



the fourteenth fine press title from Horse & Buggy Press

Roses

from the Late French Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke

TRANSLATIONS & ESSAY BY DAVID NEED
PEN & INK DRAWINGS BY CLARE JOHNSON

Rilke's 'Roses' calls us into a more intimate relationship with things, asking us to consider the material world as sister of our imagination, rather than nameless patient of our ideas. EXCERPT FROM DAVID NEED'S INTRODUCTION

The poet Rainer Maria Rilke's French language sequences, written over the last four years of his life, were a new beginning for him following the completion of the *Duino Elegies* and *The Sonnets to Orpheus*. Less often translated than his other work and, in general brief, the work nevertheless carries forward the aesthetic project of his major work in German. The translation of the posthumously published sequence *Les Roses* is offered here alongside an accompanying set of pen and ink drawings by Clare Johnson. Also included is translator David Need's essay on the motif of the rose in Rilke's poetry, as well as a translation of numerous German language poems in which Rilke turns to and stages the figure of the rose—that thing that we are like that is both impossibly interior, and yet also thrown out into and at stake in the world.

Visit www.rilkesroses.wordpress.com for more information about this project.



Roses is an interdisciplinary book featuring the twenty-seven poem series *Les Roses*, published posthumously and translated here by poet David Need and accompanied by pen and ink drawings by Clare Johnson. David has been working on Rilke's writings for over fifteen years; the book also includes "The Room Next Door: The Impossible Affordance of the Rose" an illuminating essay by David that places this late set of French language poems in the context of Rilke's overall aesthetic project, focusing in particular on the rose as a persistent motif for a 'Good' realized in Art. Several dozen other poems (French and German, all accompanied by English translations) are presented as "Kinfolk in the Wind of the Fields," an appendix providing further contextualization and background to this work.

Books are 6 by 9 inches and the 224 interior pages were offset printed in two colors by Sheridan Press in Pennsylvania on FSC certified heavyweight 80lb uncoated text paper. The covers, printed in three colors are a mix of offset and printing on a hand-fed, hand-cranked letterpress at the Horse & Buggy Press studio. This fine press book features a symth-sewn binding and wrap-around cover foredge flaps for durability. Each book is accompanied by a printed bookmark.

VIII

*De ton rêve trop plein,
fleur en dedans nombreuse,
mouillée comme une pleureuse,
tu te penches sur le matin.*

*Tes douces forces qui dorment,
dans un désir incertain,
développent ces tendres formes
entre joues et seins.*

VIII

Too full of your dream,
flower with so many within,
damp as one who weeps,
you lean towards the dawn.

Your sweet powers, that sleep
in an unsettled longing,
unfold these tender forms
between cheeks and breasts.

Rilke sang of actual roses, the tangible incarnadine flower, not some abstract Platonic ideal. In these intimate and luminous translations from his post-Elegies work, written in French, David Need rescues Rilke from the cult of New Age positivism, restoring his uncanny mystery, his harrowing commitment to dwell along the perilous and empowering borderline between inner necessity and a manufactured world of dead objects. The realm of Rilke's roses is chthonic and immanent. All aperture and cusp, fold and further fold, the flesh of the rose's petals permits both a bantering playfulness and the most profound experience of evanescence and fragility. Because they die into themselves each day, Rilke's roses are always undergoing loss and transformation; they are his highest allegories for praise and finitude, Orpheus and Eurydice conjoined. In the classic Rilkean gesture, they are always departing, always arriving – the impossible moment of plenitude and emptiness, Celan's 'niemandrose' – the poem that knows itself by knowing no one. Or as Rilke has it: "no one's sleep beneath so many lids..."

— Patrick Pritchett, Lecturer in History and Literature, Harvard University

DAVID NEED has taught at Duke University in the Department of Religion and the Slavic and Eurasian Studies Department since 1997. His poetry and essays on poetry have appeared in *Hambone*, *Talisman*, *Golden Handcuffs Review*, *Spoke*, and *Oyster Boy*. Since 2009, he has curated an occasional long-poem reading series “Arcade Taberna.” David’s chapbook, “Offshore St. Mark,” is scheduled to be published by Three Count Pour in 2014.

CLARE JOHNSON has exhibited widely throughout the UK (including at the Jerwood Space and Lauderdale House) before returning to her native Seattle in 2010. Solo exhibitions include a 35-piece drawing project about childhood experiences with asthma that is on permanent display at Guy’s Hospital in London. Awards include a ‘Best of Seattle’ from Seattle Magazine for her ongoing Post-it Note Project, which combines drawing and writing and was recognized as ‘Best New Take on the Memoir.’

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Translations and Essay by David Need | Pen and Ink Drawings by Clare Johnson

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