

STICKING PLACE BOOKS
KIAROSTAMI



Remove everything unnecessary. Resist the onslaught of secondary ideas that come with your primary one. Don't adulterate. The most effective way of refining your work is to keep it short and simple. "I didn't really do anything," explained Michelangelo when asked how he created David. "The statue already existed in the block of stone. All I did was remove everything unnecessary." Rumi advises us not to talk too much, to use the fewest words possible. Consider this idea when telling your stories, when making films, when selecting images, when living life. AK



LESSONS WITH Kiarostami

Edited by Paul Cronin • Foreword by Mike Leigh

Here he is, one of the greatest of us all, the originator and master of the minimalist epic, the visionary who has raised the cinema of humanity to an unprecedented level of purity, the reluctant teacher who modestly confronts you with truths so profound that they will blind you with their luminous clairvoyance, the outrageous provocateur with an exhilarating capacity to make statements about his ideas and methods at which you will be so shocked that you will likely howl out loud, albeit joyfully.

Mike Leigh

Over the past two decades, Abbas Kiarostami – the Iranian film director of **Where is the Friend's House?**, **Life and Nothing More**, **Through the Olive Trees**, **Close-Up**, **A Taste of Cherry**, **The Wind Will Carry Us**, **Ten**, **Shirin**, **Certified Copy** and **Like Someone in Love** – has appeared regularly at festivals and on campuses, where he has worked closely for several days with young filmmakers, shepherding them and their projects, sending them out with cameras, then screening and discussing the results. Pieced together from notes made over a period of nearly ten years at several of these workshops, **Lessons with Kiarostami** is a distillation of Kiarostami's filmmaking techniques and working methods, and most importantly a series of practical guideposts for aspiring filmmakers.

When I talk about poetic cinema, I am thinking about the kind of cinema that possesses the qualities of poetry, that encompasses the vast potential of poetry. It has the capabilities of a prism. It has a complexity to it. It has a lasting quality. It's like an unfinished puzzle that invites us to decipher the message and put the pieces together in whatever arrangement we want.

Abbas Kiarostami

LESSONS WITH KIAROSTAMI

Edited by Paul Cronin
Foreword by Mike Leigh



English 190 pages
2015 paperback • hardback

I was once asked if the basis of Iranian art is poetry. I said that the basis of all art is poetry. Art is about revelation, about new information being rendered. True poetry, similarly, elevates us to the sublime. It overturns and helps us escape our habitual, familiar and mechanical routines, which is the first step towards discovery and breakthrough. It exposes a world otherwise concealed from the human eye. It goes beyond reality, deep into the realm of truth. It enables us to fly a thousand feet up and look down upon the world. Anything else is not poetry. With no art, with no poetry, comes impoverishment.

The novels I own are in near-perfect condition because I read them once then put them aside, but the poetry books on my shelves are falling apart at the seams. I return to them continually. Poetry isn't easy to grasp because instead of being told a story, we are presented with a series of abstractions. The essence of poetry is a level of incomprehension. A poem, by its very nature, is unfinished and unfixed. It invites us to complete it, to fill in the blanks, to join the dots. Crack the code and the mysteries reveal themselves. True poetry will always outlive mere storytelling.

Abbas Kiarostami



From the injustice of our time,
take refuge in poetry.

From the harshness of the beloved,
take refuge in poetry.

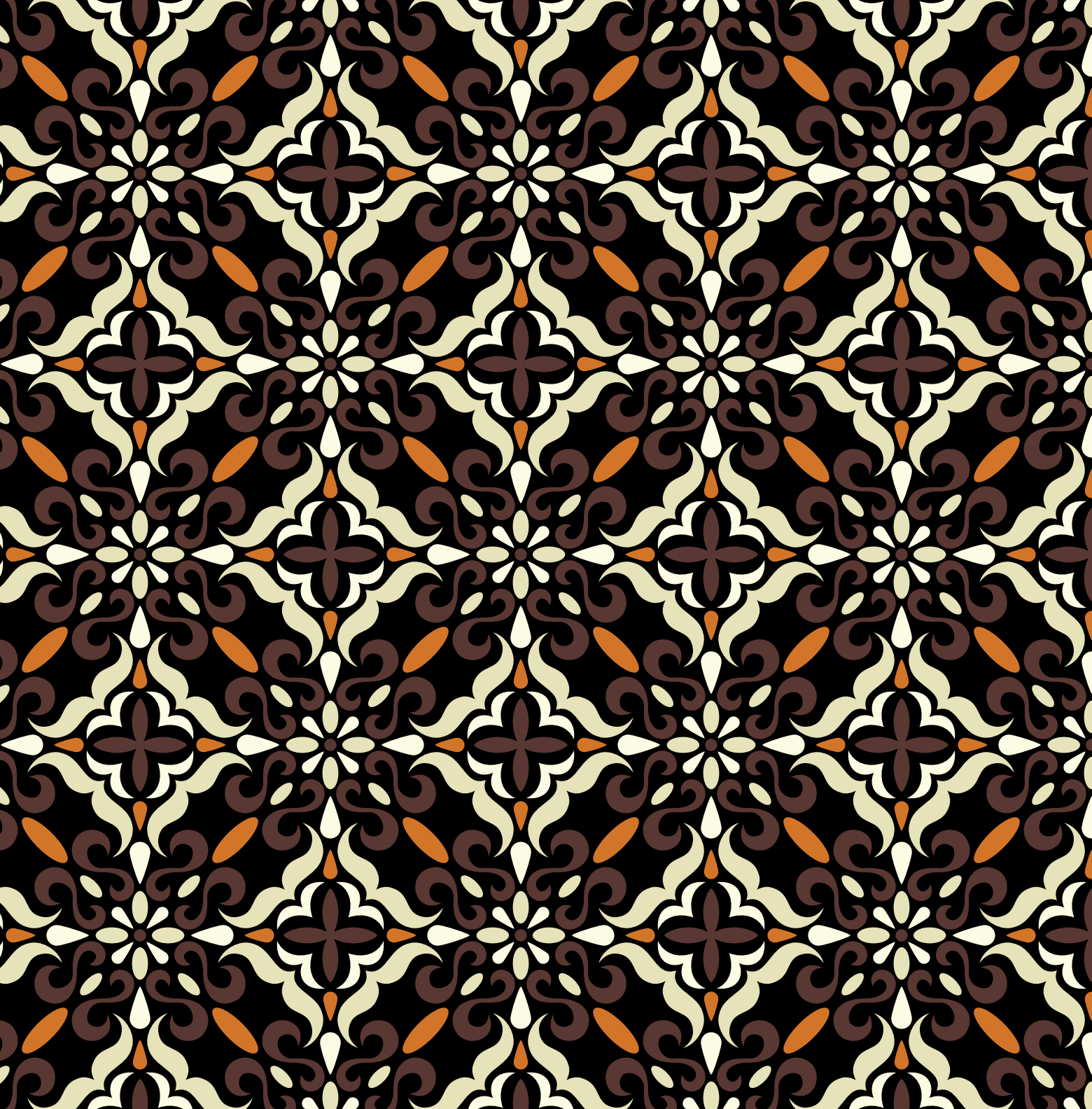
From glaring cruelty,
take refuge in poetry.

ازستم روزگار
پناه بر شعر

ازجوریار
پناه بر شعر

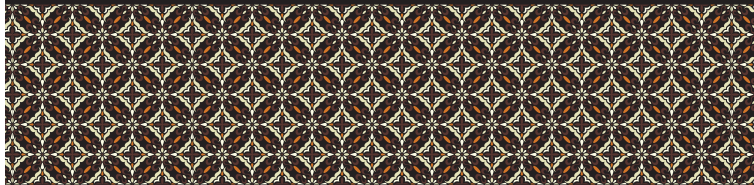
ازظلم آشکار
پناه بر شعر.





A WOLF ON WATCH

POEMS BY
ABBAS KIAROSTAMI

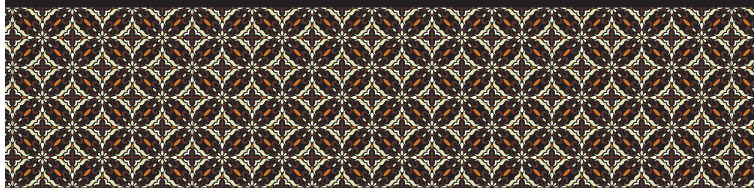


A TRANSLATION BY
IMAN TAVASSOLY AND PAUL CRONIN

English / Farsi (dual) : 314 pages
2015 : paperback • hardback

WITH THE WIND

POEMS BY
ABBAS KIAROSTAMI

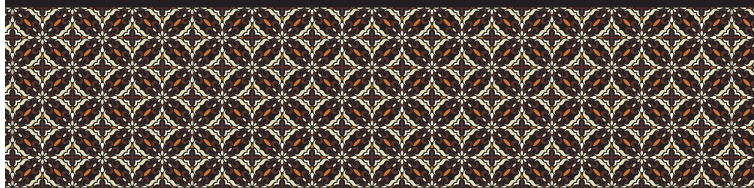


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WIND AND LEAF

POEMS BY
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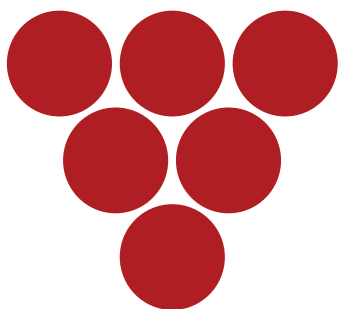
English / Farsi (dual) : 382 pages
2015 : paperback • hardback



Poetry is important.
The poetic life is one of the richest to be had.
He who walks this path is never aimlessly searching.

شعر را
رقت بسی بالاست
زندگی شاعرانه با نواتر زندگانی های
این دنیا است
آن که در این راه می پوید
خیره چیزی را نمی جوید

Nima



Between 2006 and 2011, Iranian film director Abbas Kiarostami – author of three books of original verse – released his selections from and adaptations of four masters of Persian poetry: Nima (1895–1960), Hafez, Saadi and Rumi (all from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries). This material is presented to English-speaking readers for the first time, in eight volumes: Hafez’s *Wine*, Saadi’s *Tears*, Nima’s *Water* and Rumi’s *Fire*. In 2015, Kiarostami published two further books, the thematic anthology *Night*, his selections from a variety of classical and contemporary poets, the English translation of which is issued in four volumes.

Kiarostami’s project has been a contentious one, and in plucking fragments of poetry from longer works – an endeavour no less personal than the composition of original verse – he incurred the ire of critics in Iran. Some, whose lifelong pursuit has been the examination of the poets whose work Kiarostami presents in his volumes, regard him as something of a dilettante, an interloper who lacks the skills required to handle such precious material. In Iran, after all, poetry is treated with absolute seriousness, its authors regarded as the unveilers of vital secrets, endowed with powerful sensibilities, in effect keepers and revealers of the Persian soul. Certain books of verse are even treated as if they were holy texts, and it would not be unfair to suggest that the work of a handful of pivotal poets has profoundly influenced both the Persian language and, in turn, the daily lives of millions in modern Iran. With no professional training in Persian literature, Kiarostami, his critics claim, is unprepared for the task at hand, and some refuse to consider his work as legitimate poetry.

Still, along with criticism came praise. In publishing his straightforward selections for the general reader, it was noted that Kiarostami – whose work in any discipline attracts global attention – has opened up the world of Persian poetry to those largely unaware of this wondrous and vast body of work, especially readers beyond the borders of his homeland. “Some people, sitting at a dining table covered in fabulous food, don’t know which dish to start with,” says the meditative Kiarostami. These books are his way of navigating readers through that particular feast. Absorb and begin to understand these adaptations – “trailers,” Kiarostami calls them – and we are, he believes, better equipped to tackle the originals in their fuller forms. There are many costly, ornate and ostentatious editions of poetry in Iran. But, says Kiarostami, such illuminated books exist “to be given as gifts, and rarely do they actually encourage reading.” The opposite could be said of Kiarostami’s versions: relatively inexpensive and unembellished, containing nothing but text. His self-professed and modest aim is to make an unequivocal and intimate connection between poem and reader, author and explorer.

So what precisely has Kiarostami done with the original texts? For his two *Night* volumes, he located lines of verse from an assortment of poets – venerable and present-day – each somehow relating to a single subject matter, and brought them together. (“It’s worth noting,” says Kiarostami, “that few of the poets write about what night actually is. Instead, the darkness and approaching dawn are used as reflections of feelings and inner conditions.”) With all others, he has trimmed down poems by individual authors, pulled lines out of context and framed them

piece by piece, at the same time retaining and thereby emphasising what he considers to be key concepts, characters and landscapes. Kiarostami has suggested that the unexpurgated originals are like crude oil, straight from the ground, in need of processing and refinement. By making his selections, deconstructing and breaking the metre of the original verse, cracking it open and removing the rhythm, Kiarostami has allowed specific ideas and themes to flow out in epigrammatic form. His reductionist method might be best understood by comparing a feature film, with its sweeping lines of narrative and interlocking characters, to a series of still photographs, each of which presents a single scene within a carefully constructed frame. It is as if Kiarostami has stood before a vast image, studied it carefully, isolated the elements he wants to accentuate, then affixed a frame over just one small part, so bringing to light something previously indistinct, almost unnoticeable, hitherto concealed.

Kiarostami's own poems are, more than anything, closest to Japanese Haiku, which is for the most part the form he has imposed upon his selections from the great masters. But in furnishing us with a mere three or four lines, Kiarostami – a practitioner of free verse, in both his adapted and original poetry – has striven to convey the essence, the fundamental meaning, of entire pages in the original. The result is a summary: poetry of minimalism. There is a startling compactness and simplicity to these books, with nothing extraneous, even if each page contains a discrete message and definite wisdom.

Kiarostami's process of creative condensation is uncomplicated and, to a large extent, intuitive. "In Paris one day I saw a book through a shop

window," he explains. "On the cover was an enlargement of the corner of a Cezanne painting. It showed only an apple. The designer of the book cover hadn't negated the rest of the painting so much as magnified a piece of it, and by doing so asked the reader to explore this one piece of fruit. A poem is like wine, which should be enjoyed line by line, drop by drop. If you want to express love or hatred, or have been asked a question by someone, these books provide you with a great many potential responses. Younger readers will presumably appreciate their brevity, that they could be sent as graceful text messages. What's important is what the poet writes about. This is my priority, rather than how he tells it. I think more about effect than form. My duty is to transfer ideas to the audience. If this is best done in short bursts, if we are living in an age of concision, then so be it. It's important for me always to be experimenting, to re-think the kind of storytelling I involve myself with." Kiarostami explains little, instead pointing at what we should be looking at, proposing that we decipher things for ourselves. Almost every poem, however short, has more than one level of meaning and is therefore open to interpretation, although Kiarostami has suggested that the first message the reader arrives at is likely the one the poet, and Kiarostami himself, intended.

This is a body of work which for Kiarostami, who for decades had no intention of publishing his selections, has been a long time coming. "When I took Rumi's book in hand," he explains, "I realised that I had already done much of the required work because for twenty years I have been obsessively highlighting and isolating certain poems." At a Tehran event marking the publication of his

Rumi volumes, Kiarostami offered a forthright explanation for his poetry project. “I hope you forgive my foolish courage. My aim with these books was never to integrate myself into the world of literature. This endeavour I have undertaken – these adaptations, many of which are lesser-known verses – is not me meddling in your own work. I was consumed by literature and poetry long before I became a filmmaker.” Whether or not the following are poems or aphorisms in disguise, this book – and every one of his published volumes of verse – represent deeply felt enthusiasms. As such, consider them an essential component of Kiarostami’s oeuvre, one that includes films, photographs and installations. Put any number of his poems alongside, for example, *The Wind Will Carry Us*, or his still images of snowy landscapes, or “Forest Without Leaves,” his three-dimensional art project consisting of hollow tubes, standing floor to ceiling, covered by life-size photographs of bark, and they take on an ever greater significance. The associations between all four forms of expression, the similarities in visual motifs and concepts, the common elements, the unity between settings, characters and themes all become quickly apparent. Whether using a camera, paintbrush, pen or (at home, quietly away from public view) wood chisel, Kiarostami’s innermost preoccupations reveal themselves. Whichever vehicle he uses, again and again the same images and ideas are transported into the mind of the audience.

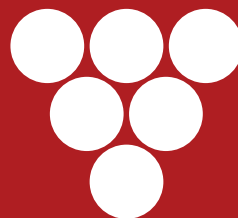
Chapter divisions in Kiarostami’s Hafez book are his own, based on the subjects of the poems. Classical Persian poetry is traditionally arranged in reference to the final letter of each line. Kiarostami’s original Saadi book is

presented, chapter by chapter, in this way, but our translation is not (we have discarded all chapter divisions, while keeping the poems in exactly the same order). Kiarostami himself dropped from his Rumi book the traditional arrangement based on each line’s final letter. In all of Kiarostami’s adaptations, his alignment of poetry on the page is very much his own (including the layout, with one poem per page). While Hafez writes in the symmetrical ghazal form, Kiarostami breaks down this structure based on his own preferences. Likewise, where Kiarostami might use three lines, we use only two. The original Persian editions of these poems contain a number of errors, so in bringing these editions to press we aim to present the most accurate versions of Kiarostami’s adapted poetry available. There is occasional overlap between Kiarostami’s single-author books and *Night*, with a small number of poems appearing in both.

As neither poets nor professional translators, we offer these fairly literal translations – something of a massive addendum to *Lessons with Kiarostami*, a book detailing Kiarostami’s recognisably poetic approach to filmmaking, published simultaneously – at the very least so they may unveil some of the mainsprings of his work as a storyteller and creator of images, thereby offering insight into his work as a filmmaker.

Iman Tavassoly and Paul Cronin

Hafez / Kiarostami
translated by Tavassoly / Cronin



English / Farsi (dual) : 728 Pages
2015 : paperback • hardback



English / Farsi (dual) 1238 pages in two volumes
2015 paperback • hardback

Nima / Kiarostami
translated by Tavassoly / Cronin



English / Farsi (dual) 284 pages
2015 paperback • hardback

Rumi / Kiarostami
translated by Tavassoly / Cronin



English / Farsi (dual) : 2206 pages in four volumes
2016 : paperback • hardback

**Poetry from the
Classical Persian Canon**
selected and adapted by Kiarostami
translated by Tavassoly / Cronin



English / Farsi (dual) 662 pages in two volumes
2016 paperback • hardback

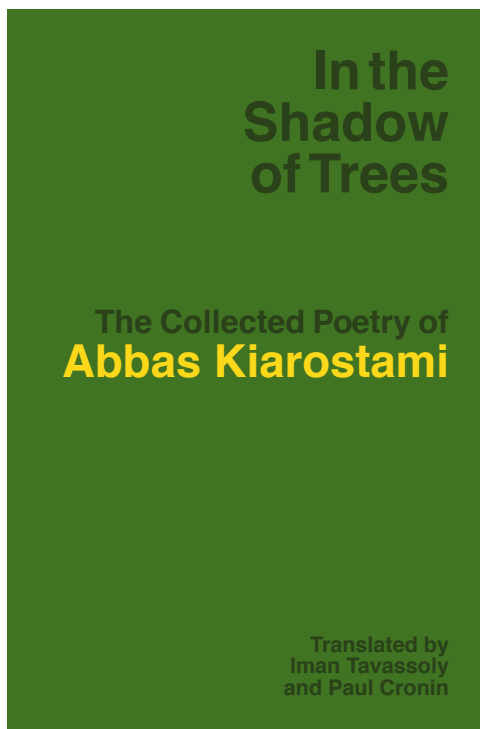
**Poetry from the
Contemporary Persian Canon**
selected and adapted by Kiarostami
translated by Tavassoly / Cronin



English / Farsi (dual) : 746 pages in two volumes
2016 : paperback • hardback

My mind is like a laboratory or refinery, with ideas as crude oil. It's as if there were a filter channelling the assorted suggestions in different directions. An image comes to mind and ends up imposing itself so obsessively that I find no rest until something is done with it, until it is somehow incorporated into a project. This is where poetry proves itself to be so convenient and useful for me. Some of the images in my head are simple, like someone drinking wine from a disposable cup, a box of wet matches in an abandoned house, a broken stool sitting in my back yard. But others are more complex, like a white foal emerging and then disappearing into the fog, a graveyard covered in snow that is melting on only three headstones, a hundred soldiers going into their barracks on a moonlit night, a grasshopper jumping and sitting, flies circling a mule as it walks from one village to the next, an autumn wind blowing leaves into my house, a child with blackened hands sitting surrounded by hundreds of fresh walnuts. How much time would it take to commit those images to film? How difficult would it be to find a subject for a film into which those images could be incorporated? This is why writing poetry is so rewarding. When I work on a poem, my desire to create an image is satisfied in only four lines. Taken together, the words become the image. My poems are like films that don't cost anything to produce. It's as if I have found a way of producing something of worth every single day. I used to take a couple of years between films, but these days rarely an hour goes by when I feel I'm not doing something useful.

Abbas Kiarostami



English 670 pages • 5 x 8 in.
2016 paperback • hardback



English 666 pages • 4.37 x 7 in.
2020 mass market paperback

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عباس کیارستمی

1940 – 2016

Those with hearts awakened by love never die.
Our existence is recorded in the book of life.

Hafez

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ثبت است بر جریده عالم دوام ما



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Design by Ryan Bojanovic
Photography by Presley Parks