

## Sahar Muradi

Afghanistan: poet, educator

Object: Divan-e-Hafiz, Hafiz's collection of poetry and prognostication

زارىش ظفاح ا  
مهديم مهسوق تتابن خاش هب ارت  
...لاوس نى مراب ميارب يىوگب تسار رگا  
(Farsi)

*[Oh, Hafiz from Shiraz / I promise you to your branch of sugarcane [your sweetheart] / If you tell me the truth about this question...] -Invocation recited before a reading of Hafiz:*

I became a poet because I grew up with the tradition of turning to poetry to settle my heart. In my family, as with many other Afghan and Iranian families, if we had a decision to make and needed guidance, we would turn to the great 14th-century Persian poet Hafiz. With his Divan, or collected works, in hand, we'd recite the invocation above, silently pose our burning question, and then open the book at random. We'd read the poem and interpret it line by line until we had our answer. And Hafiz always answered.

I learned this tradition from my mother, who grew up consulting Hafiz for everything. She turned to him on whether she'd pass exams at school, on which subject to study at college, and even whether to marry my father. But her most agonizing question came in 1982, just three years after Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan and one year after my father, like many others, was forced to flee the country. My mother was left with three children and anxious how she would



make the dangerous journey out of her homeland. She turned to Hafiz, and, like always, he answered. And when I was three years old, my mother, my two siblings, and I made our way from Afghanistan to Pakistan to Sri Lanka, and, eventually, to the U.S., where we reunited with my father. In the States, we'd also reunite with Hafiz. This small, worn, leather-bound copy of his Divan was a gift to our family from my father's father. My grandfather gave us the book again when we arrived in New York, and we have continued the family tradition of consulting our poet-seer ever since. As new immigrants, our hearts—and lives—would feel unsettled for some time, and Hafiz knew we would need all manners of guidance.

### Bio:

Sahar Muradi is a writer, performer, and educator born in Afghanistan and raised in the US. She is the author of the poetry chapbook [ G A T E S ] and co-editor of *One Story, Thirty Stories: An Anthology of Contemporary Afghan American Literature*. Sahar has been the recipient of the Stacy Doris Memorial Poetry Award, a Kundiman Poetry Fellowship, and an Asian American Writers' Workshop Open City Fellowship. She has an MFA in poetry from Brooklyn College, an MPA in international development from NYU, and a BA in writing from Hampshire College. Sahar works at City Lore, where she is Director of Poetry Programs and Associate Director of Education Programs. For more info: [saharmuradi.com](http://saharmuradi.com)