



Possibility of Being: A Selection of Poems

Rainer Maria Rilke

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The eighty-four poems included in this small volume will serve as a sound and inviting introduction to Rilke's strategies in the pursuit of "being." And just as the unicorn in "This Is the Creature" has an eternal "possibility of being" but only becomes visible in the mirror held by a virgin, so can our own possibilities become manifest in the mirror held by the sensitive artist. The poems are chosen from *The Book of Hours* (1899-1903), *The Book of Images* (1902 and 1906), *New Poems* (1907 and 1908), *Requiem* (1909), *Duino Elegies* (1923), *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1923), and the posthumous *Poems 1906-26*. This selection was made by Professor Theodore Ziolkowski of Princeton University, who drew from the various New Directions volumes of Rilke's work translated by J. B. Leishman.

Possibility of Being: A Selection of Poems Details

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From Reader Review Possibility of Being: A Selection of Poems for online ebook

Laura says

Simple, sensual poetic goodness.

Heather Shaw says

Reading Rilke makes me feel like I have a huge boulder strapped to my shoulders. Then, in little flashes of light, it rolls away and you feel lightness anew, like you've never felt it before. Those moments are worth the weight.

SJ Loria says

Let's see the poems I loved back in the day from this book. Lots. Tons of underlining. He's into sex this guy.

Amy says

Love Rilke, did NOT love the selection.

Anna W. says

Read this while on vacation in Seattle, and it was an excellent book of poetry. That being said, I only found one whole poem that actually "spoke to me"... but it was all quite beautiful. There was one other poem that had a brief excerpt I enjoyed, but overall it was beautiful but not "exactly what I needed." His letters to Kappas are much, much more relatable, I felt.

Lou Last says

from Requiem

I'll simply watch the animals, that something
of their own way of turning may glide over
into my joints; I'll have a brief existence
within their eyes, that solemnly retain me
and slowly loose me, calmly, without judgment.

I'll make the gardeners repeat by heart
the names of many flowers and so bring back
in pots of lovely proper names a remnant,
a little remnant, of the hundred perfumes.
And I will purchase fruits too, fruits, wherein
that country, sky and all, will re-exist.
For that was what you understood: full fruits.
You used to set them out in bowls before you
and counterpoise their heaviness with colors.
And women too appeared to you as fruits,
and children too, both of them from within
impelled into the forms of their existence.
And finally you saw yourself as fruit,
lifted yourself out of your clothes and carried
that self before the mirror, let it in
up to your gaze; which remained, large, in front,
and did not say: that's me; no, but: this is.
So uninquiring was your gaze at last,
so unpossessive and so truly poor,
it wanted even you no longer: holy.

*

Drea says

The best translations of Rilke I have read, and I have read a lot of them.

Jacob Hurley says

Are we really such tremblingly breakable
things as destiny tries to pretend?
(Still the Good Remains, Sonnets to Orpheus)

Mary Mulliken says

I hate to say it because I'm a pretty big fan of Rilke's soul poetry but this one was a doozy. With a rare few exceptions, I was bored and moreover, had a hard time paying attention to these poems. Good to know we all get better with age...?

Hannah Givens says

I was mostly bored, possibly because of the translation, but there were still a few affecting poems. I would've

liked more context, but that'd probably defeat the purpose of this small collection.

Bryony says

I read a poem from this book here and there, when I feel like it. I like taking it in small doses and letting a poem roll around in my mind for a bit!
