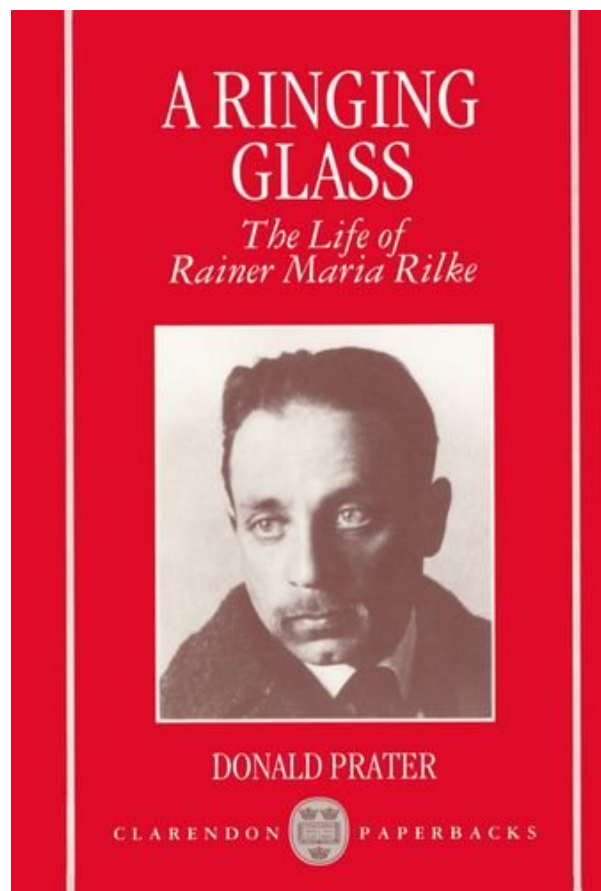


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# A RINGING GLASS

*The Life of  
Rainer Maria Rilke*



DONALD PRATER

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Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) is widely regarded as the greatest lyric poet of this century. His major achievements--the New Poems, the Sonnets to Orpheus, and the incomparable Duino Elegies--had a powerful impact on European literature and have been the subject of intense scrutiny and increasing acclaim since the poet's death. Only in recent years, however, with the emergence of key documentary material, has it become possible to present the full story of Rilke's life. In *A Ringing Glass*, Donald Prater's aim is not to add to the preponderance of critical interpretations, but to provide a portrait of the man himself, and to show the background in which Rilke's extraordinary vision developed.

And it is an extraordinary background. Rilke's nomadic existence led him from his birthplace in Prague through Germany, Russian, Spain, Italy, France, and finally Switzerland. He visited Tolstoy at Yasnaya Polyana, acted for a time as secretary to Rodin, and was a friend of Romain Rolland, Leonid Pasternak, and Walter Rathenau. He was the protege of Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis and the lover of Lou Andreas-Salome and Baladine Klossawska. Financially and emotionally, Rilke needed these associations; yet he dedicated himself fully to his art and remained single-minded in his search for the solitude it required. In his correspondence, from which Prater draws extensively, Rilke reveals the tragic conflict between his needs as a man and his goals as a poet.

With this comprehensive biography, readers can delve deeply into the life Rilke built, a life as courageous and rare as the poetry it left behind.

- Sales Rank: #1516839 in Books
- Published on: 1994-04-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 1.24" w x 6.13" l, 1.70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 506 pages

From Publishers Weekly

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Behold, the man!

By Duane M. Johnson

Of the three Rilke biographies that I have read (Ralph Freedman and Wolfgang Ippman being the others),

this one was the most consistently satisfying. Prater purports to concentrate more on the personal aspects of the poet's life, and, comparatively speaking, I think that he succeeds. There is less of the not always helpful literary commentary in which, for example, Freedman indulges, and by comparison the Leppmann book has more of that snapshot quality about it that seems to be such a tendency now in biographies written by German authors--as examples I am thinking here of Gregor Martin-Dellin's book on Wagner, and Ruediger Safranski's books on Nietzsche and Heidegger.

In this book there is a greater sense of continuity with regard to the inner workings of Rilke's personality and emotional life. And we know that the evidence for that inner life is most rich, and like any other writer dealing with this poet, Prater does not always take everything at face value because of what he describes as Rilke's continuous habit of "self-stylization". If you wish to read and own a single Rilke biography, this is really the one!

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