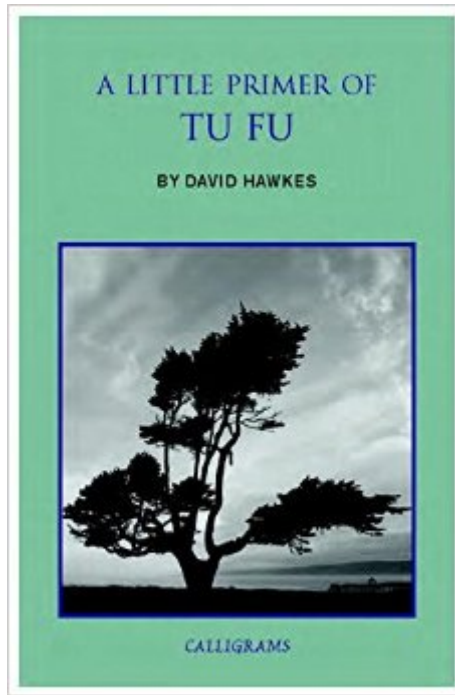


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A Little Primer Of Tu Fu



Synopsis

The deepest and most varied of the Tang Dynasty poets, Tu Fu (Du Fu) is, in the words of David Hinton, the "first complete poetic sensibility in Chinese literature." • Tu Fu merged the public and the private, often in the same poem, as his subjects ranged from the horrors of war to the delights of friendship, from closely observed landscapes to remembered dreams, from the evocation of historical moments to a wry lament over his own thinning hair. • Although Tu Fu has been translated often, and often brilliantly, David Hawkes's classic study, first published in 1967, is the only book that demonstrates in depth how his poems were written. Hawkes presents thirty-five poems in the original Chinese, with a pinyin transliteration, a character-by-character translation, and a commentary on the subject, the form, the historical background, and the individual lines. There is no other book quite like it for any language: a nuts-and-bolts account of how Chinese poems in general, and specifically the poems of one of the world's greatest poets, are constructed. It's an irresistible challenge for readers to invent their own translations.

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Customer Reviews

This book is out of print and almost impossible to find used. A copy recently sold for \$170 on ebay. But it is a testament to its high quality that people are willing to spend that much to own it. Tu Fu (AD 712-770) and his contemporary Li Po are the two great masters of Tang Dynasty poetry. To greatly simplify, Li Po is the Taoist free spirit, while Tu Fu is the Confucian, concerned for the welfare of China, from the peasant on up to the emperor. While Li Po's touching and often whimsical accounts

of wine and song under moonlight are perennial favorites with audiences around the world, Tu Fu is often considered harder to translate, and hence less accessible to those who do not read Chinese. However, poet and critic Kenneth Rexroth expressed the view that Tu Fu was THE greatest non-epic poet that the world has ever produced, in any language. David Hawkes was for many years a professor of Chinese at Oxford. He has also published what is perhaps the definitive translation of the great Chinese novel _Story of the Stone_ (also known as _Dream of the Red Chamber_). In _A Little Primer of Tu Fu_, Hawkes has taken thirty-five of Tu Fu's most highly regarded poems, and provided for each 1. the original Chinese text 2. the pronunciation of the text (in Pinyin romanization with tones) 3. a note on the "Title and Subject" of the poem, including a discussion of the poem's context in Chinese history and Tu Fu's life 4. a discussion of the "Form" of the poem ("regulated verse," "old style" etc.), including meter and rhyme 5. a line-by-line "Exegesis" of the poem, which translates each line word-by-word and comments, typically after each couplet, on the word choice, imagery, etc. 6.

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