



# Sonnets to Orpheus

*Rainer Maria Rilke*

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## **Sonnets to Orpheus** Rainer Maria Rilke

COMPOSED IN A BURST of inspiration near the end of the poet's life, Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* represents the consummation of the writer's career, distilling the essence of his poetic wisdom in a gem-like sequence. This new translation--with the original German on facing pages--offers a clear window into the world of this endlessly scintillating cycle of poems.

"Daniel Polikoff's English version of Rilke's last sonnet sequence, perhaps his greatest work, is wholly admirable. Rilke's late work is extremely difficult to penetrate. Both its conceptual nature and Rilke's unique use of the German language tend to resist interpretation. Astonishingly, Polikoff has found ways of rendering Rilke's complexities into English and also preserving his metrical and rhyme schemes. Such an accomplishment is possible only with a deep understanding of Rilke's vision and a knowledge of the root structure of German. Daniel Polikoff gives us Rilke in word and spirit in these splendid *Sonnets*."--LISEL MUELLER, National Book Award for Poetry (1981) for *The Need to Hold Still*; Pulitzer Prize for Poetry (1997) for *Alive Together: New & Selected Poems*

"Daniel Polikoff is the first to achieve the unimaginable: an English translation which brings the form and content of these *Sonnets* together into an organic confluence. These new translations lift our understanding of Rilke's spiritual and aesthetic inspiration up to a whole different level, one accessible for the first time to the English reader. As a professor of German literature who has taught these sonnets for over thirty years, I can only thank Daniel Polikoff for this phenomenal accomplishment. His version should serve as the new standard for Rilke translations and belongs on the bookshelves of every poetry lover."--LUDWIG MAX FISCHER, author of *Seasons of the Soul: The Poetic Guidance of Herman Hesse*

"This is a uniquely faithful, skillful, and eloquent translation of one of the greatest poems of the 20th century. I salute Daniel Polikoff and recommend his wonderful work to all seekers and lovers of poetry."--ANDREW HARVEY, author of *Teachings of Rumi*

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