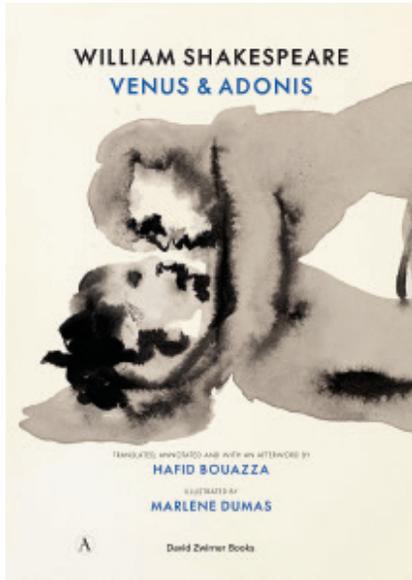


# Venus & Adonis

By William Shakespeare. Translated by Hafid Bouazza. Illustrated by Marlene Dumas



At once comic, tragic, and erotic, *Venus & Adonis* (1593) is a poem by William Shakespeare based on passages from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This new translation by Hafid Bouazza of Shakespeare's text is illustrated by Marlene Dumas, the renowned painter celebrated around the world for her highly charged depictions of the human form.

Through a series of expressive ink washes, Dumas paints new passion into the poem—bodies bleed into one another, lips part in sighs of passion, a flower blooms to life. Desire in all its heady intensity is evocatively washed over the pages. As with Dumas's wider body of work, however, tragedy is not forgotten and is frighteningly played out with equal intensity. The owl, "night's herald," as Shakespeare writes, flies jet black across the sky; a wild boar looms like a shadow over Adonis's suffering, wounded body; black dissolves into gray; and bodies are lost in a sea of ink.

The poem tells the story of Venus, the goddess of love, and her attempts to seduce the hunter Adonis. It is a complex, kaleidoscopic work in which love takes center stage—Venus's lustful yearning for Adonis ripples throughout, each stanza and line tinged with unrequited longing. As Venus declares, "Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry, / Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie." Like Shakespeare before her, Dumas opens up a seemingly unending flow between light and dark, love and death, pleasure and pain.

Dumas's complete suite of thirty-two works on paper is reproduced in this volume, exactly placed by the artist throughout Shakespeare's text. Copublished by Athenaeum and David Zwirner Books as an English/Dutch edition, the book is a striking yet beautiful paradox—a marriage of text and image that is as sensual, fleshy, and carnal as it is unnerving and disturbing.

**William Shakespeare** (1564–1616) was an English poet, playwright, and actor, widely regarded as both the greatest writer in the English language and the world's preeminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon." His extant works, including collaborations, consist of approximately 39 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

**Hafid Bouazza** was born in Oujda, Morocco, in 1970 and moved to the Netherlands in 1977. After his university studies, he debuted as a writer in 1996 with a collection of short stories, *Abdullah's Feet*, which was translated into English, French, Czech, and Italian. In addition to publishing award-winning novels and other fiction, he has written about culture and politics for a variety of newspapers and magazines. He has translated volumes of classical Arabic erotic poetry and prose and, for director Ivo van Hove, Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, **Marlene Dumas's** (b. 1953) work has been prominently featured in solo and group exhibitions around the world. In 2008, a critically acclaimed retrospective, *Marlene Dumas: Measuring Your Own Grave*, was organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in association with The Museum of Modern Art, New York, which also toured to The Menil Collection, Houston, in 2009. In 2014, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam presented *Marlene Dumas: The Image as Burden*, which traveled to Tate Modern, London, and Fondation Beyeler, Basel, in 2015. Opening in September 2018, the artist has curated an exhibition of her work alongside that of Edvard Munch and René Daniëls at the Munch Museum in Oslo.

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