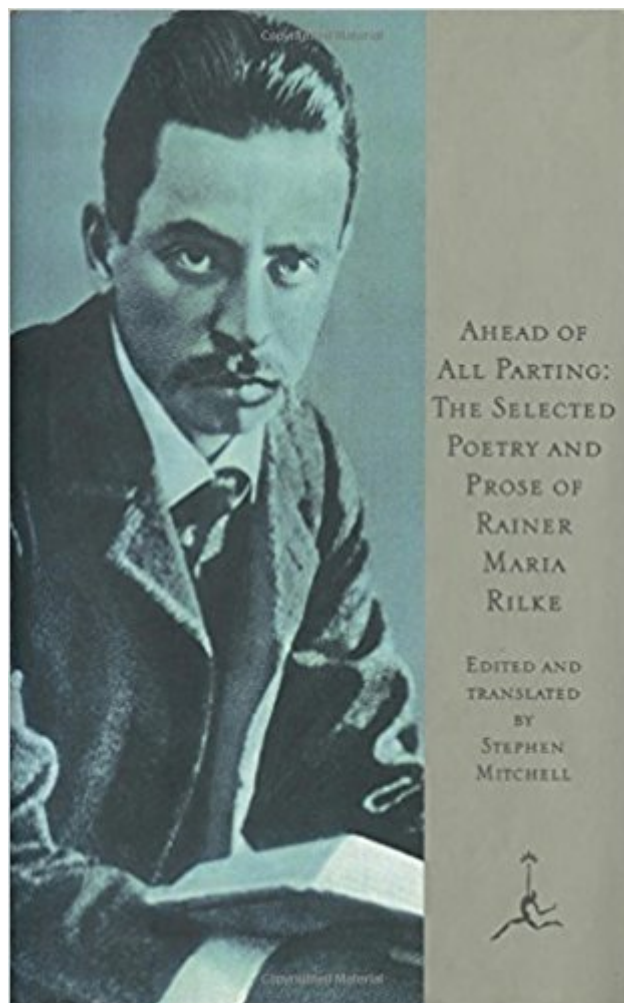


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# Ahead Of All Parting: The Selected Poetry And Prose Of Rainer Maria Rilke (Modern Library) (English & German Edition) (English And German Edition)



## Synopsis

The reputation of Rainer Maria Rilke has grown steadily since his death in 1926; today he is widely considered to be the greatest poet of the twentieth century. This Modern Library edition presents Stephen Mitchell's acclaimed translations of Rilke, which have won praise for their re-creation of the poet's rich formal music and depth of thought. "Rilke had written in English," Denis Donoghue wrote in *The New York Times Book Review*, "he would have written in this English." *Ahead of All Parting* is an abundant selection of Rilke's lifework. It contains representative poems from his early collections *The Book of Hours* and *The Book of Pictures*; many selections from the revolutionary *New Poems*, which drew inspiration from Rodin and Cezanne; the hitherto little-known "Requiem for a Friend"; and a generous selection of the late uncollected poems, which constitute some of his finest work. Included too are passages from Rilke's influential novel, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, and nine of his brilliant uncollected prose pieces. Finally, the book presents the poet's two greatest masterpieces in their entirety: the *Duino Elegies* and *The Sonnets to Orpheus*. "Rilke's voice, with its extraordinary combination of formality, power, speed and lightness, can be heard in Mr. Mitchell's versions more clearly than in any others," said W. S. Merwin. "His work is masterful."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I just thought I would clarify that this collection is more comprehensive than *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, also translated by Stephen Mitchell. *Ahead of All Parting* includes all poems in

the aforementioned book and adds many more.

Of the volumes in my collection of Rilke work, this is the single book I reach for most often. Stephen Mitchell is a master of translation with a consummate feel for nuance that is imperative in poetry translating. For anyone embarked on a personal spiritual journey, reading Rilke is essential. Mitchell, an able guide on such a journey, has selected powerful, insightful works. The first 2-verse poem, "I live my life in widening rings," is alone worthy of years of contemplation. And I never cease to find inspiration and solace in "For the Sake of a Single Poem." I consider "Ahead of All Parting" one of the five most important books I own.

Very few translations of poetry manage to capture not only the content but the "feel" of the original text. Mitchell's rendering of Rilke is one of these rarities: without slavishly imitating Rilke's rhythms or attempting to pin down his sometimes elusive meanings, he's enabled the non-German-speaker to experience Rilke's poetry in spirit as well as sense. (I'm not a Rilke scholar, but I know enough German to read and appreciate the originals.) The notes are useful too -- sometimes an idea that Rilke expressed obliquely in a poem is much clearer in his correspondence! This volume contains all of Rilke's "major" poetry and selections from his prose, so it's a good, reasonably priced introduction to his work. (And the book has a good "feel" too -- heavy paper, clear type, a solid cover -- which is rare in these days of cheap computer-assisted printing!) This book belongs in the library of anyone who's serious about 20th century poetry -- and anyone who appreciates the art of translation.

I've read virtually all of the Rilke translations (discovered him browsing in a library in '73 and haven't stopped reading him) and this one truly shines. What is most amazing about Rilke is his ability to make his perceptions your perceptions. Rilke is not easy, especially the later poems, but like all great literature, landscapes keep opening for more exploration. He really is "the poet's poet." You might start by thumbing to the middle of the book and read the "uncollected poems." I also recommend Rilke's one novel, "The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge," by the same translator (a first person narrative of the life of an impoverished poet in turn of the century Paris) --surreal, intensely psychological, artful.

Mitchell does a fine job at creating his own poetry out of Rilke's, but non-German speakers are deceived in believing that Mitchell is giving you a true translation of Rilke's poems. I'll start with the

first few lines of the first poem in this volume: Rilke: Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen, die sich ueber die Dinge ziehn. This roughly translates to: "I live my life in widening circles/rings, which pull themselves over things." Mitchell translates "die Dinge" to "earth and sky." "Dinge" means things, not "earth and sky." "Dinge" is much less specific, more ambiguous. This next mistranslation is a little more annoying. It's the third poem in the volume: Rilke: Ich finde dich in allen diesen Dingen, denen ich gut und wie ein Bruder bin; This translates to "I find you in all these things, to which I am good and like a brother." Mitchell translates this to "I find you, Lord, in all Things and in all / my fellow creatures, pulsing with your life;" That's completely different! Mitchell's translation is very pretty, but he's often either adding or taking out important words or images and inserting ideas where Rilke would be more vague, ambiguous, and subtle. I agree with one of the other reviewers who implies that, in this volume, non-German speakers are getting more of Mitchell's verse and less of Rilke's. One can always find fault with someone's translation, especially when translating poetry. In my opinion, though, Mitchell's translation borders on the Oedipal.

I recently discovered Rilke, and am much the better for it - his craft with words literally gives one goosebumps. The poetry portion of *Ahead of All Parting* is dual language, so readers of German can enjoy the original as well as Mitchell's translations. The book also contains copious notes about many of the poems (when they were written, what was going on in Rilke's life) as well as a section of his published and unpublished prose, which I found almost as vivid and beautiful as his poetry. The book itself is also physically beautiful - the pages are delicate, further adding to the sensuousness of the reading experience.

Let me put it this way: If I was marooned on a desert island and could have only one book with me, this would be it! Rilke's poetry sings; it soars; it dips into the deepest wells of existence. It begs to be read aloud and savoured.

This is one of the most beautiful books I have ever had the pleasure of reading, especially with Stephen Mitchell's translation. Rilke's "Letters to a Young Poet" is also translated by Mr. Mitchell, and his translation is as pure as Rilke's own German. Rilke is a quiet light. I believe, he realizes, in some measure, his oneness with God. His table of quietness absorbed me. Although, I may not know what Rilke was actually experiencing when he wrote, but what I feel is the vastness and inclusiveness of God, the patience of God, the love of God, the "closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet" of God. One day, someone, who was familiar with Rilke, saw me reading this

book, and mentioned that some of Rilke's books were read at funerals. I laughed; i hadn't heard that before. Yet, i can understand why this would be so. There is a sadness in his writings. But the death of which he speaks is not the kind of death that needs an undertaker; but the kind that says to "die daily" to our claims, suggestions, fixations, and opinions of "this world." It is when we die to universal beliefs that we become the quiet light of which Rilke speaks.

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