



You Must Change Your Life: The Story of Rainer Maria Rilke and Auguste Rodin

Rachel Corbett

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The extraordinary story of one of the most fruitful friendships in modern arts and letters.

Rainer Maria Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet* is one of the most beloved books of the twentieth century. It has sold millions of copies and inspired generations with its galvanizing wisdom on how to lead an artistic life. In *You Must Change Your Life*, debut author Rachel Corbett tells the remarkable, long-buried story of where Rilke's ideas originated.

In 1902, Rilke, broke and suffering from writer's block, accepted a commission to go to Paris to research and write a short book about the sculptor Auguste Rodin. The two were almost polar opposites: Rodin in his sixties, notoriously carnal, revered; Rilke in his twenties, delicate, unknown. Nonetheless, they fell into an instantaneous friendship and would work closely together as master and disciple for the next few years, as Rodin showed Rilke how to become the writer he wished to be.

With verve and great insight, Corbett transports readers to turn-of-the-twentieth-century Paris to explore this surprising friendship and the development of their influential ideas about art and creativity. She captures the dawn of modernism with appearances by such charismatic figures as Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, Isadora Duncan, George Bernard Shaw, and Jean Cocteau, as well as the rise of the concept of "empathy" amid the pioneering work of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Georg Simmel. Corbett also introduces the women in these men's lives, many of them esteemed writers and artists in their own right: Rodin's muse Camille Claudel, Rilke's wife and fellow artist Clara Westhoff, and the remarkable Lou Andreas-Salome, who was Nietzsche's lover and Rilke's lifelong friend.

You Must Change Your Life is a vibrant portrait of Rilke and Rodin's singular friendship, heartbreaking rift, and moving reconciliation, and it is a testament to the ways their work continues to reverberate to this day.

16 illustrations

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