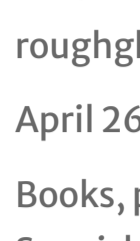




## The earth was a rose fully opened: Eternidades / Eternities (1916–1917) by Juan Ramón Jiménez

 roughghosts  
 April 26, 2026  
 Books, poetry, Review, Spanish  
 A. F. Moritz, Bitter Oleander Press, book review, books, Eternidades / Eternities (1916–1917), Juan Ramón Jiménez, literature, poetry, Spanish, translation

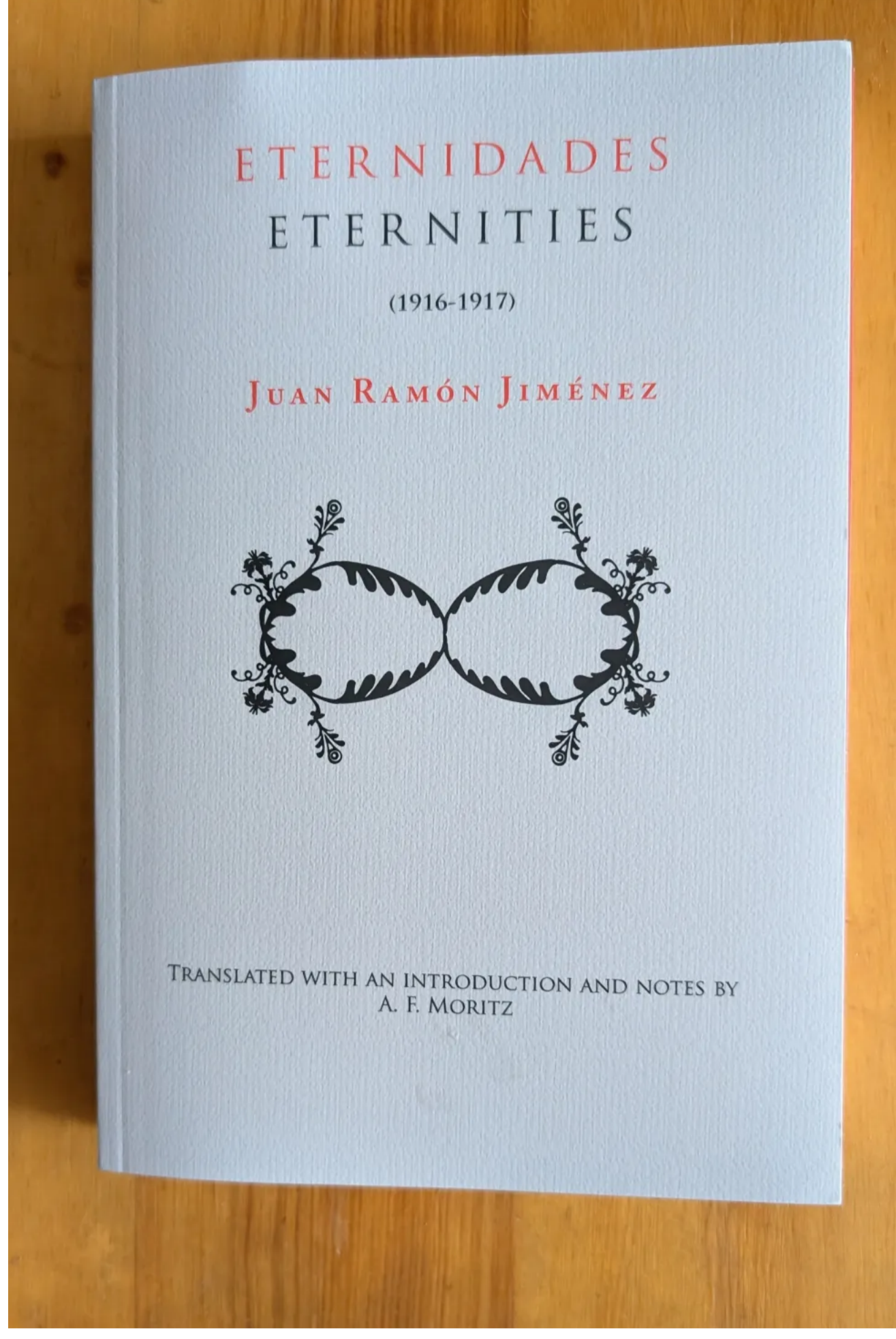
*My feeling and the star  
were ecstatic in their idyll.*

*You passed through the garden  
and your hand, playing,  
paying no attention,  
tore off my feeling.*

(poem 107, “Flower”)

Winner of the 1956 Nobel Prize for Literature, Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881–1958) is widely regarded as one of the most important Spanish language writers of the twentieth century. But, as is often the case, the popularity of his poetry experienced its ebbs and flows over the course of his lifetime, only to be received with renewed enthusiasm in the decades since his death. Born in Moguer, in southwest Spain, he was drawn to poetry at an early age. Before he turned twenty, he was invited to Madrid by leading writers of the Modernismo style and with their support he published his first two books of poetry in 1900 and 1901. But he soon broke away from this group to develop his own distinct aesthetic, one focused on the ideal of beauty. This new approach would ultimately bring him attention and international fame, with his book of prose poetry *Platero and I* (1914) being translated into at least thirty languages. However, yet another important stylistic shift still lay ahead.

By the time Jiménez made his first trip to the United States in 1916 to marry his American–Spanish fiancée Zenobia Camprubí Aymar, he was already aware of English–language poets and of a new bluntness and asringency in the more recent works by Yeats, but it was the reading of Emily Dickinson that made the strongest impression on him. He would bring this inspiration, and her capacity to convey the experience of an invisible reality in a concise poem, home to Spain. Her inspiration is reflected clearly in the work he composed immediately following his journey and in the years that followed. In *Diary of a Newlywed Poet*—a poetic memoir chronicling his trip to America composed in 1916—Jiménez introduced a new direction and style and the present volume, *Eternidades / Eternities*, written in 1916 and 1917, and published in 1918, turned on and refined this stylistic shift to focus on the dynamic relationship between the poem and the self, and between the poetic word and the re-creation of the world.



In his thorough introduction to Bitter Oleander Press's handsome dual language edition of this milestone in Jiménez's creative evolution, translator and poet A. F. Moritz describes *Eternities* as “a book that joins—or rather, sees the identity—with-difference of—poetry and Poetry: the making of poetry by the poet, and the presence of Poetry as the inner and greatest reality that is available to everyone and experienced by most.” Notably, in a move from what was known as “pure poetry” to what he would term “naked poetry,” he established a streamlined, yet potentially rich form that would in turn influence the further development of Spanish poetry of the time. In poem 5, “Poetry,” he famously imagines poetry as a woman who comes to him when he is young, but then begins “putting on fashions” to an extent that his initial boyish enthusiasm turns toward hatred and resentment:

*... But she started to undress.*

*And I smiled at her.*

*She stood there in just the shift  
of her ancient innocence.*

*I believed in her again.*

*And she dropped the shift  
and showed herself naked, all ...*

*O passion of my life, naked  
poetry, mine forever!*

This renewed connection to poetry allows the poet to reveal his unveiled self, to speak of the ideas and feelings that are true for himself, knowing that essentially he is speaking to a universal experience of the nature of existence.

*Eternidades / Eternities* is a sequence of 137 numbered poems, titled or untitled, some several stanzas in length, but many no more than four lines. However, the arrangement of poems appears, at first glance, to be loose, unorganized. But it has its own form. As Moritz puts it:

*By the time the first ten poems, say, have been absorbed, a clear if unusual unity emerges that continuously fills itself in. The poems have a radial interconnection rather than a linear, narrative, or logical one. Better said, perhaps, they are constellated. They unite as dispersed points within an area (an orbit or ambit, to use words that Jiménez loved) and with a gradually locatable center of gravity—points that make up a picture and a story.*

It is, in the reading, that a natural flow opens, circles, and changes direction as poems complement or contradict one another, even split into two parts separated at some distance across the sequence. Images drawn from nature—dawn, light, trees, flowers, the sky, stars—appear throughout, as do the perennial themes of life, love, death, and the question of time. Moods shift, moving from despair to elation to meditative reflection. A poem that reads:

*How I hate the me of yesterday!*

*How I'm sick and tired of tomorrow  
in which I have to hate the me of today!*

*Oh what a heap of dried up flowers,  
this whole life!*

(poem 69)

can be followed by one that opens:

*I'll kiss you in the darkness,  
without my body touching  
your body.*

*(I'll run through the shadows,  
so that not even the oblivion  
of the sky can enter.)*

(from poem 70, “World Kiss”)

There is the sense, throughout *Eternities*, of the poet in conversation with his own insecurities on one level, and with the mysteries of life on another, an echo of existential reality we all can recognize. His curiosity, restlessness, and joy is infectious, and his commitment to the notion of a universality of experience affords the poems in this sequence a startling connection not unlike that which readers often feel with Dickinson.

With meticulous attention to detail, Moritz translated, for this volume, the *Nueva y original edición de Eternidades (1916–1917)* edited by Professor Emilio Ríos, published in 2007, including an Appendix consisting of eleven “perfected” versions of poems from the sequence that Professor Ríos appended to his text. He also preserves Jiménez's distinctive punctuation—exclamation marks, parentheses, and ellipses—features that contribute the intrinsic energy of the poems. The result is an invaluable dual language edition of an important work of Spanish poetry that should readily appeal to a wide audience.

*Eternidades / Eternities (1916–1917)* by Juan Ramón Jiménez is translated from the Spanish by A. F. Moritz and published by Bitter Oleander Press.

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**Marcie McCauley**

April 28, 2026 at 2:59 pm

I read *Platero and I* from the library shortly after moving to Toronto (it hadn't been available in the city where I lived before) and I just loved it. This collection sounds like a valuable companion.

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**roughghosts**

April 28, 2026 at 10:21 pm

I loved this work and definitely would like to seek out more.

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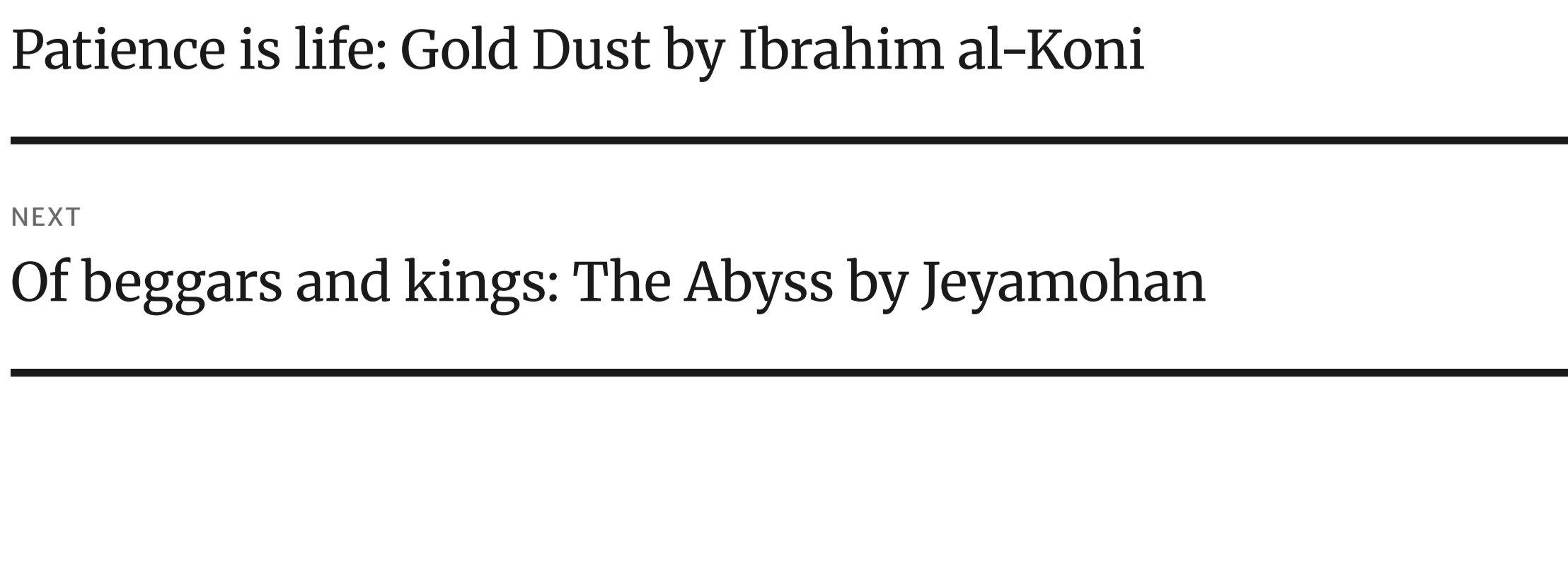
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