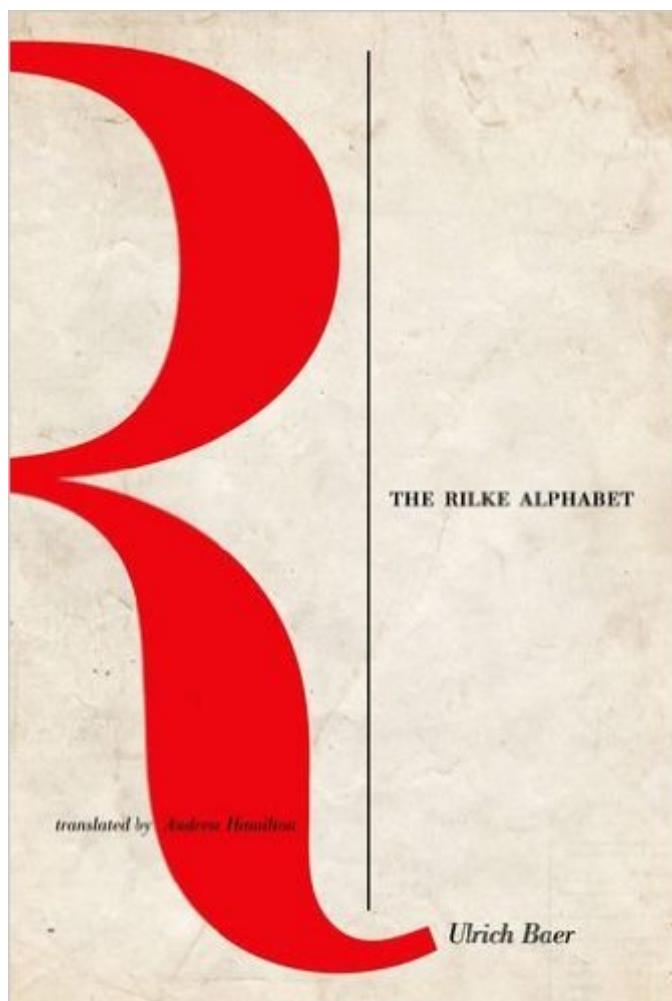


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The Rilke Alphabet



Synopsis

Ulrich Baer's *The Rilke Alphabet* will surprise and delight established fans of Rilke, intrigue newcomers, and convince all readers of the power of poetry to penetrate the mysteries and confusion of our world. The enduring power of Rainer Maria Rilke's poetry rests with his claim that all we need for a better life on earth is already given to us, in the here and now. In twenty-six engaging and accessible essays, Ulrich Baer's *The Rilke Alphabet* examines this promise by one of the greatest poets in any tradition that even the smallest overlooked word may unlock life's mysteries to us. Fueled by an unebbing passion and indeed love for Rilke's poetry, Baer examines twenty-six words that are not only unexpected but also problematic, controversial, and even scandalous in Rilke's work. In twenty-six mesmerizing essays that eschew jargon and teutonic learnedness for the pleasures and risks of unflinchingly engaging with a great artist's genius, Baer sheds new light on Rilke's politics, his creative process, and his deepest and enduring thoughts about life, art, politics, sexuality, love, and death. *The Rilke Alphabet* shows how Rilke's work provides an uncannily apt guide to life even in our vexingly postmodern condition. Whether it is a love letter to frogs, a problematic brief infatuation with Mussolini, a sustained reflection on the Buddha, the evasion of the influence of powerful precursors, or the unambiguous assertion that freedom must be lived in order to be known, Rilke's writings pull us deeply into life. Baer's decades-long engagement with Rilke as a scholar, translator, and editor of Rilke's writings allows him to reveal unique aspects of Rilke's work. *The Rilke Alphabet* will surprise and delight Rilke fans, intrigue newcomers to his work, and deepen every reader's sense of the power of poetry to penetrate the mysteries and confusions of our world.

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Customer Reviews

I think this book is quite brilliant, an excellent introduction to Rilke's fantastic work. It is a great help in contextualising and further understanding some of the major themes in his work and it is written in a very accessible manner. Baer has built up an astonishing expertise on Rilke but the text never becomes too heavy. It is extraordinary to see how Rilke was thinking about the same topics that occupied some of his friends and acquaintances (like Walter Benjamin)- topics that remain as relevant today as they were in those times.

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