



The Book of Hours: Prayers to a Lowly God (European Poetry Classics)

Rainer Maria Rilke

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This is a complete translation of Rainer Maria Rilke's "The Book of Hours" that restores to the English-speaking reader a critical work in the development of a significant figure in 20th-century German poetry. Conveying an almost mystical conception of the relationship between God, the human being and nature, "The Book of Hours" ("Das Stundenbuch", first published in 1905) is a series of intimate prayers written as if by a Russian monk turned painter - writings that bring to bear the profound influence of Rilke's journeys to Russia and Italy at the turn of the century. A tripartite work comprised of "The Book of the Monkish Life", "The Book of Pilgrimage", and "The Book of Poverty and Death", the book is published here in a bilingual format, with the original German and the English translation on facing pages. Annemarie S. Kidder's translation imitates Rilke's uncomplicated and melodic flow, his rhythm and, where possible, his rhyme, while remaining true to content. Each line closely reflects the thought of the original as it strives to preserve Rilke's simplicity of style, economy of words, and candour in addressing God. Kidder's introduction and commentary offer historical and interpretive background information, largely from Rilke's own diaries and correspondence, chronicling the influence of various geographical settings on the writing of "The Book of Hours" and illustrating his own spiritual quest. Also included are translated excerpts from an earlier manuscript of "The Book of Hours", along with prose inserts that interpret the reading of the poetry.

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