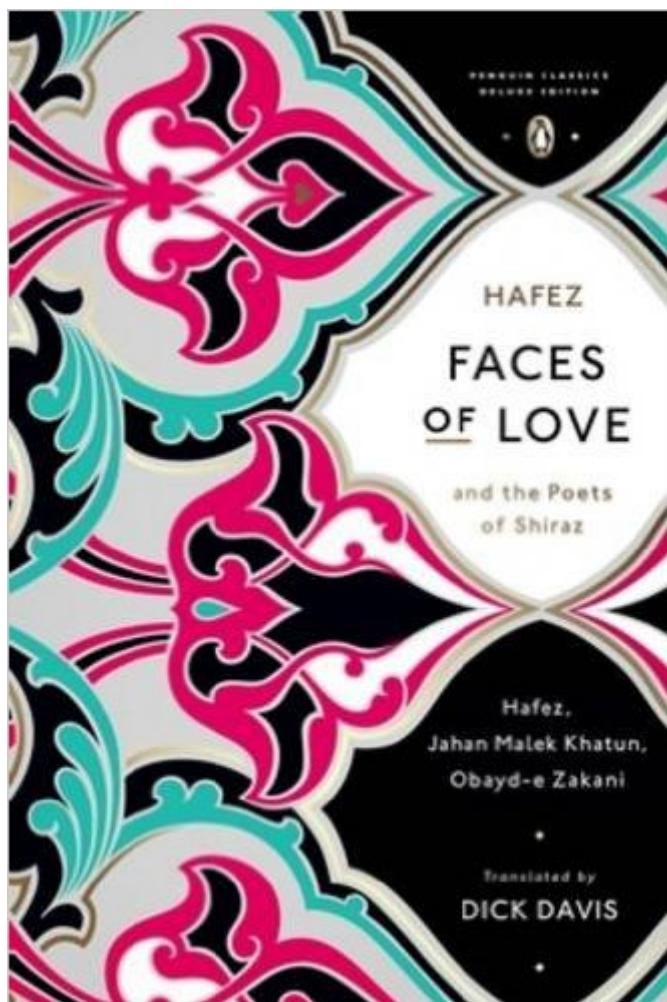


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Faces Of Love: Hafez And The Poets Of Shiraz (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition)



Synopsis

Acclaimed translator Dick Davis breathes new life into the timeless works of three masters of 14th-century Persian literature. Together, Hafez, a giant of world literature; Jahan Malek Khatun, an eloquent princess; and Obayd-e Zakani, a dissolute satirist, represent one of the most remarkable literary flowerings of any era. All three lived in the famed city of Shiraz, a provincial capital of south-central Iran, and all three drew support from arts-loving rulers during a time better known for its violence than its creative brilliance. Here Dick Davis, an award-winning poet widely considered one of the finest translators of Persian poetry (The Times Literary Supplement), presents a diverse selection of some of the best poems by these world-renowned authors and shows us the spiritual and secular aspects of love, in varieties embracing every aspect of the human heart. For more than sixty-five years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,500 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Like every book from Mage Publishers, *Faces of Love: Hafez and the Poets of Shiraz* (2012), by Dick Davis, is a beautiful book, both inside and out. Davis situates Hafez within the rich culture of

medieval Shiraz, where both poetry and wine cultivation flourished. Apart from a lovely, informative introduction by Davis, the book is mostly devoted to Davis's translations of selected poetry from three of the best medieval poets of Shiraz: Hafez of course, Princess Jahan Malek Khatun, and Obayd-E Zakani. Davis's translations are formal in the sense that they have a conscious meter, and they rhyme. At the same time, they remain conversational, accessible, and often melodious. (The book closes with thorough explanatory notes for many of the translations.) Davis's translations of Hafez are compelling and lyrical; however, the real discovery of this book is the section on the lesser-known Jahan Malek Khatun. Hafez is one of the greatest poets who ever lived. But Khatun is a wonderful poet in her own right. Davis spends some time on both her uses of and moves away from traditional forms. Deceptively simple at times, her poems have a modern, daring quality that readers of any century would find powerful. Davis mentions her androgynous address in several poems: true enough, in poem after poem of intense longing, Khatun both struggles with and seems to transcend gender. The book is a delightful offering of gorgeous, timeless, and often controversial poetry. Yet, its genius is in the triptych structure of three poets from the same fascinating and complicated town.

Faces of Love is wonderful. It's actually so wonderful that I've had to abandon all hope of recapping of its virtues in a comprehensive way. (The account threatened to be book-length.) Instead, here is what I hope will be a more useful, if only partial, description of a few highlights:-- First and maybe most importantly, the collection has the rare quality of being as accessible as it is intelligent. Both the poems and the commentary that frame them offer plenty of depth and detail to satisfy the frequent reader of poetry, but it also strikes me that translator Dick Davis's wry prose and contemporary analogies could provide a very entertaining inroad someone less acquainted with this art form. (Do you like Bob Dylan? This could be the book for you!) Very easy to imagine someone who was otherwise not much of a poetry reader getting curious about what else is out there, after reading Davis's collection.-- Second, the poems are remarkable. I'm not a reader of Persian, sadly, so I can't speak to the originals, but these translations make an impressive body of work on their own. There's a dexterity with rhyme and emotion I wish we'd see a lot more of in contemporary Anglophone poetry (Davis knocked me out resolving an otherwise-unrhymed poem on despair and solace with a final rhymed couplet, closing the poem with a comfort to the reader's ear that matches and magnifies the comfort the poem's themes offer the reader's heart). There's intellectual sophistication that gives lie to postmodernity's purported monopoly on the instability of meaning (a Hafez aside about "wine that's real and not a metaphor" is but the most explicit indication that one

didn't need to wait for Barthes to grasp the pleasures and possibilities in the space between sign and referent.

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