Twitter Thread by Persian Poetry in English

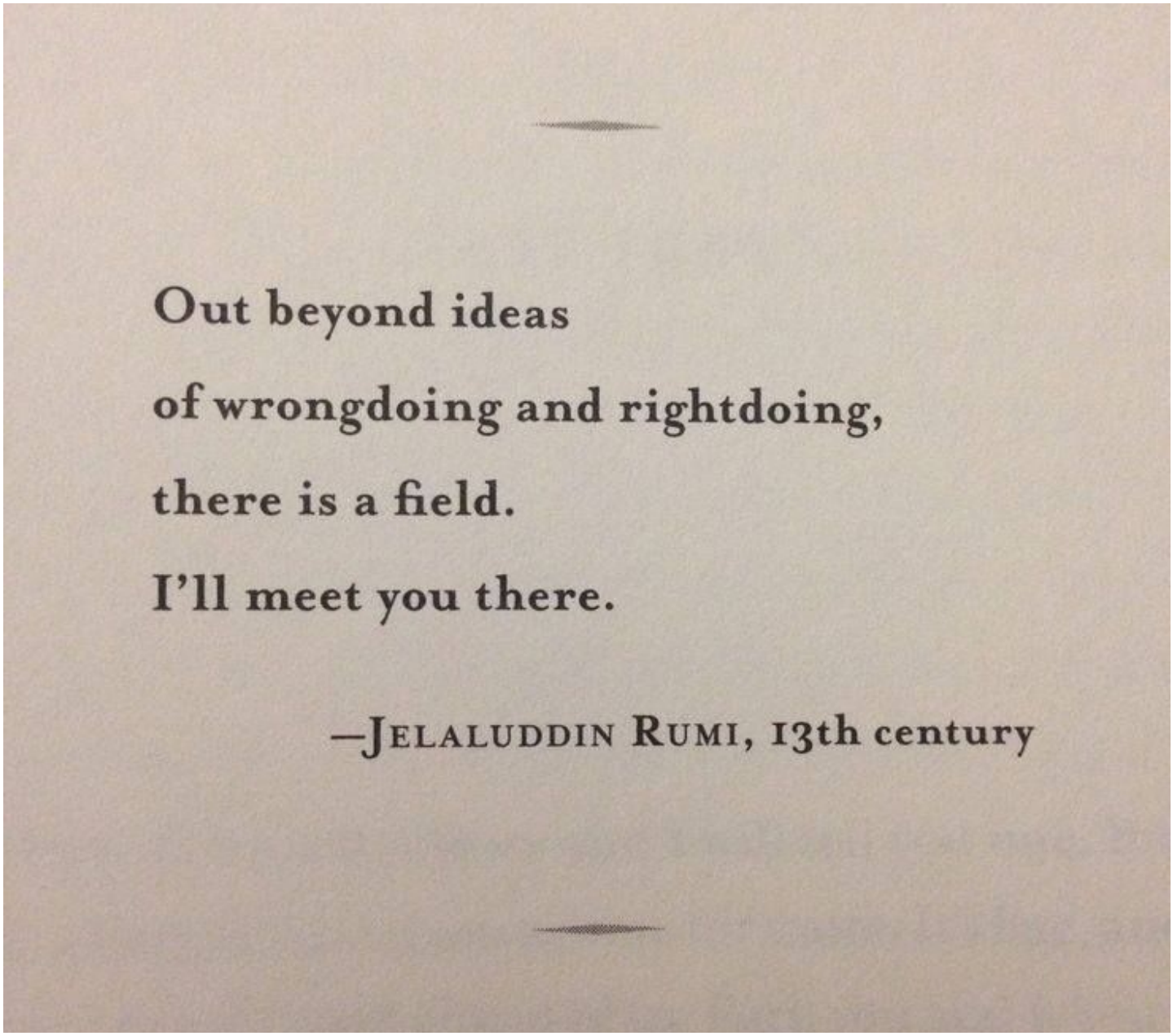
Persian Poetry in English
@PersianPoetics

Thread: The Orientalizing of Moulana Rumi

Many of you may be familiar with the 'Rumi quotes' that circulate the internet. What if I told you the vast majority of them are fake and they are part of a project to secularize Rumi? This isn't a whatsapp conspiracy.



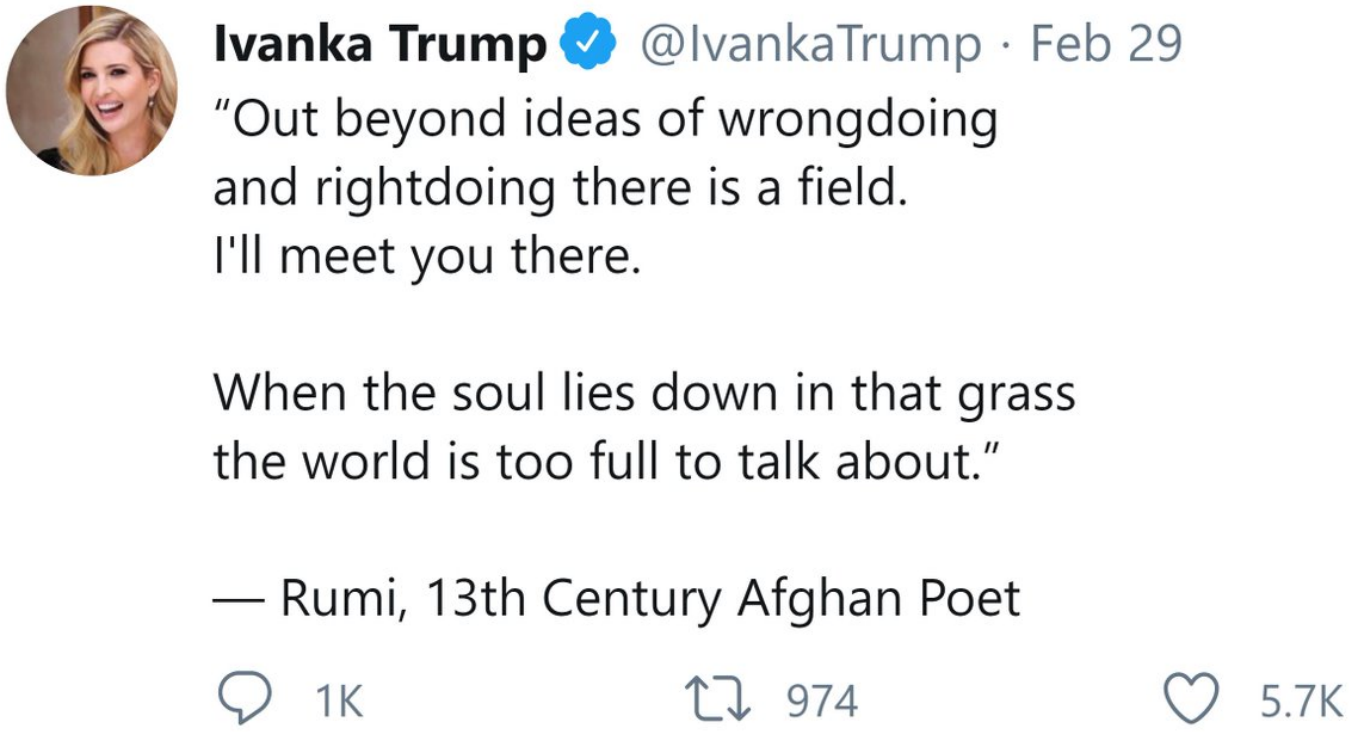
Take this quote, commonly attributed to Moulana Rumi:



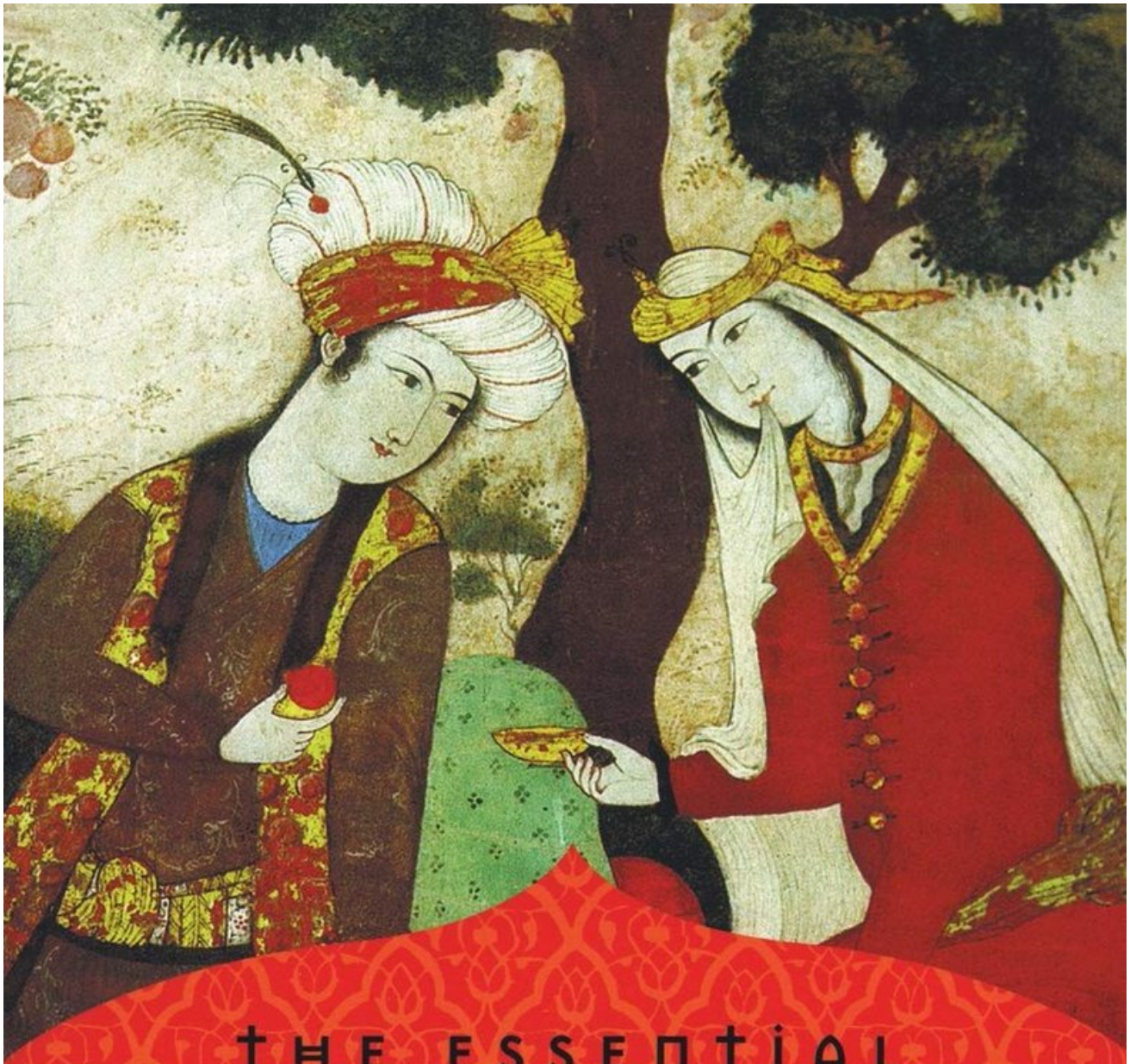
Brad Pitt even got it tattooed, right by his pit:



Ivanka Trump, the daughter of the most Islamophobic president in US history, tweeted it out after her dad failed to make peace in Afghanistan. If Rumi were alive today, her dad wouldn't even allow him in the country. The irony.



Where is this quote from? It's from 'The Essential Rumi' probably the best selling poetry book in America, written by Coleman Barks who has made his career peddling Rumi 'translations.'



THE ESSENTIAL RUMI

Translations by

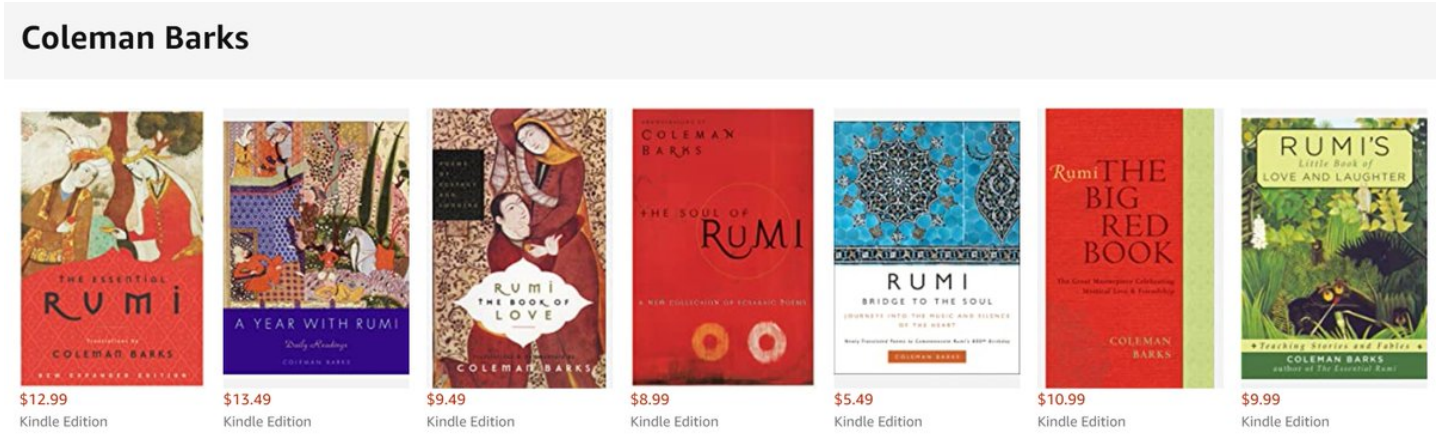
COLEMAN BARKS

NEW EXPANDED EDITION

Meet Coleman Barks, the man responsible for nearly every 'Rumi quote' you've seen. Coleman hasn't studied Islam, Sufism, or Persian in academia or traditional settings, he doesn't even know Persian! But that didn't stop him from writing over a dozen translation books!



In a country where poetry books struggle to sell even a few thousand copies, Barks has sold over five hundred thousand, literally making millions from Moulana Rumi's writings.



After three decades of 'translating' Moulana Rumi, Barks managed to establish himself as a scholar. Here he is giving a Ted talk about his 'translations.'



Opening the Heart Through Ecstatic Poetry: Coleman Barks at TEDxUGA

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Remember when I said he has no formal qualification? Scratch that, he was actually given an honorary doctorate by the University of Tehran (Iran's premier university) for all of his... scholarship... right. With friends like this, who needs enemies!

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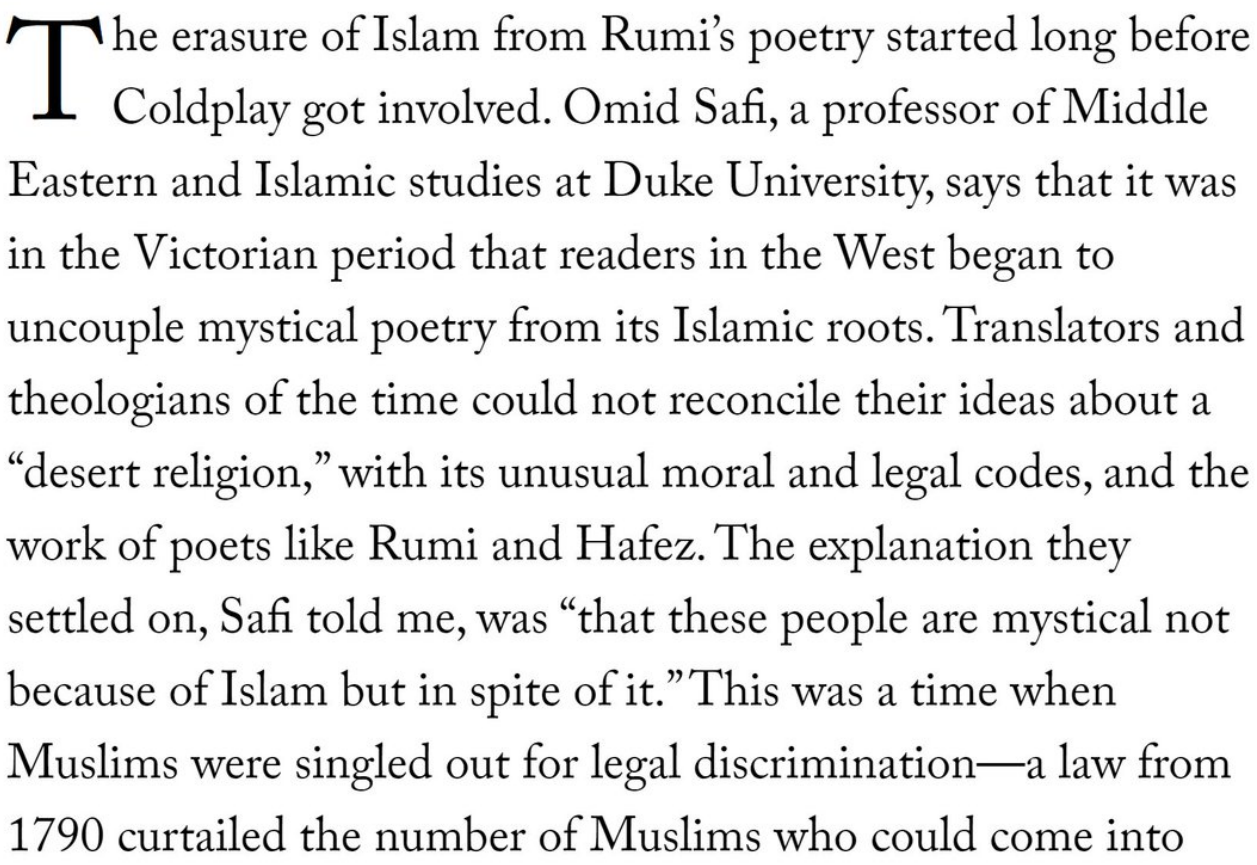
University of Tehran to grant honorary doctorate to Coleman Barks

5/9/06

TEHRAN, May 8 (**Mehr News Agency**) -- The University of Tehran will be presenting an honorary doctorate in Persian language and literature to American poet **Coleman Barks** on May 17, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Monday.



Here's what @ostadjaan had to say via @rozina_ali for @NewYorker



The erasure of Islam from Rumi's poetry started long before Coldplay got involved. Omid Safi, a professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies at Duke University, says that it was in the Victorian period that readers in the West began to uncouple mystical poetry from its Islamic roots. Translators and theologians of the time could not reconcile their ideas about a "desert religion," with its unusual moral and legal codes, and the work of poets like Rumi and Hafez. The explanation they settled on, Safi told me, was "that these people are mystical not because of Islam but in spite of it." This was a time when Muslims were singled out for legal discrimination—a law from 1790 curtailed the number of Muslims who could come into

"I see a type of 'spiritual colonialism' at work here: bypassing, erasing, and occupying a spiritual landscape that has been lived...by Muslims from Bosnia and Istanbul to Konya and Iran to Central and South Asia." a gem from an actual real Rumi scholar, @ostadjaan

Discussing these New Age “translations,” Safi said, “I see a type of ‘spiritual colonialism’ at work here: bypassing, erasing, and occupying a spiritual landscape that has been lived and breathed and internalized by Muslims from Bosnia and Istanbul to Konya and Iran to Central and South Asia.” Extracting the spiritual from the religious context has deep reverberations. Islam is regularly diagnosed as a “cancer,” including by General Michael Flynn, President-elect Donald Trump’s pick for national-security adviser, and, even today, policymakers suggest that non-Western and nonwhite groups have not contributed to civilization.

Persians call Rumi's Masnavi, "The Qu'ran in Persian." It's a storybook that embodies the spirit of the Qu'ran in simple, rhyming Persian for the non-Arabic speaking masses. One cannot understand the Masnavi w/o the Qu'ran, but alas “The Koran is hard to read.” remarks Barks.

face and say, Like this.” The religious context is gone. And yet, elsewhere in the same poem, Barks keeps references to Jesus and Joseph. When I asked him about this, he told me that he couldn’t recall if he had made a deliberate choice to remove Islamic references. “I was brought up Presbyterian,” he said. “I used to memorize Bible verses, and I know the New Testament more than I know the Koran.” He added, “The Koran is hard to read.”

But let's go back to the quote I mentioned earlier. I've found the original Persian text (that Coleman can't even read) and translated it into English. Notice anything?

Beyond kufr and Islam
there is a desert plain,

in that middle space
our passions reign.

When the gnostic arrives there
he'll prostrate himself,

not kufr not Islam nor is there
any space in that domain.

-Moulana Rumi

Compare my mostly literal translation with Coleman's 'translation.' My heart aches for those who only know Moulana Rumi via this orientalist garbage masquerading as a translation.

@persianpoetics translation	**Coleman Barks translation**
Beyond kufr and Islam there is a desert plain,	Out beyond ideas
in that middle space our passions reign.	of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
When the gnostic arrives there he'll prostrate himself,	there is a field.
not kufr not Islam nor is there any space in that domain.	I'll meet you there.

Take this second poem. All of the Islam is removed to the point where the poem is almost meaningless. 'Home' (dargah) in Persian is unnecessarily translated as 'caravan'. This divergence from the original exposes the orientalist mindset of these 'translators.'

@persianpoetics translation	**Translation of unknown origin**
Come again come again whatever you are come again,	Come, come, whoever you are.
if you're a kafir or idol- worshiper come again.	Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving. It doesn't matter.
This home of ours is not a home of hopelessness,	Ours is not a caravan of despair.
even if you've repented one hundred times, come again.	Come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times come, yet again, come, come.

To help us de-construct orientalist narratives and accurately translate Persian poetry, please support us at https://t.co/WJBzECiIUh and find us on insta https://t.co/wCkW4BEzWB

#rumiwasmuslim

For those who would like another way to support this project, we also have clothing for sale:

https://t.co/VYDCm1OSyj