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RILKE, MODERNISM AND POETIC TRADITION

If the rise of modernism is the story of a struggle between the burden of tradition and a desire to break free of it, then Rilke's poetic development is a key example of this tension at work. Taking a sceptical view of Rilke's own myth of himself as a solitary genius, Judith Ryan reveals how deeply his writing is embedded in the culture of its day. She traces his often desperate attempts to grapple with problems of fashion, influence and originality as he shaped his career during the crucial decades in which modernism was born. Her book is the first systematic study of Rilke's trajectory from aestheticism to modernism as seen through the lens of his engagement with poetic tradition and the visual arts. The book is full of surprising discoveries about individual poems. Above all, it shifts the terms of the debate about Rilke's place in modern literary history.

Judith Ryan is Harvard College Professor and Robert K. and Dale J. Weary Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Harvard University. Her books include *The Uncompleted Past: Postwar German Novels and the Third Reich* (1983) and *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* (1991).

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Acknowledgments

Rilke's poetry always calls forth a response, sometimes sympathetic, sometimes critical; but it is rare to study a text of his without becoming fully engaged, one way or the other. While I was working on *Rilke, Modernism and Poetic Tradition*, I had the chance to present my thoughts about Rilke in a variety of different forums. At an early stage in the project, Paola Mildonian invited me to speak at the International Comparative Literature conference in Venice. I am grateful to her for the opportunity to present my reading of Rilke's poem on Saint Mark's cathedral in the watery city itself. Two seminars at the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies at Harvard University invited me to speak; in both cases, the audience was lively, perceptive and not inclined to let me get away with anything. I learned a great deal from those discussions and have done my best to incorporate the suggestions that emerged from them into the book. I am very grateful to the seminar organisers, Beatrice Hanssen, Nicholas Jenkins, Jesse Matz and Joshua Esty for inviting me to test my ideas before their groups. At a crucial juncture, when the book was very close to completion, I was invited to speak at Oxford University on 'Rilke, Modernism and Mourning', where I received helpful suggestions from T.J. Reed, Ray Ockenden, and others who attended the talk. I owe thanks to Paul Kerry for having mediated the invitation and made my stay such a delightful one. Finally, a conference in Mainz on 'Rilke and World Literature' in September 1998, just before I put the finishing touches on my manuscript, affirmed my sense that this is the moment for a more international vision of Rilke's writing. I would like to express my appreciation to the organisers, Manfred Engel and Dieter Lamping, for inviting me to participate, and to thank the other speakers and members of the audience for broadening my understanding of Rilke's manifold links to other literary traditions.

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Quarterly, for an adaptation of ‘Dead Poets’ Voices: Rilke’s “Lost from the Outset” and the Originality Effect’ (volume 53, 1992, 227–245); *Comparative Literature Studies*, for a reworking of ‘The Intertextual Maze: Rilke’s “Der Turm” and His Relation to Aestheticism’ (volume 30, 1993, 69–82); and *PMLA*, for a version of ‘More Seductive Than Phryne: Baudelaire, Gêrôme, Rilke, and the Problem of Autonomous Art’ (1993, 1128–1141). I am also grateful to Bulzoni Editore for permitting me to reprint here in revised form my ‘Pasticcio and the Incrusted Style: Ruskin, Rilke and Saint Mark’s’, in *Parodia, Pastiche, Mimetismo*, ed. Paola Mildonian (Rome, 1997), pp. 219–229.

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James O’Neil showed me photographs from his visit to the mausoleum at Halikarnassus and helped me understand more about the

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