

NADIA ANJUMAN

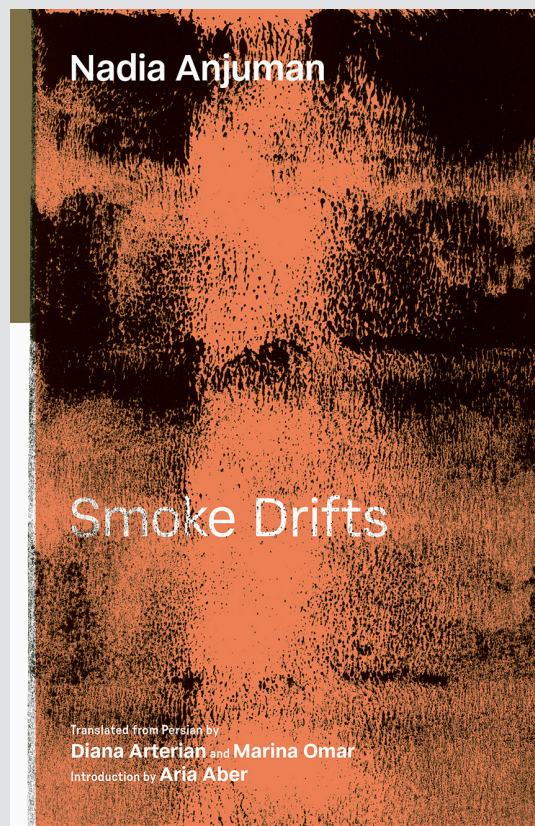
SMOKE DRIFTS

Translated from Persian by

DIANA ARTERIAN & MARINA OMAR

Introduction by

ARIA ABER



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Born in Herat, Afghanistan, **Nadia Anjuman** (1980-2005) surreptitiously gathered with women in the Golden Needle School to discuss literature under the guise of practicing needlepoint—one of the few Taliban-approved pastimes for women. After Afghanistan's liberation from the Taliban, Anjuman attended Herat University. She penned two volumes of poetry: *Flower of Smoke* and *A Basket of Doubt*. *Flower of Smoke* has been reprinted three times and sold over three thousand copies.

Diana Arterian holds a PhD in Literature & Creative Writing from the University of Southern California and is the author of the poetry collections *Agrippina the Younger* (Northwestern University Press) and *Playing Monster :: Seiche* (1913 Press).

Marina Omar moved to the US from Afghanistan in 2001 and received her PhD from the University of Virginia in Political Science in 2016. Her publications include an article on the Afghan constitution in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*.

Afghan poet Nadia Anjuman (1980-2005) drew on the lineage of Persian and Sufi writing and her life under Taliban rule, attending to love, oppression, myth, and devotion through lyrics that both embrace and resist tradition.

Nadia Anjuman's poetry in Diana Arterian and Marina Omar's masterful translation is a testament to the liberating power of poetry and translation to inspire hope and resilience in the face of adversity and injustice.

FATEMEH SHAMS

Anjuman's biography is so iconic, so tragic, that it tends to distract us from the depth and brilliance of her work. Here is a poet who had mastered Persian's classical and modern poetics, its forms, imagery, tropes, rhythms, and historical resonances. In these ghazals and free verse poems we find the patient stone, the caged bird, the green garden of hope blighted, the desire for a Beloved denied, all reworked in the context of twenty-first century Afghanistan. With passion, irony, and anger she distills that literary heritage, and the beauty and constraints of her life, into poems of ferocious and devastating precision. A voice with power to be reckoned with, and thus silenced in her time.

ELIZABETH T. GRAY, JR.

Nadia Anjuman, an impassioned "daughter to the city of elegy and ghazals," met an unimaginable end that threatened to silence her words before they could "fill the chest of history with gold." Now Diana Arterian and Marina Omar bring those words as a gift for us in English. Her poetry speaks of "bitter stories" that "have made homes of our hearts," women who have "joined the children of iron," and a nation where "no caravan arrived from the land of friendship." Yet even in despair, she never lost hope, imagining a future where the "mind's tree is no longer devastated by autumn" and her "soul will climb to the center of God's light." As her name conveys, Nadia was—no, is—the enduring hope and the songstress of her people.

KAVEH BASSIRI