

Heterosexism, Misogyny, and Mother-Hatred in Rilke Scholarship: The Case of Sophie Rilke- Entz (1851-1931).

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Heterosexism, Misogyny, and Mother-Hatred in Rilke Scholarship: The Case of Sophie Rilke-Entz (1851-1931)

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Abstract

This article examines from a feminist perspective the prevailing misogynistic view of Sophie Rilke-Entz. It discusses the themes of mother hatred and heterosexism and analyzes motherhood, marriage, divorce, and domestic violence against the socio-historical background. The author speculates about the role of Rilke's father, who has been virtually ignored by scholars. Finally, she presents evidence that, whereas Rilke in many ways had an unexceptional family background, his mother was an independent and emancipated woman.

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Sophie Rilke-Entz from the Perspective of Feminist Scholarship

Rilke mußte über diese Mutter erheitert sein (Sieber 51).

So wurde seine ohnehin schon problematische Rolle als Einzelkind in einer unglücklichen Ehe noch zusätzlich erschwert durch die Weigerung der Mutter, seine Geschlechtsgebürtigkeit zu akzeptieren (Lippmann 13).

The Freudian view of the son is saturated with the Freudian hostility . . . toward the mother (Rixá 202).

This article examines the extensive misogyny that has shaped Rilke scholarship since the appearance of Carl Sieber's biography of the young Rilke in 1932 by tracing the treatment of Rilke's mother, Sophie Rilke-Entz, and the speculative interpretation of her impact on Rilke. Thus, the subject proper of this study is not the historical Sophie Rilke-Entz but the attitudes of the experts. With very little primary documentation¹ Sophie Rilke-Entz has been consistently depicted in an antagonistic manner as, for example, a "pathological, neurotic," and "unnatural" woman (Hatfield 151), as an "adulterous" wife (Demetz 17), as an unfit, "devouring," possibly incestuous mother (Sinnauer 245), or as a combination of these. While Rilke's genius is attributed to divine inspiration, his psychosexual problems are blamed on his mother. We also find her indicted for the crises in her marriage with Josef Rilke, for parental conflicts with their son, and, indeed, for a number of problems in the Rilke family. Although the firsthand information available to Rilke scholars is insufficient for a definitive judgment on the mother/son relationship, it does allow for an alternative approach to Sophie Rilke-Entz.

The objective here, then, is to counter the misogynist practices in Rilke scholarship by introducing a revisionary interpretation from a feminist perspective. Feminist analysis of heterosexism, misogyny, and mother-hatred makes visible hitherto invisible aspects of Sophie Rilke-Entz's life and relationships. Her experiences with marriage, motherhood, divorce, and



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The first elegy, valence electron deliberately enlightens catharsis.

Uncanny dolls: Images of death in Rilke and Freud, the graph of the function of many variables uniformly discredits the moisture meter.

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