

Have You Met Hafez ?

TRANSLATOR OF INNOVATIVE EDITION AVAILABLE TO INTRODUCE

KHWĀJA SHAMS-UD-DĪN MUḤAMMAD ḤĀFEẒ-E

SHĪRĀZĪ (aka Hafiz [Arabic] / Hafez [Persian], 14th

century) is recognized as both the pinnacle of Persian poetry – and untranslatable. Comes now Gary Gach to speak on how *Hafiz's Little Book of Life* makes his poetry new for our times, and why Hafez matters.

The book draws from innovative adaptations by renowned Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami – who'd isolated single lines as close-ups, and edited them into brief poems. Each can be savored on their own – or enjoyed as a book-length poem with a five-part symphonic structure, going beyond Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* links and arc.

Hafiz's Little Book of Life is a soul map.

1) The path begins with the mundane world, and an aspiration for a path to a better world. 2) Transcendence requires going beyond reason and orthodox religion. Wine offers a veiled initiation: justification for belief that a path exists, and a taste of its methods. 3) The doctrine of love, lover, and beloved – in all its forms and phases, including the pangs of separation and longing for union. The mundane and the sacred beloved mirror & magnify each other. 4) Wisdom. 5) Going beyond the illusion of separateness, its pain of isolation, considering self as the skin-encapsulated ego. Opening the eye of the heart. Becoming a vessel for a more expansive realm of energies to flow through and realize themselves in one's own life.

The book's not only a reading device, but also "a spiritual instrument" – thanks to a double collaboration. San Franciscan poet Gary Gach and Erfan Mojib, an award-winning translator in Iran, shared a GoogleDoc and GoogleMeet. The manuscript was then alchemized into print by a brilliant typographer who's also a poet-painter-dancer, together they erased the entrenched separation of right-hand / left-hand pages, into something else.



Talking Points

I The Sufi Connection

A What Is Sufism?

Islam is the second largest and fastest growing religion in the world; Sufism is "the other Islam." "Sufism is believed to be both a historical reality that appeared in the Muslim world after the advent of Islam as well as a "reality without a name," a trans-historical phenomenon that has been present from the time that the first human experienced a sense of separateness from and attraction to ultimate reality." – Alan Godlas

B Sufism in Persian Poetry

Much of what the West knows about Sufism is initially through poetry – Rumi, Attar, Sa'di, and Hafez, for example. This influence can be seen as early as the 12th century, in minstrels and jongleurs, courtly trouvères and troubadours, and Dante – later in Goethe & Emerson.

A leading trait is the dialogue of the sacred and the secular, particularly through love poems, where the mortal and the divine Beloved are interfused, mirroring and magnifying each other; Western examples are *The Song of Songs* and the "Bride of Christ."

2 The Role of the Translator

Voltaire claimed, "It is impossible to translate poetry. Can you translate music?"

A "Untranslatability" is Hafez' middle name.

As with other titans of world literature – Akhmatova, Bashi, Blake, Cervantes, Dante, Du Fu, Emily Dickinson, Goethe, Homer, *et al* – he's rooted in his cultural soil. Thus, we present a vivid portrait of his life and times, plus an unparalleled, extensive glossary.

B Translation finds a mean between saying what the original *says* and saying what the original *means*. (It's not like tracing paper.) There's also a mean be-

tween “foreignization” and bringing new vistas to the target language.

- C There’s also the danger of Orientalism – such as cultural appropriation and cultural erasure. Question: is it irony to draw upon a sales base of bestselling books of Hafez for which no Persian original texts exist?
- C As a spiritual instrument, our book’s precedent is an 1897 book by Stephane Mallarmé, liberating text across its pages.

3 MAXIMALISM: THE 360° POV

A What Is Maximalism?

Think of *Everything Everywhere All At Once*

B How Is Hafez Maximalist?

Rumi is a deep-sea diver in the ocean of wisdom. Hafez is a brilliant multi-faceted jewel.

This also enables his use in divination.

C Why Is Maximalism Important?

Maximalism offers the Big Picture, so we might live fully in today’s fragmented culture. .

4 Hafez as Oracle

In Iran he’s known as the Tongue of the Hidden because of his popular treatment as an oracle, as the book details. Gary can also share his own startling encounter.

5 Hafez & Iran, & the World, Today

Over the past 25 years, a cultural renaissance has been occurring in Iran. Yet the West has been relatively cut off from it, due to the revolution of 1978 and US sanctions. The Diasporic community mirrors and magnifies that renaissance .

When we say Hafez is the acme of Persian poetry, we note that poetry is the zenith of Iranian culture. What philosophy is to ancient Greece, poetry is to Iran, then and now.

With the tragic death of 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini, September 17, 2022, Iran has seen one of the largest women-led social movements in history, Woman Life Freedom, with intersectional relevance to global society. Hafez’ life and work speaks to many of its urgent issues and themes: loyalty to the soul of the world ... hypocrisy on high ... pushing boundaries, in the name of freedom ... trust, resilience, and hope ... the eternal feminine ... and hair, for which, strange as it may sound,

women have been beaten and killed. And yet Iran is to chair the UN Human Rights Council 2023 Social Forum; what would Hafez say?



GARY GACH has appeared on over a dozen TV programs, including Connie Martinson Talks Books (2M viewers; rebroadcast as an audience favorite). As a guest on +30 radio shows, he’s been heard on ABC, PBS, Pacifica, and Westwood One networks, plus numerous independent programs. Of +30 podcast interviews, the most recent is [Classical Ideas](https://www.classicalideas.com/podcast/gary-gach), [tinyurl.com/4rer3bz] NewBooksNetwork. Recently, he furnished a dozen poetry segments for The Bob Thurman Podcast.

His first book, *Preparing the Ground— Poems 1960–1970*, was published by a small, multicultural publisher. Following this, and a conversation with mentor George Oppen, he decided to set his own poetry aside and listen – as previously marginalized voices were becoming heard in society. His anthology *What Book!?! – Buddha Poems from Beat to Hip-hop*, was honored with an American Book Award from Before Columbus Foundation. With Brother Anthony of Taizé and Young-moo Kim, he translated three books of poetry from Korean by Ko Un. His translations have been published in a dozen anthologies and +150 periodicals, including *Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here*, *Asymptote*, *Book of Luminous Things*, *City Lights Review*, *Evergreen Review*, *Language for a New Century*, *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, *Poems for the Millennium*, *Technicians of the Sacred*, *Two Lines*, *World Literature Today*, and *Zyzzyva*.
Author page : GaryGach.com

CONTACT:

Eryn Carter Eaton, Marketing Manager
Hampton Roads Publishing
Ecarter@RWWbooks.com
978-225-2930

GGach@USFca.edu
415-771-7793

