

Transforming Art: A Cross-Cultural Study of Visual Art and Literature in Rainer Maria Rilke

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Abstract : The evolution of visual art can be traced back from “pre-historic” humans, from the age of Paleolithic, Neolithic, and Metal Age. Mesopotamians and the Egyptians were the pioneers of art, in the first period of history. But the field of art first flourished in the west during the Renaissance. Since then, art represents a continuous yet varied tradition till present day. Until the early 19th century art focused chiefly on representational, religious and classical motifs, but gradually art became more abstract and conceptual approaches gained popularity. Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) was one of the leading poets cum art critic of European modernism. This paper addresses the relationship between Rilke's poetry and visual art, which involves an intimate transference of aesthetic means and definitions of form in the creative process of writing. Rilke's connection with Auguste Rodin made him learn that a person who can “see” things could realize the beauty of a “thing” and could subsequently write. To “see” the “thing” or “object” rather than representing emotion was considered as more important by Rodin and that was the way he cracked the old aesthetic mould. Rilke himself agreed that his correspondence with the artists made him acquainted nothing but a new way of seeing. Rilke admitted to the constant reference to the Bible, the books of the Danish poet Jens Peter Jacobsen and Auguste Rodin, who all had given him the experience of the essence of creativity, its depths and eternity. Rilke's association with philosophers such as Nietzsche and artists, starting from Worpswede and Rodin to Cezanne's paintings, made him almost an apprentice in visual art.

Keywords : seeing, gaze, aesthetic, beauty, visual art, Rilke

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