

# The Orient

*poem* song, in memory of Leonard Cohen

by David Solway



I travelled to the  
orient Am, Em

Where the earnest seekers went C, Em

To search for wisdom, search for truth— Am,  
Em

The illusions of our  
youth C, Em

Between desire and regret,  
Am, F6 or Dm7/A

The tower and the oubliette

Em, Am

High up on the mountain peak

Between the straight and the oblique

Between the summit and the cloud

Between the hermit and the crowd

I found the wise man sitting there

Who played a hand of solitaire

I asked the sage what he would do

If he were caught between the two

Between the music of the spheres

And the music no one hears

Between the silence and the word

The seahorse and the hummingbird

The wise man did not say a thing

He merely cast in the I Ching

His fingers moving canzicrans

Lost between the hexagrams

Lost between the waning moon

And the darkness of the rune

Between the free man and the slave

Between the sunlight and the cave

The leaden bar, the golden mean,

There's only what lies in between

Between what rises and what falls

Between the night and the crystal balls

Between the heavens and the dust

Between the oil and the rust

Between the creature and the wheel

Between the angel and the seal

That's all that our wisdom knows

Between the nettle and the rose

Going to and coming from

Riding on the pendulum

Between intention and result

Between the sweetness and the salt

Between the field mouse and the hawk

Between forever and the clock

I've come back from the orient

Back into my element

It's not the game we used to play

When we were fools back in the day

Between the shroud and the swaddling cloth

Between the candle and the moth

The wise man, well, he made no sense

And that produced the consequence

Between the flower and the fire

Between the dungeon and the spire

Between the winding corridors

Between the prayers and the wars

O many went to Kathmandu

Betrayed the Christian and the Jew

Betrayed the world that gave them life

Sought for peace and brought back strife

And did not keep the proper time

Between the rhythm and the rhyme