Featured Poet: Dick Davis

Dick Davis is Emeritus Professor of Persian at Ohio State University. He has written scholarly works on both English and Persian literature, as well as eight volumes of his own poetry; his publications include volumes of poetry and verse translation chosen as books of the year by *The Sunday Times* (UK) 1989; *The Daily Telegraph* (UK) 1989; *The Economist* (UK) 2002; *The Washington Post* 2010, and *The Times Literary Supplement* (UK) 2013. He has published numerous book-length verse translations from medieval Persian, most recently, *Faces of Love: Hafez and the Poets of Shiraz* (2012). He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

Davis will lead a critical seminar on *Verses and Voices: Poetic Translation*

Description: The seminar will consist of four 90 minute sessions, spread over four days; this will be restricted to invited participants, but to conclude there will also be a general session with an audience made up of anyone attending the conference who wishes to come. For the seminar itself, each of the participants will give a talk on some aspect of verse translation, or make a comparison of verse translations by different poets of a single work or of a single poet’s oeuvre, or offer a road-map as to how he or she has gone about his or her own verse translations – generally or with regard to a specific work. Each of the talks will be followed by a discussion of the topics raised. For the open session each of us will read a translation or two of our own, with however much commentary seems appropriate, and again we hope that this leads comments, questions or a wider discussion.

Below is one of Davis’ poems:

**Translating Hafez, or Trying To.**

How long you’ve teased me with your tropes, Hafez,
And led me on, and dashed my hopes, Hafez,

And left me like a foolish fog-bound man
Who pats and peers and grasps and gropes, Hafez,

And thinks he’s getting somewhere till he takes
A tumble down delusion’s slopes, Hafez,
And nursing angry broken bones declares,
“God damn the guide, god damn the ropes, Hafez”.

Your imperturbability is like
A really irritating pope’s, Hafez -

All wealth that’s poverty, and wine that’s not,
And metaphoric cloaks and copes, Hafez!

But there, no matter how much Dick complains
Or goes off in a sulk, or mopes, Hafez,

Tomorrow finds him shaking (just once more)
Your glittering kaleidoscopes, Hafez.

Dick Davis