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Adonis: Selected Poems (The Margellos World Republic Of Letters)



Synopsis

Born in Syria in 1930, Adonis is one of the most celebrated poets of the Arabic-speaking world. This volume serves as a comprehensive survey of Adonis's work, allowing English readers to admire the arc of a literary career through the labours of the poet's own handpicked translator, Khaled Mattawa.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have been waiting for this book and was thrilled to see its release this year. Adonis is one of the all-time greats, and finally, we have a comprehensive volume of his work in English. Adonis worked with Khaled Mattawa for a long time (I heard eleven years) in bringing this volume together. The layout is beautiful, the poems are captivating, and we can finally read Adonis as he matures over the years. Although not complete, this selection of poems is vast. Most major texts are represented, many very generously. I have only come across three poetry books by Adonis published in English, so for English readers, it doesn't get any better than this. Also, the translations are superb. I compared some lines of translation in this text with a previous publication that I have of Songs of Mihyar of Damascus. This one reads better. I don't read Arabic, and the Arabic version of the poems are not are provided (an asset as the book is a nice size to hold), so I can't pretend to compare it to the original. One surprise is that "A Grave For New York" is not included. I'm not sure why. This is my favorite of all of Adonis' poems. It could be because it has been translated in several other collections. Or it could be because of personal preference. "A Grave For New York" can be found in A Time Between Ashes and Roses, The Pages of Day and Night, and Modern

Arabic Poetry (Salma Khadra Jayyusi); all are excellent volumes. On the flip side, there are plenty of new gems that can't be found elsewhere spanning 1957-2008. And unlike many poets, his early poems do not disappoint. If you haven't read Adonis, you are missing out, and this would be a wonderful place to start. His poems are surreal, powerful, lyrical, natural, mythic, experimental and a mixture of long and short.

This is the most complete English collection of the poems of the Arabic language poet Adonis. Adonis is considered the dean of Arab poets in the Western world, the one who has made the greatest contribution to Arab poetry as a whole. He is considered an innovator who while knowing well traditional Arab forms pioneered in breaking the mold and moving Arabic Literature to greater freedom. His poetic credo sees poetry as a "leap outside of established concepts, a change in the order of things and in the way we look at them." He is a poet of love and sensual experience but also of mystical life. Ideologically he is known as a fierce secularist who believes the religious domination of Arab culture is to an extent to its detriment. Adonis whose poetry has not been widely known, or until this present translation been extensively translated into English is considered one of the senior poets on the global poetic scene. He has lived in exile for many years mostly in Paris. His work has been strongly influenced by that of Whitman and Baudelaire but above all by the French surrealists. He also combines a deep interest in mystical Sufi thought and his work often reflects this. As I do not know Arabic I cannot possibly speak about the quality of the translation, but as I understand it the translator is considered a close associate and collaborator of Adonis, who knows his work very well. Adonis though he has a background as a Syrian nationalist is not considered to be primarily a political poet. He has spoken when asked about the popularity of his poetry of the need for Poetry to be difficult to challenge its reader, and lead the reader to be a co-creator of it. He has been defined as a poet of Exile and has said about this "Every artist is an exile within his own language," he said.

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