism, the playing with words that say one thing and mean something totally different, the vagueness of a philosophy that dares not speak out (...)”

Gertrude Bell, Poems from the Divan... p.30

“In the same way that Hafiz spiritualizes wine, he spiritualizes love. In both, he seeks something more than a passing oblivion or a sensation of the flesh. The former has the effect of a moral stimulant, and it provides an exaltation of the soul which for a moment permits the unveiling of the hidden realities. The latter, in all its forms and almost in itself, stands for the ideal which the poet sets before him in his worldly life: the way that this passion obliges one to pursue, sown with both pain and joy is the tariqat (the mystical, inner path of spiritual development in Sufism aimed at achieving direct, experiential knowledge of God) mentioned in the Divan, and is the only way that leads to purity, and at the end of which one is assured of finding divine compassion.”

Roger Lescot, Chronologie de l'oeuvre de Hafiz, in Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales, 1943-44

"I daily discover, with increasing delight, new beauties and elegances in him. The principal difficulty attending the translation and publication of his poems as you have begun, consists in giving them a poetical dress; but this will prove easier than you imagine; for there are many of his odes, which I conclude you will not attempt to translate, as containing expressions wholly foreign to our manners, lofty and daring figures, or abrupt unconnected lines; and this will in some measure alleviate the Herculean labor of the task."

William Jones to Baron Reviczki, April 1768

Hafez' great fame rests on his ghazals, which are so allusive and dense in their language, using the often arcane conventions of Persian lyric poetry with consummate dexterity, as to be virtually untranslatable."

Dick Davies, *Borrowed Ware: Medieval Persian Epigrams*, Mage Publishers, Washington, DC, 2004, p. 185

"One of the things most regrettably lost in the translation of Hafez is his melody. This lies not in his meters, as some have thought, but in his melodious words."

Mas'ud Farzad, *To translate Hafiz*, Teheran 1935



SAFAR NAMEH

PERSIAN PICTURES:
A BOOK OF TRAVEL

GERTRUDE BELL



Are we the same people I wonder when all our surroundings, association, acquaintances are changed? Here that which is me, which womanlike is an empty jar that the passerby fills at pleasure, is filled with such wine as in England I had never heard of, now the wine is more important than the jar when one is thirsty, therefore I conclude, cousin mine, that it is not the person who danced with you at Mansfield St. that writes to you to-day from Persia.

- Yet there are dregs, English sediments at the bottom of my sherbet, and perhaps they flavour it more than I think.

—Gertrude Bell, letter to Horace Marshall,
Tehran, 18 June 1892



Mr Strong was most interesting; enormously excited to hear I wished to learn Persian; I felt a horrid fraud while he explained to me all that was to be done with it and how he longed for more people to edit books and translate and so on. He described to me the things he was doing; it was very very interesting. I do think the happiest people in the world are those who spend thirteen hours a day in a library.

<https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-1-1-4-9>

Our intercourse was somewhat restricted by the fact that we had no satisfactory medium through which to convey our thoughts to each other. He spoke French – such French as is to be acquired at Tehran! and I – ah well! I fear my Persian never carried me very far. Nevertheless, we were accustomed to embark recklessly on the widest discussions. He was a bit of a reformer was

I have arranged with a young man called Denison Ross, who once read Persian with me, that I should send him all my difficulties in Persian and Arabic during the winter - sort of correspondence lessons. I think it will prove a most useful plan

September 1898 – letter to her father

<https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-2-1-4-8>

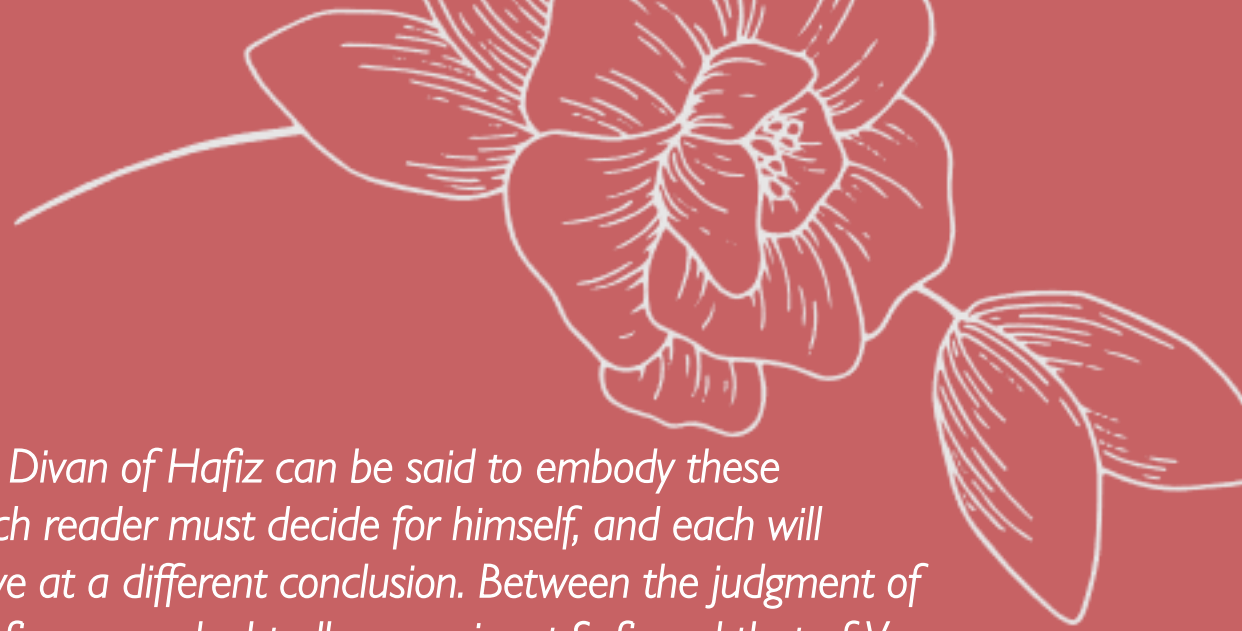
‘Peace be with you!’ he would say with a low bow. ‘Is the health of your Excellency good?’ ‘Thanks be to God, it is very good,’ I would answer. ‘Thanks be to God!’ he would return piously, with another bow. Then he would draw up a chair and sit down in front of me,



: *“The keynote of Sufiism is the union, the identification of God and man (...) So the soul of the Sufi longs to return to God, from whom it has been separated by the mortal veil of the body”*

“The Sufis (...) content themselves with saying that the world came into existence when it pleased God to manifest himself beyond himself”

Gertrude Bell, Poems from the Divan pp. 33-34



“How far the Divan of Hafiz can be said to embody these doctrines, each reader must decide for himself, and each will probably arrive at a different conclusion. Between the judgment of Jami, that Hafiz was undoubtedly an eminent Sufi, and that of Von Hammer, who declared that (...) the Interpreter of Secrets interpreted only the language of pleasure — between these two there is a wide field for differences of opinion.

For my part, I cannot agree entirely either with Jami or with Von Hammer (...) Hafiz seems to me to rise above the narrow views of his co-religionists, and to look upon the world from a wider standpoint”

Gertrude Bell, Poems from the Divan **p. 40**

"During his [Hafiz] lifetime the city that he loved, perhaps as dearly as Dante loved Florence, was besieged and taken five or six times; it changed hands even more often (...) But what echo of that is there in his poems? Almost none"

"We can forgive him for leaving to us so indistinct a representation of his own time (...) when we find him formulating ideas as profound as the warning that there is no musician to whose music both the drunk and the sober can dance".

Gertrude Bell, Poems from the Divan
pp. 46-47

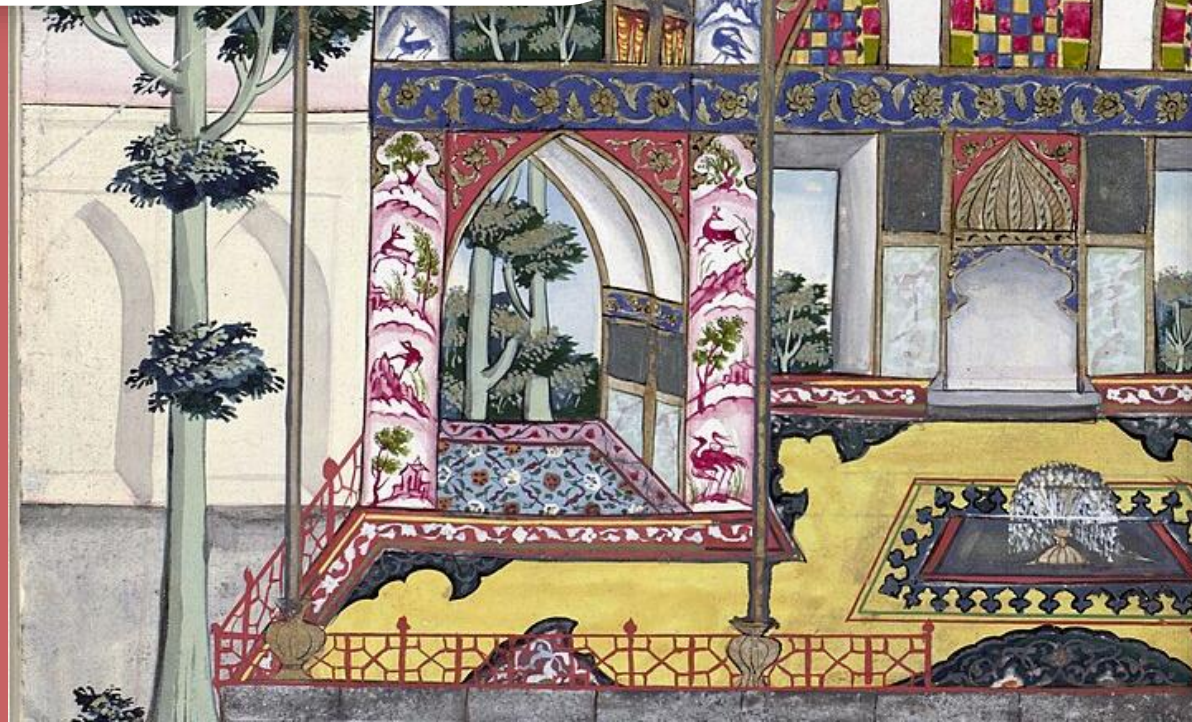


"Hafiz is rather the forerunner than the founder of this school of poets. It is equally unsatisfactory to give a completely mystical or a completely material interpretation to his songs. He wrote of the world as he found it (...) I am very conscious that my appreciation of the poet is that of the Western. (...) From our point of view, then, the sum of his philosophy seems to be, that though there is little of which we can be certain, that little must always be the object of all men's desire."

Gertrude Bell, Poems from the Divan p.49

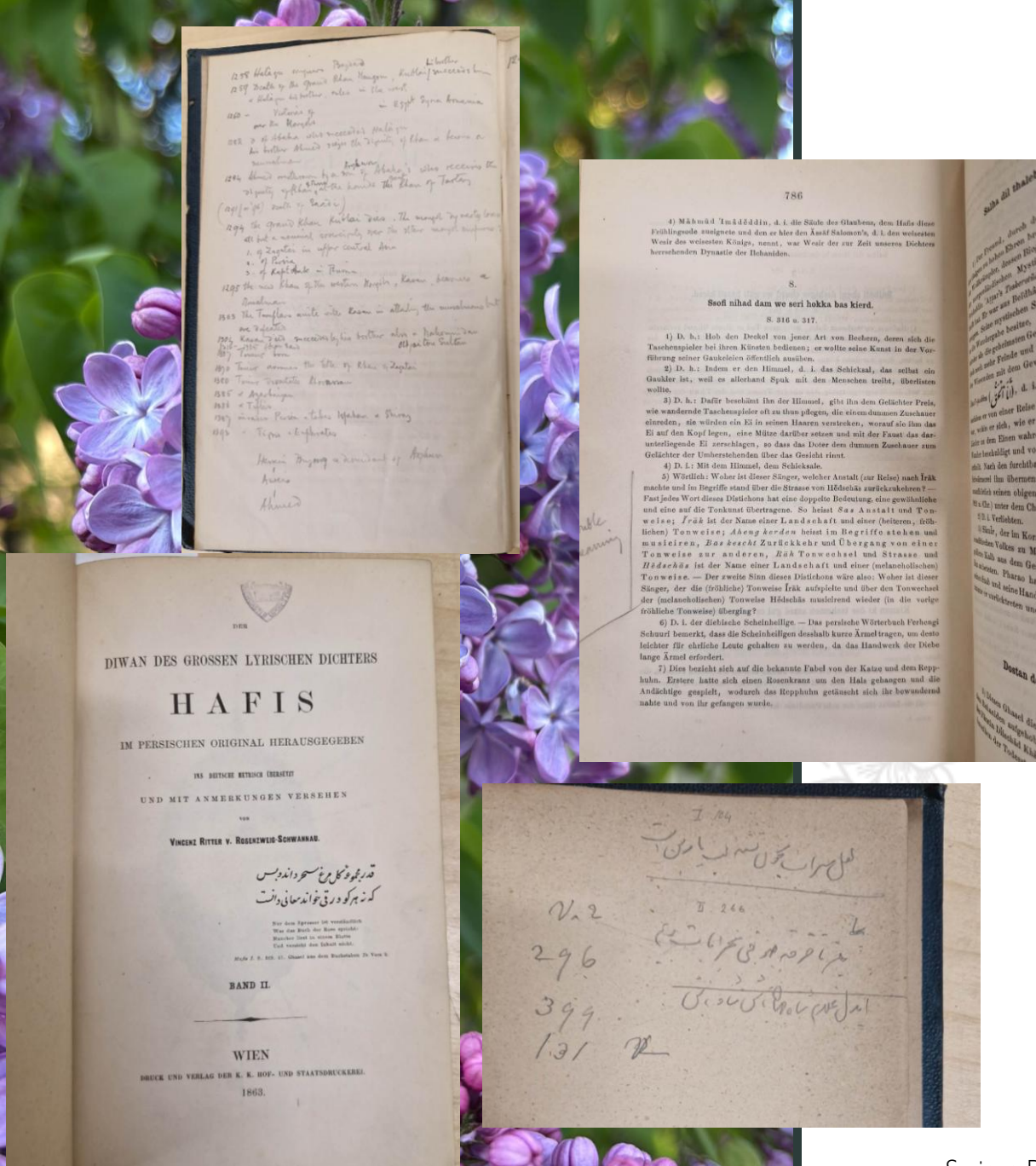


stanza 5.—So far I have endeavoured to give the mystical interpretation of the poem. There is, however, a story attached to it which turns it into a historical rather than a theological document. It is related that the King of the Deccan, Mahmud Shah Bahmani, had heard of the fame of Hafiz, and having a pretty taste in literature, was desirous of attracting him to his court. Accordingly he ordered his Vizir, Mir Feiz Allah Inju, to send the poet a sufficient sum to pay for his journey from Shiraz. Hafiz resolved to accept the invitation. He wound up his affairs in his native town, using some of the money the Sultan had sent him in paying his debts and in making gifts to his sister's children, and set forth upon his journey. But when he reached the town of Lar he found there an acquaintance in very bad case, having been plundered by robbers and reduced to a state



written: women were women and wine red wine for me, the cup-bearer was the person whose advent was most eagerly to be greeted; roses and nightingales, soft winds and blooming gardens, were all part of a beautiful imaginative world, and fit setting for a poet's dreams.

But this was wilful stupidity. If I had listened to the wisdom of Sheikh Hassan, I should have realized that we were in the midst of sublime abstractions, and that the most rigid morality and the strictest abstinence were inculcated by those glowing lines. In practice, however, I had the poets themselves on my side; the days of Hafiz sped merrily, if tradition has not belied him, and the last prayer of the Tent-Maker was that he might be buried in a rose-garden, where the scented petals would fall



Poems from the Divan of Hafiz 1897

Rozensweig-Schwannau, *Der Diwan des großen lyrischen Dichters Hafis (1858-1864)*

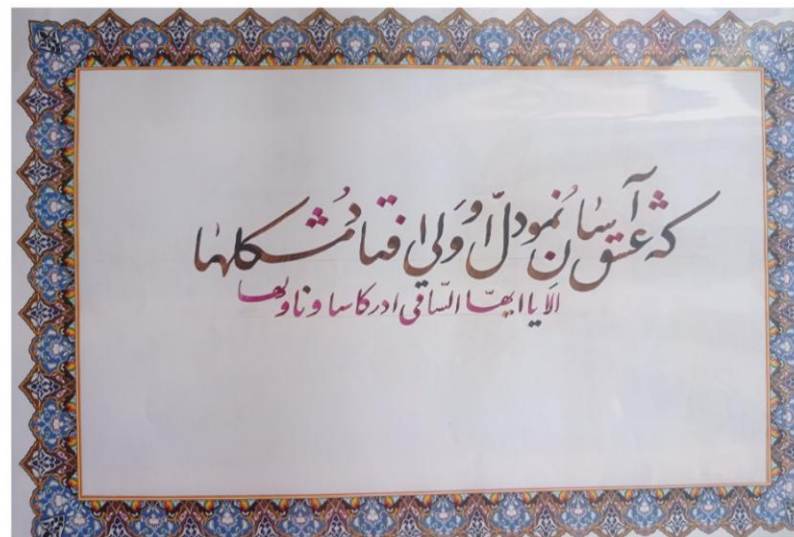
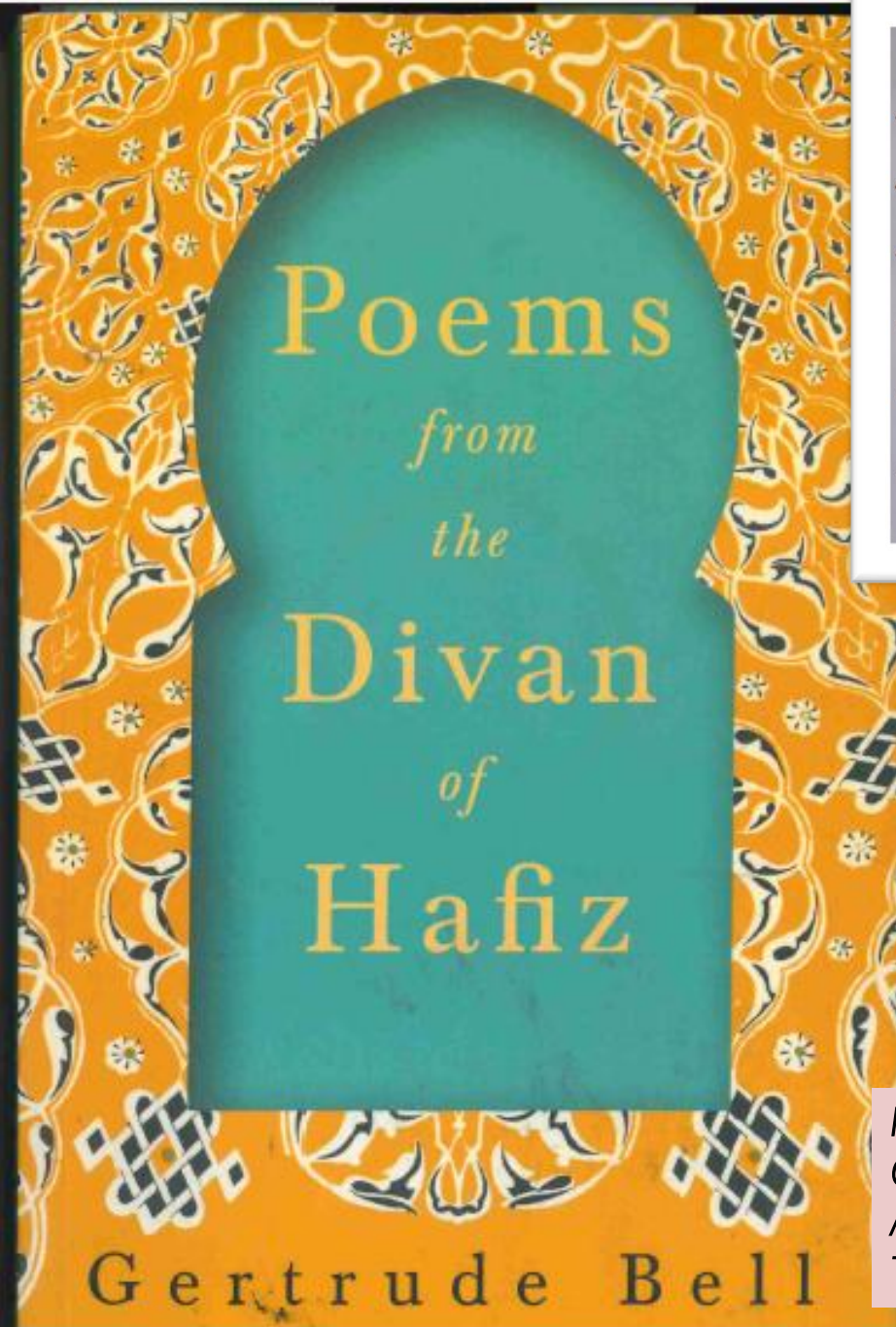
George Sale, translation of the **Quran** (1734)

James Darmesteter (1849-1894) – studies on Zoroastrism

Stories from the Thousand and one nights (the Arabian nights' entertainments)
translated by Edward William Lane (1839-1841)

Henry Layard, **Early adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia** (1887)

Edward Granville Browne, **A year Amongst the Persians** (1893)



Bell n.1 Hafez #1

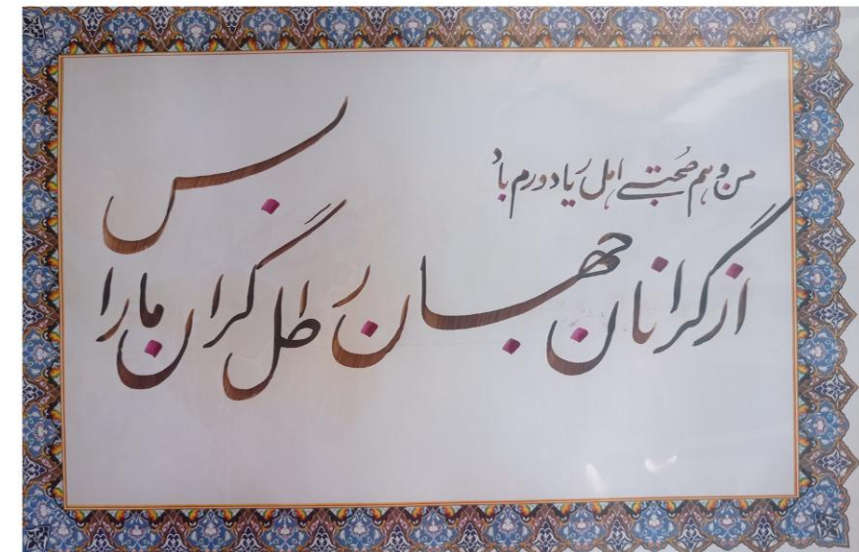
Arise, oh Cup-bearer, rise! And bring
To lips that are thirsting the bowl they praise,
For it seemed that love was an easy thing,
But my feet have fallen on difficult ways.

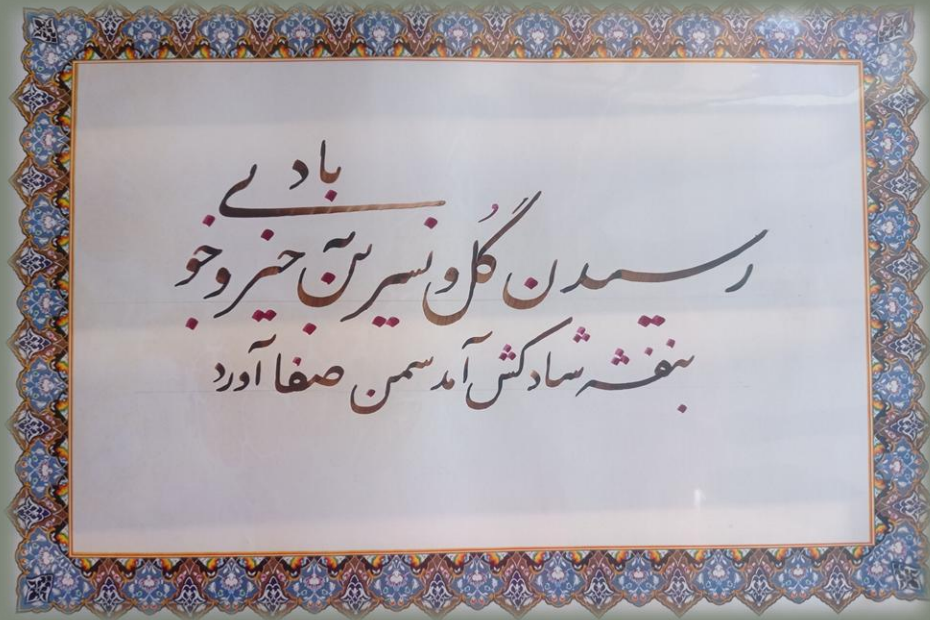
Calligraphy by Sepideh Emami



Bell n.6 Hafez #268

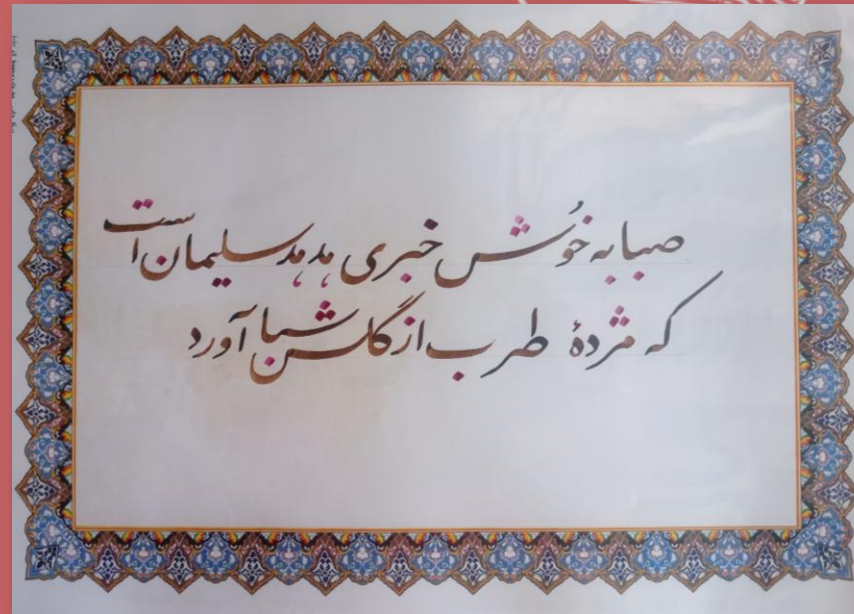
I am no lover of hypocrisy;
Of all the treasures that the earth can boast
A brimming cup of wine I prize the most
This is enough for me!





Welcome, oh rose, and full-blown eglantine!
The violets their scented gladness fling,
Jasmin breaths purity

Bell n.19 Hafez #145



Bell n.19 Hafez #145

The wind itself bore joy to Solomon,
The Lapwing flew from Sheba's garden close,
Bringing good tidings of its queen and rose.

III

Stanza 1.—King Solomon sent the lapwing or hoopoe as his messenger to Bilkis, Queen of Sheba. The story is told thus by Al Ta'labi, in his Stories of the Prophets. (The lapwing had already made a journey on his own account, and had brought Solomon news of the great Queen, and told him that she was not a worshipper of the true God.) "Then Solomon wrote a

“And we, too, passed out of the silence and remembered that we lived. Life seized us and inspired us with a mad sense of revelry. The humming wind and the teeming earth shouted “life! Life” as we rode. Life! Life! The bountiful, the magnificent! Age was far from us – death far; we had left him enthroned in his barren mountains, with ghostly cities and out worn faiths to bear him company. For us the wide plain and the limitless world, for us the beauty and the freshness of the morning, for us youth and the joy of living”

Gertrude Bell, Persian Pictures, Tauris Parke 2019 p.18

Stefania Benutti
stefania.benutti@cam.ac.uk
IG: @memorialmediterraneo

Gertrude Bell
From Oxford to Babylon
Archaeology and Intelligence in the Middle East
Round Table – Florence September 18th 2026

