By the time he met Lou, Rilke had written already a relatively large number of poems. There had been a time in his life when he consciously set out to make himself a poet, and the oftentimes unfortunate results weighed on his mind. That his work had been insignificant and petty he had realized himself, and that realization was one of the causes that brought him to Munich. He had written already the three collections of poems, Larenopfer, Traumgekrönt, and Advent,[1] which were later united under the title Erste Gedichte. Besides these there were three pamphlets: Wegwartenhefte; the drama: Im Frühfrost; and some fifty contributions[2] to periodicals and newspapers.

None of these were outstanding. His poetry held promise of development; one reviewer commented that Rilke might turn out to become a good Lieder poet. The prose sketches and short stories differed only in style from the naturalistic literature that was prevalent in Germany. By no means could one call Rilke already a poet.

When Rilke began to write during the last decade of the 19th century, German literature was esteemed least of all the countries of Europe. The belated German naturalism, obviously so far behind the French masters, reached its climax only in 1892 with the first performance of Hauptmann's Weber. Subsequently German naturalism was carried to impossible extremes by Johannes Schlaf and Arno Holz. But 1892 saw more than the first performance of Die Weber. In 1892 also Stefan George presented his followers with his first poetry cycle Algabal, and founded the exclusive Blätter für die Kunst, while in

Vienna the precocious Hofmannsthal was writing poetry and plays that were haunted with an air of unreality. In 1892 the poem Vorfrühling and the drama Der Tod des Tizian; in 1893 Der Tor und der Tod was written. These achievements would soon bring German literature on par with what was being written in England, France, Scandinavia, and America, but as yet only few people had come in contact with or had been stirred by this new literature, least of all the young Rilke, who had probably never heard of it.[1] Rilke's earliest works are the products of artistic isolation from the broad world of literature, and isolation which was surely not insignificant as a cause for the esoteric qualities of all of Rilke's later works and the shyness with which they were introduced to the public.

Rilke came to Munich, unknown, and ignorant of the world of literature which would within a quarter of a century proclaim him Germany's greatest poet. Munich was to him a dreary city, dreary as all cities are to most young artists who attempt to live in them and to establish themselves as writers.

The most striking and the most complete picture of Rilke in Munich before his meeting with Lou he gave in the autobiographical sketch Ewald Tragy, whose date of composition has not been definitely established, but whose style and assurance reveal an author far more mature than the youth whose struggles and uncertainties he so understandingly depicts. Rilke arrived in Munich tired, and restless with expectation:

> "One will hardly believe it: Ewald Tragy sleeps a full fourteen hours. And it is a strange pitiful hotelbed, and in the railroad square, there is sun and noise since five o'clock already. He has even forgotten to dream, even though he knows that first dreams have a special meaning. He consoles himself with the fact that now everything can come true, regardless of whether one dreams or not, and he extends this sleep after all of yesterday like a long, long hyphen. Finished. Well, and now ? And now it can begin, life can begin, or whatever should begin, all in its proper order."[1]

But although Rilke waited for life to come and greet him, he waited in vain, and decided he must search for it. He lived the pointless existence of a vagabond, planless, driven by a vague hunger for reality. He decided to live and act as though he were at home. He waited for something, and he knows not what, and he has no one to ask what can be done about a case like his.

At times then, overcome with self-pity he thought of death with the wistful and lonely thoughts of a homeless poet:

> "And sometimes big bells ring out somewhere, bells he has never before heard, and then he folds his hands over his breast and closes his eyes and dreams that candles are burning on either side of his temples, seven high candles, with calm red flames, which are like blooms in this solemn sadness."[2]

He hopes for a letter, for any letter at all. But who should write him ? The days pass; autumn turns to winter. He is lonely without end. It snows, and the city's ugliness is buried under the snow. There are no letters, no visitors, and the evenings are without end.[3]

> "And just in these days his need for understanding is great; it grows in him, grows into an uncontrolled dry thirst, which rather than humbling him makes him bitter and stubborn. It occurs to him suddenly whether he cannot demand as a privilege what he vainly begs from all the world, whether he cannot demand it, like an ancient debt, which one collects at all costs, recklessly. And he demands of his mother: Come, give me what is mine.

> "It is a long long letter which he writes far into the night, ever faster, and with cheeks ever hotter. He began as though he were demanding a duty, and, before he knows it he is begging for grace, for a gift, for warmth and tenderness. 'Yet it is time,' he writes, 'yet am I soft and can be like wax in your hands. Take me, give me a form, make me finished.'
>
> "It is a cry for motherliness which far outdistances any woman, . . ."[1]

If it was a cry that outdistanced any woman, it was Lou who was there to receive him. He came to her, as he put it, still almost a child to a rich woman and she "took him into her arms and gently rocked his soul."[2]

Their friendship matured rapidly, although Lou was not drawn to Rilke by what he had written already,[3] but by the latent qualities in his character, by that which she hoped and believed he might become, by that, in other word, which she would make of him. The friendship between them was primarily a personal one; as in the case of Nietzsche, Rilke's writings were the direct expressions of his state of mind, and the influence which Lou had on Rilke's writings is secondary to that which she had on his character.

No record remains of the earliest part of their friendship. What is known is fragmentary, and it is perhaps fortunate that it should be so, else one might attempt analysis of human relationships which defy that mode of approach, one might forget over a scrutiny of details, the results and the conditions of the friendship which was born in a large city, in the winter of 1897 - 1898.

But spring came. The year was 1897. Rilke and Lou spent the summer in Wolfrathshausen, a village south of Munich, away from the city, away from the noise and confusion, the forced and artificial

manners which were foreign to both Rilke and Lou. Wolfrathshausen became the turning point of Rilke's life. Years later he would refer to the "pre-Wolfrathshausen element" in his life as something which he had to overcome when it reappeared in his memories or in his life.[1] A farm house in the country provided an idyllic setting, and freedom, not so much from the exigencies of city life as from the moral and physical oppression it exerts. In letters written many years later Rilke recalls one of his favorite memories, how they would walk barefooted through the dewy meadows, the great good earth in intimate contact with the frail body. It was a fashionable practice at the time; to Rilke it had special significance.

Wolfrathshausen established for Rilke a direct relation to nature and to himself; it signified one phase of the long sought redemption from artificiality. For Rilke it contained the might of a religious conversion. What Rilke learned at Wolfrathshausen was sincerity and directness, in style as well as in attitude; it was similar to Goethe's experiences in Strassburg under the tutelage of Herder. The dangers of Rilke character were primarily two: the superficial though eloquent sentimentality and the morbid abandonment to death in his thoughts and feelings to which Rilke was prone. Wolfrathshausen freed him, at least temporarily from both of these dangers, and that was why, ever afterwards he looked back with longing and gratitude to these days he spent together with Lou and her husband.

The fear that henceforth would periodically recur in Rilke's life was that his poetry was not deep enough, that it was wordy,

that his feelings did not penetrate the surface of things. Some years later his acquaintance with Rodin implanted in Rilke the conviction that his insights were not penetrating enough and led him to repudiate even the Stundenbuch as immature. Likewise the summer at Wolfrathshausen drove him to change both his style and his philosophy. The poem Fortschritt expresses Rilke's feelings:

> Und wieder rauscht mein tiefes Leben lauter,
> als ob es jetzt in breitern Ufern ginge.
> Immer verwandter werden mir die Dinge
> und alle Bilder immer angeschauter.
> Dem Namenlosen fühl ich mich vertrauter:
> mit meinen Sinnen, wie mit Vögeln, reiche
> ich in die windigen Himmel aus der Eiche,
> und in den abgebrochnen Tag der Teiche
> sinkt, wie auf Fischen stehend, mein Gefühl.[1]

A parenthetical parallel drawn with Nietzsche at this point will demonstrate why both Nietzsche and Rilke were susceptible to the influence of Lou. With Nietzsche the doubt was never of the method of searching for the truths in things but of the ideals themselves. Rilke found it necessary to search ever more thoroughly after the secrets of the things[2] (Die Dinge). Nietzsche maintained that to live meant to overcome ones old ideals:

> Ein andrer ward ich und mir selber fremd ?
> Mir selbst entsprungen ?
> Ein Ringer, der zu oft sich selbst bezwungen,
> Zu oft sich gegen eigne Kraft bestemmt,
> Durch eignen Sieg verwundet und gehemmt ? -[3]

The propensity to change made both writers susceptible to the influence of Lou Salomé, each in his own way. In the life of Rilke as in Nietzsche's life, Lou was the midwife, - in the Socratic sense, - who inaugurated for each a new and more important phase of thought and art.

The change in Rilke's style brought about by the summer in Wolfrathshausen was on the one hand, so far as prose was concerned a transition from sentimental naturalism to a highly refined symbolism,[4]

and on the other hand, so far as poetry went, it was a change from superficial imitation (particularly of Heine) to the careful though musical and airy quality of Die frühen Gedichte. Naturalism was not wholly expelled from Rilke's writing. It would occur again in the morbid phantasies of short stories[1] and in the autobiographical description of Malte Laurids Brigge,[2] and wherever it occurred it was like a musical theme the reminder of Rilke's "pre-Wolfrathshausen"[3] life. Naturalism was linked with the military school psychosis[4] from which Lou Andreas-Salome's motherly understanding freed him, and with the neurotic motif that began with his mother's dressing him as a girl and runs like a nightmare through Rilke's subconsciousness, climaxing in the terrifying descriptions[5] of Malte Laurids Brigge.

The dew that covered the meadows of Wolfrathshausen freed Rilke from more than the dust on his feet.

The liberation from the oppressing memories of childhood was the gift of a new life. Rilke had looked forward impatiently; he had prepared himself for a great change. In Munich already he had written:

> "I ask myself so often in these days, as always in the time of a great revolution. I am in the early dawn of a new epoch.--- I have left the garden where I have long since walked myself tired."[6]

Remembering the days at Wolfrathshausen, he once commented from Rome:

> "The world lost its clouds for me, this ever-flowing forming and thereupon losing oneself which was the fate and fault of my first verses: this grew, animals which one distinguished, flowers which existed; I learned simplicity, learned slowly and ponderously how unobtrusive all things are, and I became mature to tell of things that are plain."[7]

Together with Lou he studied Italian art, the Renaissance from its first flowering in Florence to the Carraccis.[8] Eager studies were the external symptoms of the growth of character. They showed him the

reality of all things, though they seem ever so distant. Rilke became suddenly aware of how artificial the observations of his visit to Venice[1] had been, how he had rephrased the words of tourists. During this summer in Wolfrathshausen the conviction that his past had been unreal seized hold of Rilke. Many years later, in Paris, he wrote of his childhood, that he would have to live it again.[2]

At Wolfrathshausen, however, no such somber thoughts clouded his mind. It was the first time in his life that work took on a truly valid meaning for him. In a sense Lou had made of him a whole, had unified the fragments of him which fought with each other. Lou had shown him the possibility, the necessity indeed of finding a solid foundation for his feelings, hence for his poetry. Thus Rilke had solved for himself with Lou Salome's help, the problem of the young Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the problem of the elusive, vague, indefinite world which refuses to be captured, and which is nevertheless the source of poetry, at least of such poetry as Rilke, Hofmannsthal and George wrote. For Hofmannsthal[3] the ability to translate himself psychically into unreal worlds and remembrances of things past and future had known no limits. Rilke required of himself that these limits be posited by work, by methodical, careful labors, first in academic studies upon which he engaged time and again[4], and later by the patient contemplation, the self-discipline and the minuteness in observation he learned from Rodin.

At Wolfrathshausen Rilke first experienced the satisfaction of knowing, as the craftsman knows his trade. Often he described the pen as a sacred tool. Rilke discovered the certainty, the assurance,

and the self-containedness with which the craftsman faces his work. As he grew older, Rilke became more and more obsessed with the thought that every thing (jedes Ding) was worthy of being studied with devotion. As feverishly as his mind and body permitted, he worked to fill the many gaps in his intellectual experience. Significant is the difference that separates the craftsmanship of the symbolist with the craftsmanship of the naturalist. For the naturalist, craftsmanship is a consequence of his purpose to portray the reality of things; for the symbolist it is a justification, it is the duty with which he purchases the right to use his art as the vehicle for a highly personal experience.. The thirst for knowledge and craftsmanship was the only bulwark between Rilke and sentimentality, between Rilke and literary oblivion..

But Rilke the author had yet a long way ahead of him. On July 20 1897 his drama Im Frühfrost was given its premiere in Prague.[1] It failed to arouse much interest, and newspaper reviews were unenthusiastic. Together with Lou Rilke went to Wolfrathshausen.[2] It was one of his last visits to Prague, the place of his birth. What was old, the days of his youth had passed. The life at home with its emphasis on form, society and custom[3] became as a bad dream for him, fused with the sorrows of his youth which he had put behind him. For Lou only that which was real had meaning; only that which was genuine had value.

If the first period of Lou Andreas-Salomé's influence on Rainer Maria Rilke, - along with his outlook upon life and art, he had changed his name and his handwriting;[4] - was decicive for his

future, it was nevertheless from a literary point of view not very productive. Lou planned to move to Berlin for the winter, and in the spirit of his summer's efforts, Rilke enrolled at the University of Berlin for courses in history andart. His zealous intentions bore no fruit, since he could not reconcile himself to the methods of university education.[1]

Under the spell of that autumn and of Lou, Rilke wrote some of his most beautiful poems. They grew out of thircommon experiences and thircommon problems. The analyses and insights which Lou incorporated into her book Im Zwischenland were expressed by Rilke in poetry. For Rilke existed the same contradictions between childhood and youth which troubled Lou Salome. The drama Die weisse Fürstin[2] dates also, at least in its conception from this period. It was included later with Die Frühen Gedichte, and is psychologically linked to the "Mädchengedichte" of the Schmargendorf period in this fall of 1898. Between Rilke and Lou Andreas-Salomé there grew an exchange of ideas and feelings which influenced Rilke for the rest of his life. In his poems about girls and in Die weisse Fürstin Rilke attempts, I believe, to express some of the insights about the nature of girlhood and womanhood which Lou Salomé had given him.

Rilke's attitude toward his poetry and toward art in general became fixed. With the poems written at Schmargendorf his literary career, properly speaking, began. The themes that he treated in these poems would recur throughout the course of his life. Not insignificant is the fact that the symbol of the angel, which will play such a dominant role in the final Duineser Elegien appears already in a

cycle of poems called "Engellieder". The devotion with which Rilke approaches the art of his Frühe Gedichte will become characteristic for his whole life:

> Die armen Worte, die im Alltag darben,
> die unscheinbaren Worte lieb ich so.
> Aus meinen Festen schenk ich ihnen Farben,
> Da lächeln sie und werden langsam froh.
>
> Ihr Wesen, das sie bang in sich bezwangen,
> erneut sich deutlich, dass es jeder sieht;
> sie sind noch niemals im Gesang gegangen,
> und schauernd schreiten sie in meinem Lied.[1]

In her book on Rilke, Lou Salomé says that from the very beginning there existed a relationship between Rilke and the deathly nearness of life; this relationship Lou is inclined to interpret psychologically, and she explains its cause to be the hyperconsciousness from which Rilke suffered in regard to his body. Most of Rilke's writing before he met Lou was turned toward death. Death was the shadow over Rilke's whole life which grew out of his psychological structure and the unfortunate experiences of the military school. Not death as the opposite element to life, not death as the necessary prerequisite to life, but for the young Rilke death and life were inseparable; and the physical horrors of death were particularly attractive to an imagination which feasted on morbidity; One of the poems written in 1896, the year preceding Rilke's meeting with Lou reads:

> Man hat sie gestern hingebracht,
> Wo jene, die kein Grab sich kaufen,
> In Massen ruh'n. - Ein Erdenhaufen
> Deckt ihre erste, erste Nacht.

Dagegen war ihr Bettchen - Pracht!
Das Lailach ist so kalt, das fremde; . . .
Sie fröstelt in demselben Hemde
In dem sie fror in jener Nacht.

Eng ist ihr Bette überdacht
Auf Moder ruht es und auf Knochen.
Am Sarg hört sie die Würmer pochen
Just so, wie - ihm in jeder Nacht. [1]

Less than a year after he had written the poem, he met Lou. It was she who showed him that his attempts at poetry had been in the wrong directions, that such writing never would or could be great art.

Rilke's preoccupation with death[2] turned into if not a joyous acceptance of life, at least into an attempt to value it from the artists point of view, to find in it that which was worthy of being loved, instead of picking from it the horrible facets which satisfied only the morbidity of the imagination. That it was not a complete conversion is proved by the short stories which Rilke continued writing.[2] The case here was different from Nietzsche. Rilke did not have in him the strength or the determination to change his way. He was looking for something, but himself he was not at all sure what it was. Lou showed him a way which he was never strong enough to take completely. Again and again he relapsed into the "pre-Wolrathshausen" state of mind, and appealed to Lou for aid.

It was Lou who was alone capable of changing Rilke's fear of life and acceptance of death. It was not long since he met her that his fears and the shadow of death that hovered over his work had been completely forgotten, at least for the moment. The fear

of death became transformed into a mystical love, both for the wholeness of life and for its small and insignificant facets:

> Vor lauter Lauschen und Staunen sei still,
> du mein tieftiefstes Leben;
> dass du weisst, was der Wind dir will,
> eh noch die Birken beben.
>
> Und wenn dir einmal das Schweigen sprach,
> lass deine Sinne besiegen.
> jedem Hauche gib dich, gib nach,
> er wird dich lieben und wiegen.
>
> Und dann meine Seele sei weit, sei weit,
> dass dir das Leben gelinge,
> breite dich wie ein Feierkleid
> ueber die sinnenden Dinge.[1]

Through all the doubts and fears of his later life he would remember the affirmation of life that he had learned from Lou. Again and again he approaches death in his writings and his life, particularly in Malte Laurids Brigge and the Requiem.[2] But he never accepts it again as a universal principle; he has found it possible to reconcile the two in the mystical, philosophical theory of"one's proper death".(Der eigene Tod)

Besides the affirmation of life to which Lou Andreas-Salomé influenced Rilke, she bequeathed to him her homeland, which was the source of strength in her own life to which she always returned. Two visits which Rilke and Lou made to Russia in the spring of 1899 and the spring of 1900 are the focus of the effect that Russia exerted upon Rilke, but this effect was by no means limited to these two visits. Rilke planned, as a matter of fact, to visit Russia again, but his intentionswwere foiled by the Russo-Japanese war and by the direction of his own interests which gradually began to turn away from Russia as the ideals and memories of his journeys grew dim with time.

During the formative years that led up to the writing of Malte Laurids Brigge, during the decade that followed 1898 Russia was, as he himself called it, his spiritual home.

Soon after Rilke had come to Wolfrathshausen, he commenced, under the sympathetic guidance of Lou, intensive studies of Russian customs and of the Russian language. Languages came easily to Rilke, - Lou thought that Rilke should have studied philology, - he had a natural feeling for words, and it did not take long until he had become fairly proficient in the use of Russian. Together with Lou he read Tolstoy, Turgeniev, Dostoievsky, Lermontof, Pushkin, Gogol, and the dramas of Chekov.[1] The curiosity and the interest which they aroused in Rilke's mind and the desire to learn more about the homeland whence Lou derived her vitality and her faith, caused Rilke to join Lou and her husband in a visit to Russia. It was the spring of the year 1899.

Rilke wrote to his mother[2] to explain the purpose of the trip, saying it would be ultimately beneficial for his general education and expedient for purposes of making a living later on. Rilke was either fooling himself or his mother. The more valid motive, and probably the underlying one, was the restlessness with which he regarded the places of his youth, now that he had outgrown them. The vast possibilities, the emotional potentialities which his friendship with Lou had opened for Rilke, demanded a corresponding change of environment. He realized now that he had never had a home. Prague, where he was born, his father's house were now the haunts of disappointed hopes and repudiated ideals. Rilke hoped to find in Russia a homeland.

Rilke, although he was not convinced in just what respect, knew that the coming weeks and months would have a great effect on him; he wanted that it should be so, and readied himself for a great emotional experience. He felt himself growing[1] and though he was not sure of his destination, he knew that it would be a deciding factor in his life. "I believe it will be decided now, whether something shall become of me or not,"[2] he wrote to a friend. When Rilke arrived in Moscow on April 27, 1899, he was prepared for a profound emotional experience.

What Rilke expected, he received. The devotion and the energy which he had given to the preparations for his journey were returned to him in like measure. In spite of his exhaustion from the long journey he went into the city after only a short rest at the hotel. The impressions of the strange city rushed in upon his ready senses; the gigantic contours of a church at dusk, and at the sides two chapels silvered in the fog; on the steps pilgrims waited for the doors to be opened. Years later Rilke related:"This picture, so unusual to me, shook me in the very depths of my being. For the first time in my life I had the inexpressible feeling, something like a feeling of home - I felt strongly that I belonged to something, my God, to something in this world."[3]

The day after their arrival, the travelers from the West visited Tolstoi. Lou had used her connections to effect an invitation. Their visit was an example of Rilke's unrestrained enthusiasm for all things Russian. Again Rilke received the impressions of Tolstoi which Lou's analyses of his literature had led Rilke to expect.

It was true of Rilke even more than of Lou that he could never regard an artist or a work of art, except from his personal point of view. For Rilke things were as he saw them, and from every work of art/and every artist he gleaned only what was akin to his own character. Rilke, accordingly, was by no means disappointed by the visit to Tolstoy[1]; even though little was said, he was much impressed by Tolstoy's gigantic stature, and through all the barriers of language and custom he perceived the greatness of the man whom he had come to visit. It was all Rilke and Lou wanted; they were satisfied; and they disregarded the only piece of advice that Tolstoy gave them: not to participate in the popular Easter celebration, and not to be impressed by its superstition. Apparently Tolstoy had misunderstood the purpose of Rilke's visit.

What followed was perhaps the most important single experience in Rilke's life. He tells it himself, as he retold it to himself so many times, in a letter to Lou (1905):

> "For me there was but a single Easter; it was/in that night in that long, strange, unusual, excited night, when all the people crowded about, and the Iwan Welikij struck me in the darkness, stroke upon stroke. That was my Easter and I believe it suffices for a whole life; the message was given to me in that night in Moscow strangely powerful, was given to my heart and to my blood. . . ."[2]

The days which followed were an anticlimax.[3] Most of his time Rilke spent in churches emotionally recapitulating the experiences of the Easter night. The gloomy darkness of Moscow's churches made a particular impression upon Rilke, for whom it represented a nexus from the physical world to the infinity of the emotions:

Du Dunkelheit aus der ich stamme,
ich liebe dich mehr als die Flamme,
welche die Welt begrenzt
in dem sie glänzt
für irgendeinen Kreis
aus dem heraus kein Wesen von ihr weiss.
. . .
Ich glaube an Nächte.[1]

In her novel Rodinka,[2] Lou Andreas-Salome describes a visit to a Russian church and the strange solemnity of huge mosaics, the glitter of gold and colored stones, the icons schematically painted and enveloped by impressive frames of metal. These icons and the darkness they conveyed became the subject of the first part of the Stundenbuch[3] which Rilke wrote that fall after he had returned from Russia.

Rilke stayed in Moscow only one week. Via St. Petersburg he returned home to Germany.

The next year, in the following spring, Rilke and Lou returned to Russia. This time they arrived after the Easter celebrations, and Professor Andreas stayed at home. Rilke was as actively absorbing what he saw and heard as he had on his first visit. But they had more time now; the churches not only, but the people as well were just what Lou's descriptions had led Rilke to expect.[4]

The first part of their stay was devoted to inspecting churches and museums, cloisters and private art collections. Lou and Rilke stayed in Moscow for three weeks; they paid Tolstoy another visit, this time at Jasna Polyana; the impressions of the first visit were merely reiterated. Then the journey went south, and Rilke was seized by the second great recognition: the infinite width of the land, where no obstacle stood in the way of the imagination,

no barriers inhibited the loning of the soul. The endless[1] plains of southern Russia, the wide horizons, the possibility of traveling for days on end fascinated Rilke. They gave him a sense of loneliness they were the physical symbols of loneliness. Rilke called them "home.

Russian literature, as Lou Salomé interpreted it, had prepared Rilke for his encounter with the Russian peasants themselves. He had read Dostoievski's Poor People, Tolstoi's War and Peace; he had translated Chekhov's Sea Gull for a German performance.[3] In the course of this second journey, Rilke lived with a peasant family; he was introduced to the peasant poet Droshin and was fascinated by his poetry. Rilke found there a mature simplicity which bespeaks a deep and silent, a lonely man, a fullness of tone, agility and movement in the rhythm. Rilke himself attempted to write poetry in Russian; Lou said he had a natural feeling for the language. But the grammar left something to be desired.

More even than the literature, the peasants impressed Rilke. They were as Lou Andreas-Salomé had described them to him: about their simplicity there was no self-consciousness. There was nothing sentimental about their emotions. They possessed a naivité which the West had lost. The faith that was implicit in their lives won Rilke's heart. He returned to them the love, the bond of human sympathy which bound them to their fellowman. Rilke felt that beneath the artificial differences of convention he was their brother, and his desire for a home found its ultimate satisfaction when he was treated by the poor peasants, with whom he lived for a few days, as a son.[4]

The dream of a romantic had come true. What Herder had found in Ossian and (strangely enough) in Shakespeare[1], what Hoelderlin's Hyperion found in Greece, what Novalis found in the middle ages, Rilke found in Russia. But whereas Herder, Hoelderlin and Novalis had visited the Scottish highlands, the groves of Attica, and the mediaeval monastery in spirit only, Rilke visited the Ukraine in flesh and blood. A dream of Goethe's had also once come true in Italy, but the artist had been more mature, and consequently the fruits of the Italian journey were artistically more complex. But the immediate echoes of Rilke's stay in Russia were naive in the same way that Schiller called Goethe's writing naive as opposed to sentimental. If it is true, as Thomas Mann maintains, that not only Adrian Leverkühn's symphonic works but all modern art is criticism, and many examples seem to prove it: Joyce's Portrait of the Artist, Marcel Proust, Stefan George's Algabal, Mann's own Magic Mountain, to name only a few, then Rilke's Geschichten vom Lieben Gott[2] is a prominent exception, and one of the most striking ones in modern German literature. In these stories Rilke has captured the childlike simplicity of the Russian peasant. They are children's stories, naively written in the first person and they deal with an anthropomorphic God and a theomorphic people. The two are inseparable; their indivisibility is Rilke's happiness. When he wrote "Trotzdem ist das Leben etwas ganz prächtiges."[3] he was convinced of it.

During those happy weeks all things Russian acquired the vast extensiveness that characterized the plains of the Ukraine. Not only the Russian sky, the endlessly winding Volga, but the love in the hearts of the people, their generosity and their simplicity,

fused into an infinite, indivisible Spinozistic substance.

"'On what could Russia border on these two sides?'" asks a cripple in the Geschichten vom Lieben Gott.

"'You know it!' I exclaimed.

'Perhaps on God ?'

'Yes,' I replied, 'on God.'

'So,' - my friend nodded understandingly. Then he grew doubtful.

'But is God a country ?'

'I don't think so,' I replied, ' but in primitive languages many things havethe same name. There is a country which is called God, and he who rules it is called God also. Simple people can often not distinguish between their country and their emperor. Both are great and good, fearful and great.'"[1]

Russia was bounded by God,[2] and the Russian people were ruled by God. God[3] was Russia's crowning perfection.

Russia's God is reflected in Rilke's writing principally in Das Stundenbuch and in the Geschichten vom Lieben Gott. In the stories a God of the people is depicted, a God who has been cut off from the humans he created, by their sophistication. In a simple, lucid, warm conversational style a traveler who has just returned from Russia tells stories of God who loves, longs for, and bleeds for the human race that has forgotten him. The grown-up people, a neighbor and a schoolteacher, are too busy and too sensible to understand these stories. Only the children intuitively know their meaning. Ellen Key[4] thought that the God of these stories, resembling as he does the dethroned, abused divinity of Niels Lyhne, was altogether Rilke's God. Das Stundenbuch, however, reveals an esoteric God of personal revelation. The author of Das Stundenbuch is not a teller of children's stories, but rather a praying, secluded monk. The first[5] part of the poetry cycle is called Das Buch vom mönchischen Leben (The Book of the Monkish Life) and reflects his ardent piety. The poems are written in part as

prayers; many of them are addressed to God. They do not attempt to express any coherent system of theology, and yet they involve a well-defined view of God and of the world. The central figure of the monk, his intoxication with God, his fundamental way of looking at the world, and the hauntingly beautiful verse in which he voices his soul are the factors which unify the sixty-seven poems of Das Buch vom Mönchischen Leben. That this first part of the Stundenbuch was written in only three weeks makes for a further unity of thought and theme. Above all it was the intellectual and emotional relationship with Lou Andreas-Salomé which inspired the all-embracing love for Russia and its God. Lou Andreas-Salomé made these poems possible, and when they were finished, they were "laid in the hands of Lou." ("Gelegt in die Hände von Lou" is the dedication of the Stundenbuch.)[1]

Its monkish author has lived and is living in continual readiness for the whisperings of God. His night like that of Samuel is punctuated by the repeated cry: Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. And when time has brought to maturity his love and his understanding of God, this monkish poet is overcome by a revelation:

> Da neigt sich die Stunde und rührt mich an
> mit klarem, metallenem Schlag:
> mir zittern die Sinne. Ich fühle: ich kann -
> und ich fasse den plastischen Tag.[2]

What is more, the poet feels that in perceiving it, he is actually completing the unfinished work of God. A mystical, holy relationship is assumed to pre-exist between God and the monk.

Nichts war noch vollendet, eh ich es erschaut,
ein jedes Werden stand still.
Meine Blicke sind reif, und wie eine Braut
kommt jedem das Ding, das er will.[1]

In the mystical communion between the monk and God, the oceanic infinity of feeling denies every distinction of magnitude. All objects of victorious emotion are reduced, - or magnified -, to a single scale of size. Their perspective is taken from them and they appear, like the paintings of anonymous mediaeval artists to speak to the soul without the intermediate services of reason. Love is the solvent which unbinds the chains of the soul, individual, collective, and universal:

Nichts ist mir zu klein, und ich lieb es trotzdem
und mal es auf Goldgrund und gross
und halte es hoch, und weiss nicht wem
löst es die Seele los. . .[2]

Having explained the attitude of readiness which he feels for supernatural revelation, the monkish poet proceeds to define his own position in the universe, toward God, and toward the mystery of his own life:

Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen,
die sich über die Dinge ziehn.
Ich werde den letzten vielleicht nicht vollbringen,
aber versuchen will ich ihn.

Ich kreise um Gott, um den uralten Turm,
und ich kreise jahrtausendelang;
und ich weiss noch nicht: bin ich ein Falke, ein Sturm
oder ein grosser Gesang.[3]

The image is of the poet as a bird, a storm, or a song rising up and circling about God. The three terms of the metaphor are successive approximations to the poet's visualisation of the soul. God is represented by a tower, the symbol for impenetrable secrecy, inner

darkness, and ageless existence. The poet pictures himself as surveying from a high vantage point the things of the world, circling eternally about the divine reality; but for Rilke, as we shall attempt to show it was not so. Rilke could not circle harmoniously around the experience he had so ardently sought. His, rather, was a parabolic motion which swept him away from his God. Russia in Rilke's life was like a receding light, shining ever more dimly from the distant shore, magnified by the traveler's longing until it vanishes beyond the horizon, and he is left alone, and in darkness.

The God of the Stundenbuch is not a god of evolution or of change, in his most constructive aspect he is a god of being, an ideal of steadfastness and sameness. Growth and mutation are conceived of as being enclosed by his warm, wise hands:

> Ich lese es heraus aus deinem Wort
> aus der Geschichte der Gebärden,
> mit welchen deine Hände um das Werden
> sich rundeten, begrenzend warm und weise.
> Du sagtest leben laut und sterben leise
> und wiederholtest immer wieder: Sein.[1]

This ideal of inner steadfastness was a contribution of Lou Andreas-Salomé to Rilke's life. Before he met her, his thought and his emotions had been flying restlessly from one shallow contemplation to the next. Russia became for Rilke, through the encouragement of Lou, a symbol of cosmic constancy. Within a few years universals would already appear inadequate, and Rilke would turn from the universal to the particular, from God to the work of art, in the atelier of Rodin.

God is indefinable. What no one has yet dared to desire, emotional oneness with God, shall sometime be inevitable for the monk. With his most reverent feelings he would express that which has never been said:

> Ich glaube an alles noch nie Gesagte.
> Ich will meine frömmsten Gefühle befrein.
> Was noch keiner zu wollen wagte,
> wird mir einmal unwillkürlich sein.[1]

Still the attempt to define God is hybris; the monk is aware of his mistake, but since he is one with God, the word sin has no meaning, and the attempt which is a prayer is its own expiation.

> Und ist das Hoffart, so lass mich hoffärtig sein
> für mein Gebet,
> das so ernst und allein
> vor deiner wolkigen Stirne steht.[2]

The definition of God, however, shall not be direct or explicit. God's nature forbids that man should describe him immediately. God's very closeness, and this is a first paradox, forbids that the monk should be skillful or strong enough to portray him directly. In the gilded icons of his churches the monk finds the medium of description, in the design of the images he finds the pattern, and in the colors he finds the substance for portraying God.

> Wir holen aus den alten Farbenschalen
> die gleichen Striche und die gleichen Strahlen,
> mit denen dich der Heilige verschwieg.
>
> Wir bauen Bilder vor dir auf wie Wände;
> so dass schon tausend Mauern um dich stehn.
> Denn dich verhüllen unsre frommen Hände,
> sooft dich unsre Herzen offen sehn.

To see God is to hide him from our sight. Moses covered his eyes before the burning bush. To be aware of our closeness to God is

to draw a veil between us and him. Oneness with God implies unconsciousness. The names we give him, the concepts through which we conceive him: all these separate us from God.

> Du, Nachbar Gott, wenn ich dich manches Mal
> in langer Nacht mit hartem Klopfen störe, -
> so ist's, weil ich dich selten atmen höre
> und weiss: Du bist allein im Saal.
> Und wenn du etwas brauchst, ist keiner da,
> um deinem Tasten einen Trank zu reichen:
> ich horche immer. Gib ein kleines Zeichen.
> Ich bin ganz nah.
>
> Nur eine schmale Wand ist zwischen uns,
> durch Zufall; denn es könnte sein:
> ein Rufen deines oder meines Munds -
> und sie bricht ein
> ganz ohne Lärm und Laut.
>
> Aus deinen Bildern ist sie aufgebaut.[1]

The preponderance of feeling and the total absence of logic in the concepts of the Stundenbuch are clearly to be seen from the preceding analysis. Still their irrationality is not sufficient cause for ignoring these concepts or for condemning Rilke's poetry. There are more powerful forces in the world than reason, and the significance of Rilke's Stundenbuch would seem to be twofold. In the first place, it had a pivotal place in his own development as a personality and as a poet. In the second place it was received in Germany by a fair number of intellectuals[2] as the final attempt to achieve a religious conviction in German literature. The Stundenbuch is to a limited extent a mirror of the aspirations of the upper Bourgeoisie in Germany. Rilke's "ersatz" religion was but another symptom of the moral bankruptcy that made the chaos of the twentieth century possible.

For Rilke himself the Stundenbuch was only a temporary solution. Already in its poems certain insoluble contradictions become evident. Our immediate perception of God is a veil that hides him from us. He is infinite, and yet he is like the darkness that hovers within two folded hands. He is the world and its life, he is a living tree, he speaks from the furrows of a face, and yet he is dark. Darkness is one of the most significant attributes by which the monk understands God. God is night. Rilke is following in the footsteps of Novalis.[1]

> Du bist so dunkel; meine kleine Helle
> an deinem Saum hat keinen Sinn.
> Dein Wille geht wie eine Welle,
> und jeder Tag ertrinkt darin.[2]

and notwithstanding:

> Dein allererstes Wort war: Licht.

It appears that God is a contradiction, and the relationship of the monk to the divinity is contradictory in its very roots. The darkness of the monk's own cell has been confused with God:

> Ich liebe meines Wesens Dunkelstunden,
> in welchen meine Sinne sich vertiefen;
> in ihnen hab ich, wie in alten Briefen,
> mein täglich Leben schon gelebt gefunden
> und wie Legende weit und überwunden.[3]

Alas, not only the attributes of God and of the monk have been confused in the darkness that envelops them both, but their roles have been exchanged as well. The creator has become the created:

> Wir bauen an dir mit zitternden Händen,
> und wir türmen Atom auf Atom.
> Aber wer kann dich vollenden,[4]
> du Dom.

He is built by men; to experience him means to build him. Rilke has made one of the most important of Lou Andreas-Salomé's ideas his own.[1] Men are the laborers on the temple that is God:

> Werkleute sind wir: Knappen, Jünger, Meister
> und bauen dich, du hohes Mittelschiff[2]

God has become so intimately associated with the monkish poet that the two can no longer be separated. He cannot live without God and God cannot live without him:

> Was wirst du tun, Gott, wenn ich sterbe ?
> Ich bin dein Krug, (wenn ich zerscherbe?)
> Ich bin dein Trank (wenn ich verderbe?)
> Bin dein Gewand und dein Gewerbe,
> mit mir verlierst du deinen Sinn.[3]

This juxtaposition of God and man was similar to that at which Nietzsche had arrived. Once, to be sure, God was real, and then he was lost like a ring[4]; he succumbed to the turmoil of the city,[5] as he had previously perished in earlier ages. Rilke was clearly influenced by Lou Andreas-Salome's historical theology:

> Du gingst in Tausenden verloren,
> und alle Opfer wurden kalt
> bis du in hohen Kirchenchoren
> dich rührtest hinter goldnen Toren;
> und eine Bangnis die geboren,
> umgürtete dich mit Gestalt.[6]

Ever since his re-creation God has been enigmatic for mankind, and he is enigmatic for the poet as he writes;

> Ich weiss: Du bist der Rätselhafte
> um den die Zeit in Zögern stand.
> O wie so schön ich dich erschaffte
> in einer Stunde die mich strafte,
> in einer Hoffart meiner Hand.[7]

God had become a shadow of Rilke's own thought and aspirations. Where Rilke had hoped to find strength there was now none left. The visions of God in the Stundenbuch overshadowed Rilke's life. They did not illuminate it. It was true: the God who seemed for a moment to have been found was lost again, "Du gingst in Tausenden verloren."[1] was applicable to the God of the monkish poet as well as to the God of the homeless people of the great cities.[2] What remained was a sickly body and an exhausted mind:

> STIMME eines jungen Bruders.
>
> Ich verrinne, ich verrinne
> wie Sand, der durch Finger rinnt.
> Ich habe auf einmal so viele Sinne,
> die alle anders durstig sind.
> Ich fühle mich an hundert Stellen
> schwellen und schmerzen.
> Aber am meisten mitten im Herzen.
>
> Ich möchte sterben. Lass mich allein.
> Ich glaube, es wird mir gelingen,
> so bange zu sein,
> dass mir die Pulse zerspringen.[3]

Das Stundenbuch represents the first step in the poetic development of Rilke. It stands at the beginning of an evolution which culminated in the Duineser Elegien. Changes begin to be perceptible already in the second and third parts of Das Stundenbuch; changes in content rather than in style, they reflect Rilke's new environment and his slow alienation from the God of the first part. The factor of unity is the impact of Russia on Rilke's imagination. The differences and the developments that separate the three parts of Das Stundenbuch are summarized remarkably well by their titles: "The Book Concerning the Monkish Life"; "The Book Concerning Pilgrimage"; "The Book Concerning Poverty and Death." From faith through pilgrimage to poverty and death

was also the history of Rilke's life.

When Rilke and Lou Andreas-Salomé returned to Germany from the second journey to Russia it was already August 1900. Now, for the first time since their initial meeting in Munich some 3½ years previously, Rilke and Lou parted ways, not merely externally, but to some extent also spiritually. Rilke had learned all that Lou Andreas-Salomé could teach him. She had fulfilled for him the functions of a mother. Rigid editorial censorship obscures any love affair that may or may not have been between them. Still there was a considerable difference in age. Rilke was twenty-five; Lou Andreas-Salomé was thirty-nine. After the overwhelming and emotionally exhausting experiences of the two journeys, the Easter night of 1899, the Volga journey, the days with the Russian peasants, the icons and the dark churches of Kiev, an anticlimax was almost inevitable. Rilke's experiences in Russia had been rich, but he had not been willing or able to remain in the land that allegedly meant his home to him. Now he would no longer stay under the tutelage of Lou although she had shaped his life. Rilke felt that he had a calling. He was convinced that he had grown to maturity. The result of his confidence was his marriage in the spring of 1901 to Clara Westhoff.

But his childhood, the "pre-Wolfrathshausen" element would not be overcome. He could not live in a close relationship with his family for any length of time. In Lou Andreas-Salomé he confided:

> "What was my house to me if not strangeness for which I was to work, and what are the people close to me if not visitors who will not leave."[1]

> "I used to believe it would be better once I had a home, a wife, and a child, things real and undeniable. I believed that thereby I should become more visible, more tangible, more actual. . . But it was a reality outside of me . . ."[1]

He turned to Paris, to the sculptor Rodin and he was disappointed both with the artist and with himself. Again he wrote to Lou Salome:

> "I have experienced so many confusing things, experiences, such as that Rodin in his seventieth year should simply lapse into wrong, as though all his infinite work had not been. . . Some sticky smallness, which in times past he has probably pushed out of his way dozens of times, . . . which had lurked and overcame him as in a game, and now makes his old age be something grotesque and ridiculous - how shall I absorb such experiences ?"[2]

The joy which the craftsmanlike artist derived from his work was real and great. But the Neue Gedichte did not suffice, although their author declared that poetry was an escape for the poet.[3] He was convinced now that he had not "achieved his childhood", (dass er seine Kindheit nicht geleistet habe) and that he had avoided it, that he had invented something to put into its place. And when Lou Salomé visited him in Paris he said to her with melancholy voice: "You see, it is like a fairy tale, where one is concerned with flinging someone who has been enchanted into a well at midnight. Three nights in succession the redeeming hour tolls. In vain. --- Whence take the courage ?!"

Russia faded in the distance. Occasionally Rilke would recapitulate the experience in a letter to Lou:

> "To know one's way and to be sure in the uttermost and farthest regions makes walking so hard . . .
> That Russia is my home is one of the great and secret assurances from which I live. From this silence, when it is given to

> me, I will sometimes lift myself unto you as the saint of that vast homeland which I cannot reach, struck by the knowledge that you bright star stand just above the spot where I am most afraid and darkest."[1]

The "pre-Wolfrathshausen" terrors had secretly grown. The futile attempts to suppress them had only caused them to multiply. They appeared now as the painful contradiction which tore Rilke away from his family into loneliness and which in his loneliness tore at the innermost being. Lou Andreas-Salomé represented for Rilke all that might have been; he wrote to her:

> "For you see, I am a stranger and a pauper. And I shall pass; but in your hands shall everything remain which once might have been my home, if I had been stronger."[2]

The oppressive atmosphere of the metropolis hastened the outbreak of an inevitable crisis:

> "I would tell you, dear Lou, that Paris was an experience for me similar to the military school; as at that time an ominous amazement seized me, so now the fright of all that which in an unspeakable confusion is called life seized me again."[3]

Rilke planned vaguely to lose himself in formal studies at some university, but nothing came of his plans. The only thing he could do, he did. It was the attempt to recapitulate his lost childhood that turned him away from the mystically symbolistic style of Das Stundenbuch and compelled him to purge his troubled soul with a naturalism such as he had been wont to write before he met Lou Salomé. The difference was that while before Wolfrathshausen his writing had been superficial if not insincere, now Rilke was writing from deadly earnest necessity. His style was tinged with expressionism, so violent was his affliction; the street scenes of Paris overpowered him:

> "There were old women who set down a heavy basket on some projection of a wall (very small women, whose eyes dried out like puddles), and when they wanted to pick it up again, slowly and awkwardly a long rusty hook pushed itself from under their sleeve, instead of a hand, and advanced directly and without hesitation upon the handle of the basket."[1]

Rilke's true position as the author of Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge, - under that title he collected and published the records of his Parisian crisis, - is plotted by the parable of the prodigal son which closes the second volume of the book. Rilke re-evaluates the story in his own terms. "One will hardly convince me," he writes, "that the story of the prodigal son is not the legend of him who did not want to be loved."[2] The prodigal son fled from home because he could not bear being loved where he was not understood. Love, in other words, was too great and heavy a responsibility to accept, a stifling burden. The prodigal son returned home and he could stay, only because

> "... he realized day by day that the love on which they prided themselves and to which they secretly encouraged each other, did not concern him. He almost had to smile when they strained themselves, and it became clear how little they could mean him.
>
> "What did they know who he was. It was now terribly hard to love him, and he felt that only One was able. But He would not yet."[3]

The search for the God who is not yet ready to love epitomizes[4] the struggle that went into the making of Malte Laurids Brigge. The God of Das Stundenbuch encompassed and surrounded the Monk in every object in the world. On the streets of Paris it was different. The people seemed to have been abandoned by God. Everywhere was fear, poverty, distress, and decay. It was necessary for Rilke as a human being to take account of this misery. There-

fore Rilke the artist could not ignore it. In Malte Laurids Brigge the wretchedness of the Parisian poor is the orchestration for the poets own misery. - The harmonic union of the melody, which is Rilke's attempt to "achieve his childhood" with the orchestral support, fear-ridden naturalistic description, gave Rilke momentary relief. Rilke paints his own life in symbols, the life of Paris in crass naturalism. Like Joyce's Ulysses, Malte Laurids Brigge is a fusion of two currents, symbolism and naturalism.

Rilke realized that the symbolistic mysticism of Das Stundenbuch was inadequate for him. The God of Das Stundenbuch was inadequate, and this attempt make him real by reconciling him with the sordid reality of life and autobiography turns the immediate, all-embracing, oceanic God of Das Stundenbuch into the vague divinity who was not yet prepared to love. "From now on," comments Lou Salomé, "the divine element in Rilke appeared more distant."[1] After the completion of Malte Laurids Brigge Rilke concerned himself briefly with a speech[2] he planned to give on the love of God for man, and he turned to Spinoza's geometrical proof[3] that God does not love man in the conventional meaning of the term 'love'. The God of Russia, the God of the peasants and of the broad plains was fading irrevocably.

Having found momentary relief by giving concrete expression to his terrors in the notebooks of Malte, Rilke sent the book to Lou Salomé begging her to tell him her opinion. In July 1903 he had already included a few pages of the future book in letters to her. Lou Andreas-Salome alone had known Rilke's "pre-Wolfrathshausen" existence; she alone could know whether what he wrote was true.

While writing the book, Rilke had become convinced that it would be a great divide in his life. When he had finished it he thought for a moment that he would never write anything else and instead become a country doctor. He could not, even if he had wanted to. It turned out that, as he said, all the water had run off to the old side and he descended into a desert from which he saw no exit. He was worse off than before because the "other one", Malte, who had perished, had weakened him.[1]

Rilke wrote to Lou Salomé asking for advice. What was there for him to do ? Malte Laurids Brigge had failed and the novel about the military school at St. Pölten which Rilke had planned was never written. The God of Das Stundenbuch had abandoned him. Lou Andreas-Salomé, in accordance with her new interests, suggested psychoanalysis. A common friend, Gebsattel, was consulted; he was willing to undertake the treatment. Yet Rilke knew the cure to be worse than the disease. He wrote to Lou:

> "I am thinking of consulting a physician less than before. Psychoanalysis is too thorough a help for me, it helps once and for all, it puts in order, and to find myself in order one of these days would perhaps be more hopeless than this disorder."[2]

How poignantly Rilke was aware of the source of his art is evident from a letter to Gebsattel himself: (Jan. 14, 1912)

> "It still seems to me that actually my work is nothing else than such a treatment. How else . . . should I have hit upon the work in the first place ? [3]

Although the God himself had vanished, a certain piety and reverence for art and the emotional experiences with which it was inextricably bound up remained:

> "My piety keeps me from . . . this correction of the whole page of life that has already been written, which I would think of as being corrected in red, like a copybook in school."[4]

A week later he protested even more strongly to Lou Salome:

> "Something like a disinfected soul is the result, a monstrosity, living, corrected in red, like a page of a school exercise."[1] (Jan. 20, 1912)

To Rilke psychoanalysis could not be a substitute for Russia and its God. The only solution was work. On the next day, January 21, 1912 Rilke sent his patron the first of the ten Duino Elegies. Ten years intervened until the last one was finished, and during those ten years Rilke suffered indescribably. As always he confided in Lou:

> "Here, Lou, is another one of my confessions. Are the symptoms those of the long reconvalescence which is my life ? Are they the signs of a new disease? I wish I could be with you for a week sometime, to listen and to talk."[2]

His letters are the documents of his suffering. "My body," he wrote to Lou, "threatens to become the caricature of my spirit." Two years later, from Paris, he complained:"I torture myself like a dog who has a thorn in his paw . . . and with each step he is not dog but thorn, something which he cannot comprehend and which cannot be." Again the thought that he should write no more occurred to him. He visited Lou Salome in Goettingen and for a few hours recaptured in conversations the joy of the Russian past that was fading and was now barely visible on the horizon of his life. He wrote in her diary paragraphs which seem to be merely continuations of the notebooks of Malte. Rilke retired to the chateau at Muzot to live alone and to await the final surge of productivity that he knew would have to come.

Year upon year he waited, until one day the waiting of many years seemed to coalesce in a single overwhelming upsurge of mind and soul. Struck be a storm he stood, and his words told of all that had happened to him, like one surge of a mighty wind.

> "- Lou, dear Lou, this Saturday, February 11 at six o'clock I put down my pen, after the last completed Elegy, the tenth.---- Think! I have been permitted to survive to this point. Through everything. Wonder. Blessing. - Everything within a few days. It was a hurricane - - -: All that was fiber and tissue, framework in me, has groaned (gekracht) and given way. - - -
>
> "They exist! They exist!"[1]

He was like a man signaling to a friend on a distant mountain top; Lou Andreas-Salomé alone knew what the Elegies meant to him. She had predicted the relapse into suffering that would follow.

The anti-climax that followed corresponded to more than the ups and downs of the creating artist.[2] The angel of the Elegies had a reality of which the artist had inevitably had to deprive himself. "To the extent that the angels of the Elegies are actual being beyond the reality of the work of art, they surpassed their author ... and questioned his validity."[3] The angels made all things insignificant except their own being. Hence their author succumbed to them. "Faith appears here as the last step which art takes in ~~the~~ ecstasy at its furthest boundary."[4] The part of man which is not artistic, the human man is sacrificed. For Rilke this sacrifice would have been unnecessary if he had been able to cling to any kind of faith, religious, speculative, or mystical. Rilke did not spare himself. "Never ceasing in the care for his work, never considering what would await the human being who had given himself up for that prophecy, never considering whether insight into that which was all too great would not crush <u>him</u>".[5]

> Dass ich dereinst, am Ausgang der grimmigen Einsicht,
> Jubel und Ruhm aufsinge zustimmenden Engeln,
> Dass von den klargeschlagenen Hämmern des Herzens
> Keiner versage an weichem, zweifelndem oder
> reissendem Saiten. . .[1]

These angels are not intermediaries between God and man. Their appearance has created a new horizon which excludes and takes no account of the God of Das Stundenbuch who was so close, so intimate and so warm. The angels replace him as the transcendental being which links this world with the above. The God of Russia had been inclusive of everything, an infinite idea which encompassed nature and the individual and embraced both in the same loving arms. But the angels of the Elegies are cold and fearful:

> Jeder Engel ist schrecklich. Und dennoch, weh mir,
> ansing ich euch, fast tödliche Vögel der Seele,
> wissend um euch . . .
> Frühe Geglückte, ihr Verwöhnten der Schöpfung,
> Höhenzüge, morgenrötliche Grate
> aller Erschaffung, - Pollen der blühenden Gottheit,
> Gelenke des Lichtes, Gänge, Treppen, Throne,
> Räume aus Wesen, Schilde aus Wonne, Tumulte
> stürmisch entzückten Gefühls . . .[2]

The angels have usurped the unified richness of the monk's paradise. Like Kafka's doorkeeper they stand implacable warders of the beyond. What we might dream to be, they are: and thus they condemn us. Their reality extinguishes the fire that created them; their superiority destroys our being.[3] Despairing we ask:

> Schmeckt denn der Weltraum,
> in den wir uns lösen, nach uns ? Fangen die Engel
> wirklich nur Ihriges auf, ihnen Entströmtes,
> oder ist manchmal, wie aus Versehen, ein wenig
> unseres Wesens dabei ? . . .[4]

What can the poet do but cling to the stark realities of this our world, like crags to which the shipwrecked sailor fetters himself

in desparation. The metaphysical visions of Das Stundenbuch have vanished.

> "Kreise dem Engel die Welt, nicht die unsägliche, ihm
> Kannst du nicht grosstun mit herrlich erfülltem; im Weltall,
> wo er fühlender fühlt bist du ein Neuling, drum zeig,
> ihm das Einfache, das, von Geschlecht zu Geschlechtern
> gestaltet,
> als ein Unsriges lebt neben der Hand und im Blick.
> Sag ihm die Dinge. Er wird staunender stehn; wie du
> standest
> bei dem Seiler in Rom, oder beim Töpfer am Nil.[1]

The poet turns toward the realities of this world because the beyond overpowers him. But this world does not give him salvation, and his prayers cannot transcend the realm of the earth. Frustrated he cries out:

> Wer wenn ich schriee, hörte mich denn aus der Engel
> Ordnungen ? und gesetzt selbst es nähme
> einer mich plötzlich ans Herz: ich verginge von seinem
> stärkern Dasein.

Just that happened to Rilke: he succumbed to a reality that was greater than he. He succumbed because of the peculiarities of his character which made him susceptible to visions and recognitions of overwhelming impact from which other, less sensitive men are protected by the dullness of their sensitivity. Rilke's last years were darkened by unbelievable physical and emotional suffering. Of his friends, Lou Andreas-Salomé stood closest to him, and although she could not help him, she understood him best. Five years after Rilke's death which in its gruesome pain surpassed the suffering of his life, Lou Salomé wrote:

> "Only softly can one speak of things which lie so deeply embedded in the background (of human experience) as this painful breakthrough of the Elegies. It lasted a whole decade as though the human being were forcibly resisting the perverting drive to production, the human being who had

to sacrifice himself as its victim: 'Denn ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.' 'Es gelang', the form proclaimed the final success. It held, the human being shattered. A work of art stands in peace and promise, but the transparent veil, which hides the uttermost resources and the fearful dangers of what we pleasantly call 'aesthetic', is thin.

"On this pattern Rainer Maria Rilke invented for himself the definition of beauty, where, - hardly hoping, - yet a shy intercession for humanity is included:

"'Denn das Schöne ist nichts
als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch gerade ertragen
und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen verschmäht
uns zu zerstören.'"[1]

Rilke knew that Lou Andreas-Salomé was the only human being who came near to understanding his suffering and its hidden sources. To a friend standing by his deathbed he said: "Do not forget that life is a wonderful thing."[2] But on a note for Lou Salomé he wrote

"Aber die Höllen!"[3]

(Oh but for hell!) Salutation and farewell were in Russian.

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After Rilke's death in 1926 Lou Andreas-Salomé began work on a biography. It was not only a recapitulation and a summary of her friendship with Rilke, nor was it merely a personal interpretation. For Lou Salomé as she was growing old the reminiscences of Rilke, coupled with the political and social developments within Germany fused into a tragic picture. She felt that since Rilke's death she had come closer to the real meaning of Rilke's suffering. And she listened for the revelation that formed itself from silence, "das Wehende hören ! die ununterbrochene Nachricht die aus Stille sich bildet."[1] She realized from Rilke's example how narrow was the difference between survival and death. Rilke's attitude toward the past as something which awaits the pre-ordained future, Rilke's view of life as carrying in it already the germs of death, became her own. Rilke's experiences became more and more the vessels into which she poured the richness and the faults of her daily life.

Psychoanalysis, which occupied the last fourty years of her life, still interested her, although she was now no longer working in Vienna as during the war years. For Freud's birthday she wrote a summary of his achievements as she saw them, embroidered with her own adoration for the man. Psychoanalysis was the solution she had found to her search for God, but she saw the heroism of Rilke who had refused to take that short cut.

For Thomas Mann's ideal of humanism she, who felt herself so deeply involved in the decay, had no use. Thomas Mann's interpretation of Freud she rejected as a picture of the "romanticist" Mann, not of the psychoanalyst, Freud.

Early in the spring of the year 1936 Gertrud Bäumer, having just published her book on Rilke, visited Lou Andreas, now an elderly lady of seventy-five, in Goettingen. Lou was suffering from a heart ailment, but Gertrud Bäumer found that the youthful look of her brow made one forget the years.

Something which did not surrender itself had always been in Lou Salomé. Gertrud Bäumer quotes her as saying: "It is strange that always when I believed most firmly to be doing the right and most natural thing, to be taking the straightest way, I have always brought about the gravest catastrophes. How is that ?" - and in saying it she appeared helpless like a young person.[1] Probably she was thinking among other things about Nietzsche's winter at Rapallo.

Gertrud Bäumer found Lou Andreas' keen intelligence to be equalled only by her pity. Outside her window were innumerable containers with birdseed frequented by wrens, robins, and finches. Lou felt a religious bond with all creatures, Gertrud Bäumer tells us. Lou Salomé turned the conversation to children. She had not wanted to have any. "How could I take the responsibility for the existence of a person, whom the greatest grief might await," the elderly lady declared to her visitor. The optimism and the love for life with which Lou Salome had impressed Nietzsche and encouraged Rilke was lost. The inquisitive adventurer who had studied first theology and then psychoanalysis was discouraged:

> "In this Europe?, where everything resolves itself to the <u>ultima ratio</u> of killing one another ? No, I will do nothing that this should continue to exist! Europe has forgotten what the East is still able to do, to live off a different reality. Europe has no longer foundation or depth. In reality it is dead!" [2]

In the following year, 1937, Lou Andreas-Salomé died in Goettingen. A Germany that had just been launched on a four-year plan with the motto, "Guns instead of Butter," took little notice of her death. Prominent literary journals displayed her name, the date of her death, and a small black cross to mark the event. The Gestapo took cognizance and paid its respects by confiscating her private papers.

In America one has never heard of her. Even in Goettingen university circles she had the reputation of being queer, since she took no part in the social life of the town. A few American libraries have some of her books. The Library of Congress lists five titles in its catalogue, the New York Public Library, three or four. Widener leads the list with nine. A Manhatten dealer in German books advertises a second-hand copy of Das Haus for $ 2.50.

Most biographers of Nietzsche devote one chapter to her influence on Nietzsche. Her name is mentioned in courses on modern German literature in connection with Rilke's journey to Russia. Graduate students consult her books on Rilke and Nietzsche.

To say that she has been forgotten would be overstating the fact that hardly anyone ever heard of her.

Lou Andreas-Salomé, like most people, was not born to be famous.

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