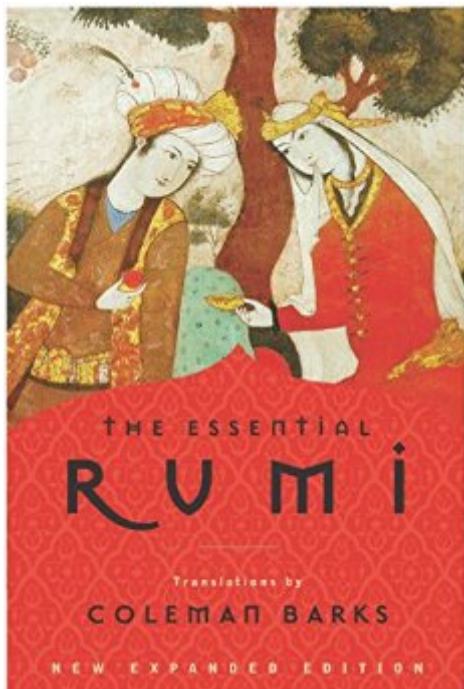


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The Essential Rumi - Reissue: New Expanded Edition



Synopsis

This revised and expanded edition of The Essential Rumi includes a new introduction by Coleman Barks and more than 80 never-before-published poems. Through his lyrical translations, Coleman Barks has been instrumental in bringing this exquisite literature to a remarkably wide range of readers, making the ecstatic, spiritual poetry of thirteenth-century Sufi Mystic Rumi more popular than ever. The Essential Rumi continues to be the bestselling of all Rumi books, and the definitive selection of his beautiful, mystical poetry.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This review was originally written as a response to a one-star Spotlight Review entitled "Look elsewhere for Rumi's essence", which criticized Barks' versions of Rumi as inauthentic because they are not precisely literal; that negative review has since been removed. But what I said then still goes: Don't let the negative reviews drive you away from a great read. This book captures Rumi's essence like no other. And despite what the critics think, Coleman Barks is very well qualified to bring Rumi to a modern English audience. Consider these four points: 1) First, and most important, Barks loves Rumi; he loves Rumi's poetry; he loves that Presence Rumi's poetry celebrates and

explores. In the original criticism, the reviewer implied Sufi poetry employs some kind of mantric magic when he said that "their poems are actually precise and carefully constructed technical instruments designed to have very specific effects on the reader under the right circumstances." Please. Rumi himself makes plain throughout his works that the point of his poetry - and of Sufism - is not technique. The point is love: "Rub your eyes, and look again at love, with love." Rumi would have been the last person in the world to insist on strict adherence to technique, or compulsive literal translation. He was about soul, and transformation, and he said over and over again that the only real magic was love. That's the real essence of Rumi. And maybe Barks has been able to translate Rumi's poetry so effectively because he's coming from the heart and the soul, and not just the head.²⁾ Second, Barks is a well-known American poet in his own right, a retired professor of English at Georgia University. He's studied the life and work of Rumi intensively for over thirty years.

Rumi (as he is known in the West), was known as Jelaluddin Balkhi by the Persians and Afghanis, from where he was born in 1207. Rumi means 'from Roman Anatolia', which is where his family fled to avoid the threat of Mongol armies. Being raised in a theological family, Rumi studied extensively in religion and poetry, until encountering Shams of Tabriz, a wandering mystic, with whom he formed the first of his intense, mystical friendships, so intense that it inspired jealously among Rumi's students and family. Shams eventually disappeared (most likely murdered because of the jealousy); Rumi formed later more mystical friendships, each with a different quality, which seemed essential for Rumi's creative output. Rumi was involved with the mystical tradition that continues to this day of the dervish (whirling dervishes are best known), and used it as a personal practice and as a teaching tool. This book has a deliberate task: 'The design of this book is meant to confuse scholars who would divide Rumi's poetry into the accepted categories.' Barks and Moyne have endeavoured to put together a unified picture that playfully spans the breadth of Rumi's imagination, without resorting to scholarly pigeon-holes and categorisations.' All of which makes the point that these poems are not monumental in the Western sense of memorialising moments; they are not discrete entities but a fluid, continuously self-revising, self-interrupting medium.' Rumi created these poems as part of a constant, growing conversation with a dervish learning community. It flows from esoteric to mundane, from ecstatic to banal, incorporating music and movement at some points, and not at others, with the occasional batch of prose.' Some go first, and others come long afterward.

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