

The Flemish Rainer Maria Rilke

# Complete poems

MAURICE GILLIAMS

Writing in the context of international Modernism, Maurice Gilliams' work has been influenced by and compared to that of Rainer Maria Rilke, especially to 'The Life of Mary'. Gilliams produced a cycle of poems with the same title and used Biblical imagery to solidify the relation between love, sensuality, and the experience of the metaphysical. Other comparisons have been made between Gilliams and German Expressionists such as Georg Trakl, Gottfried Benn, and his fellow countryman, Paul van Ostaïjen. French influences include the cerebral Paul Valéry and Stéphane Mallarmé, in their attempts to replace life with art. However, Gilliams' poetry never becomes abstract and the 'confessional', self-baring nature of his work is essential.

Gilliams' sixty-eight poems and his entire body of work are part of the painful and obsessive effort to uncover and preserve his true self. The ultimate goal of his endeavors was to create a "lyrical autobiography", a still portrait in the sea of life. It was to be a permanent document of himself in the perfect form of the words on paper. The pessimistic understanding of the inevitable failure of his life project leaves a mark of sadness on the very limited number of texts Gilliams selected to 'remain'.




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## AUTHOR

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**Maurice Gilliams** (1900-1982) grew up bilingually. He decided that Dutch suited his poetic purpose best, which was to isolate fragments of a life in words that were personal and detached at once, hard and true like stones.

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**ORIGINAL TITLE** Verzamelde gedichten (2000, Meulenhoff, 111 pp.)

**PRIZES** Constantijn Huygens Prize, Flemish State Prize for a Writer's Oeuvre, Grand Prize for Literature

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**TRANSLATION GRANTS** Patrick Peeters - patrick@flandersliterature.be