

Rilke in Paris

Maurice Betz

Rainer Maria Rilke

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In 1902, at twenty-six, Rainer Maria Rilke visited Paris for the first time, drawn by his perception—he was not alone—of France as the consummate home of the artist. He sought out Auguste Rodin and, over the course of many years, the older sculptor, Cezanne, and other prominent figures of the arts bestowed on the young poet some of the stuff that would lead to his eventual greatness.

Paris proved to be complicated for Rilke. Over the next two decades, he would flee the city in distress only to return as if he were powerless to stay away. He writes, “For Paris, that I admire so much and to which I know I must submit as one submits to a training, is always in some sense new, and when you feel its grandeur, its near infinity, it annihilates you so violently and completely that you must demurely recapture from the very beginning the impassioned attempt to live.”

Written by Maurice Betz and originally published in the WWII darkness of 1941, this project features an astounding collection of Rilke’s ruminations on Paris life at all levels of society, his compelling need to write, progress on *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, and so much more. Conceived as an essay on Rilke’s relationship to Paris, as well as Betz’s reflections on a long career working with, and translating Rilke, *Rilke in Paris* makes it clear that “France and French culture are the dominant guiding forces of Rilke’s adult life,” in the words of translator Will Stone in his introduction to this first English edition.

MATT SUTHERLAND (July/August 2019)

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