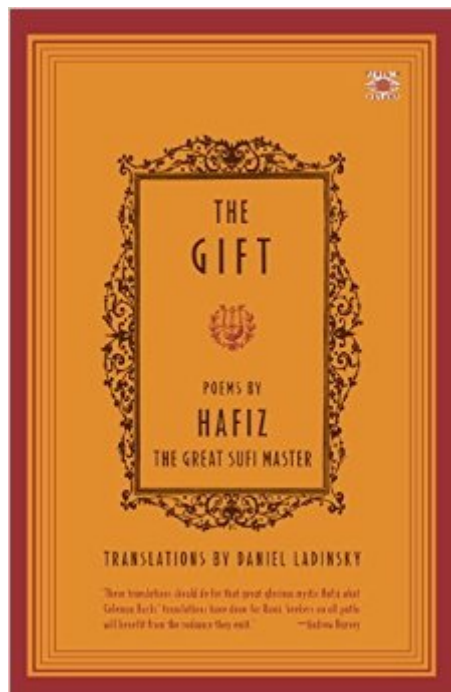


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The Gift



Synopsis

Chosen by author Elizabeth Gilbert as one of her ten favorite books, Daniel Ladinsky's extraordinary renderings of 250 unforgettable lyrical poems by Hafiz, one of the greatest Sufi poets of all time. More than any other Persian poet—even Rumi—Hafiz expanded the mystical, healing dimensions of poetry. Because his poems were often ecstatic love songs from God to his beloved world, many have called Hafiz the "Invisible Tongue." Indeed, Daniel Ladinsky has said that his work with Hafiz is an attempt to do the impossible: to render Light into words—to make the Luminous Resonance of God tangible to our finite senses. I am a hole in a flute that the Christ's breath moves through—listen to this music! With this stunning collection of Hafiz's most intimate poems, Ladinsky has succeeded brilliantly in presenting the essence of one of Islam's greatest poetic and religious voices. Each line of *The Gift* imparts the wonderful qualities of this master Sufi poet and spiritual teacher: encouragement, an audacious love that touches lives, profound knowledge, generosity, and a sweet, playful genius unparalleled in world literature.

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Customer Reviews

Hafiz, a secret Sufi, came to prominence in his day as a writer of love poems. That love transformed into an all-consuming passion for union with the divine. In *The Gift*, Daniel Ladinsky bestows on us the impassioned yet whimsical strains of Hafiz's ecstasy. Never forced or awkward, Ladinsky's Hafiz whispers in your ear and pounds in your chest, naming God in a hundred metaphors. I once asked a bird, "How is it that you fly in this gravity Of darkness?" She responded, "Love lifts Me." Like

Fitzgerald's version of Khayyam's Rubaiyat, the language of *The Gift* strikes a contemporary chord, resonating in the reader's mind and then in the heart. Ladinsky's language is plain, fresh, playful--dancing with an expert cadence that invites and surprises. If it is true, as Hafiz says, that a poet is someone who can pour light into a cup, reading Ladinsky's Hafiz is like gulping down the sun. --Brian Bruya

Less well known in the U.S. than his Sufi predecessor, Rumi, Hafiz (Shams-ud-din Muhammad) is also worthy of attention, and Ladinsky's free translations should help see that he gets it. Hafiz is so beloved in Iran that he outsells the Koran. Many know his verses by heart and recite them with gusto. And gusto is appropriate to this passionate, earthy poet who melds mind, spirit, and body in each of his usually brief pensees. Ladinsky has deliberately chosen a loose and colloquial tone for this collection, which might grate on the nerves of purists but makes Hafiz come vividly alive for the average reader. "You carry / All the ingredients / To turn your life into a nightmare--/ Don't mix them!" he advises, and "Bottom line: / Do not stop playing / These beautiful / Love / Games." Nothing is too human for Hafiz to celebrate, for in humanity he finds the prospect of God. In everything from housework to lovemaking, he celebrates the spiritual possibilities of life. A fine and stirring new presentation of one of the world's great poets. Patricia Monaghan

There isn't a better gift in the world for morning reading - to help you get ready for a happy day full of surprises. It is hard to hold on to negative expectations when Hafiz is around. Daniel Ladinsky takes a leap as only a master of altered consciousness can and each poem is an experience of weightlessness. Give this book to someone trapped by the suffering of poverty, worry, or grief. Stand back and wait for it... 3... 2... 1... and then the dawn.

Hafiz is the sort of genius you go back to repeatedly for guidance, for counsel, to regain your bearing. Beautiful lines of poetry convey incredible wisdom and peace. I found him about a year ago and he was and is a long lost friend.

Poetry is something I seldom read, but the range of philosophical and religious reflection in Hafiz' writing is amazing, delightful, and life-affirming. Not every poem is equally rewarding, but how could they be? The translations make these ancient short poems speak to the present day, but sometimes too much so--using terms that have only come into our language in the 20th or 21st centuries at times borders on "cutsie", which distracts from the true meaning. When Ladinsky sticks to standard

and time-tested language and grammar, his translations have much deeper impact, for me anyway. I have not read other translations of Hafiz, but I imagine previous ones are full of "thee's" and "thou's", and less erudite perspectives. I highly recommend this book--for me it has more understanding and depth concerning daily living than Rumi, for instance. Just beware that there are some shockingly off-the-mark, if sincere, attempts to make this ancient poetry relevant to us now. Ladinsky apparently spent years working on this book, so my hat is off to his scholarship.

Amazing poetry. Almost every piece has an "ahah!" in it, a surprise or a shock of recognition. I love Hafiz - although he lived many centuries ago, his poetry is so pertinent, and so beautiful, and this translation makes it very contemporary.

Love this book. I pick random poems each night and they are exactly what I am needing to hear

As much as I want to, I cannot get into the ongoing debate over whether Daniel Ladinsky is a "translator" or a "renderer" of Hafiz's works. For one thing I don't know enough Farsi to read the originals, and for another thing, translation is deucedly difficult even at the best of times. Just look at how many versions there are of that most ubiquitous of books, the Bible. Having said that, Ladinsky never claims to do anything but make a "free translation" of Hafiz. I am unfamiliar (again) with the metre and rhythms of traditional Persian poetry, and so I cannot even hazard a guess as to whether this collection is accurate in language or in substance. At best, I'd guess this is an introduction to Hafiz for English speakers --- Hafiz light --- and the poems have a lightness and an affectionate quality that keeps me revisiting them. There is depth here, too --- one can see the influence of Rumi --- and so, whether this is translation, rendering, or invention, it serves a purpose, and that is to make Western readers familiar with Hafiz. To that extent, "The Gift" is well-bestowed.

I loved his poem, "The Still Cup." I bought this book to have it, and read it in context with his other works. I am in dire need of appreciating Persian poets and Persian wisdom, and becoming humble in the face of his bright light. Hafiz is a remarkable poet, and someone who knows the life of the spirit quite well. He has much to teach us, me very much included. It is wonderful to see such kind, compassionate, funny, and uplifting and contemporary teaching from someone born in Persia in about 1325. And connection with the Spirit of God brings that brightness, is the lesson for me.

This is a classic. I consider it one of the greatest works of poetry ever written, and have reread it

many times. I have owned it before, and given it away to admirers three times, so this is my fourth copy and i expect to give it away sometime soon.

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