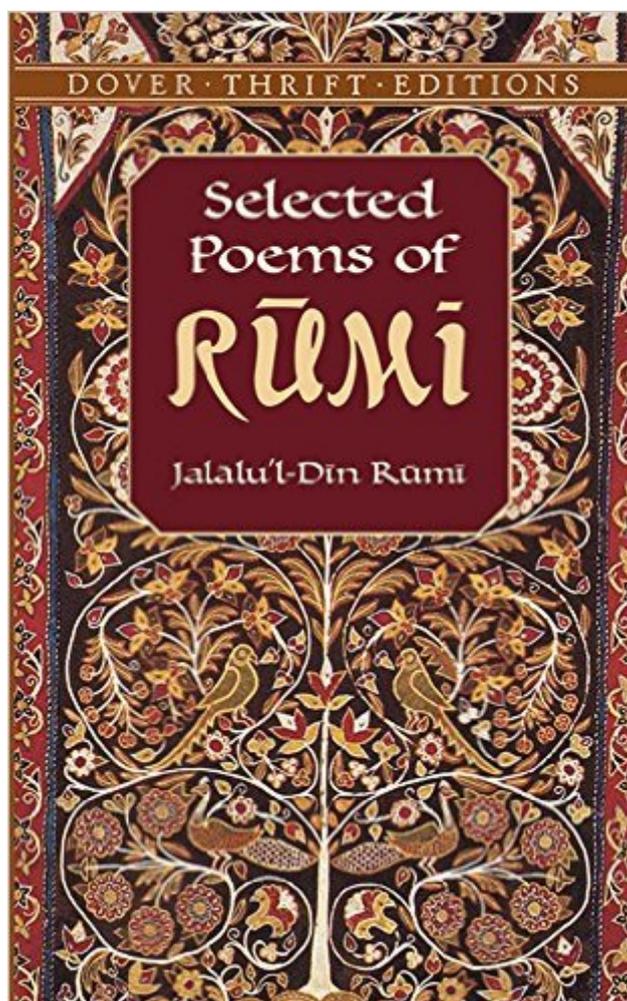


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Selected Poems Of Rumi (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

In recent years the stirring, unforgettable poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207–1273), the great Sufi teacher and the greatest mystical poet of Iran, has gained tremendous popularity in the western world. Although he died over 700 years ago, his poetry is timeless. In the best modern translations, the passion and playfulness of his words reach across the ages to communicate themselves to people today with an undiluted fervor and excitement. Rūmī produced an enormous body of work — as many as 2,500 mystical odes, 25,000 rhyming couplets, and 1,600 quatrains — some of it instructional, some personal and emotional, much of it sublimely beautiful. The present volume includes over 100 of his finest lyrics, including "The Marriage of True Minds," "The Children of Light," "The Man who Looked Back on his way to Hell," "The Ascending Soul," "The Pear-Tree of Illusion," "The Riddles of God," and many more. "In some of these poems," says A. J. Arberry in the Introduction, "the mystic's passion is so exuberant, his imagination so overflowing, that we catch glimpses of the very madness of Divine experience."

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Customer Reviews

For those, like me, who first came to Rumi via the free-form paraphrases of Coleman Barks in the late 1990s, when Rumi came in vogue, this selection of Rumi's poetry by early twentieth century Orientalist par excellence Reynold A. Nicholson is decidedly different. That is not to say bad, but it is different. Nicholson's translations are not un-poetic, but they are fairly literal and quite old-fashioned.

This might scare off the casual reader, but if you really dig into the meat of these poems, and the fine scholarly footnotes attached to each selection, many of the poems are intriguing, instructional, and, of course, quite mystical. Now, the paraphrases of Coleman Barks might be mystical, in their modern way, but these poems tend not only to be mystical but theological, and I hope the reader of this review will understand the difference. Modern mysticism, and this includes Barks, includes twin strains of ecumenicism and a relativistic hedonism, an un-morality. What do I mean? Ecumenicism, a one-source, many wells religious philosophy that seeks to claim all mystics are on a correct path to the Godhead. Although it is clear that Rumi draws from Christianity and Judaism and other sources, he is a strict Mohammedan, and this is made clear in several poems. Rumi's Sufism, his mysticism, might seem a bit un-Muslim, but Rumi makes it clear that it is not; his mysticism is certainly not New Agey. When you consider that Nicholson died in 1945, it is as if he read some modern takes on Rumi when he declares in a footnote: "'Man is born once,' a hard saying for some modern writers who foist upon Rumi the Indian doctrine of rebirth...." Ha. This brings us to the "hedonism" of modern new age mysticism.

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