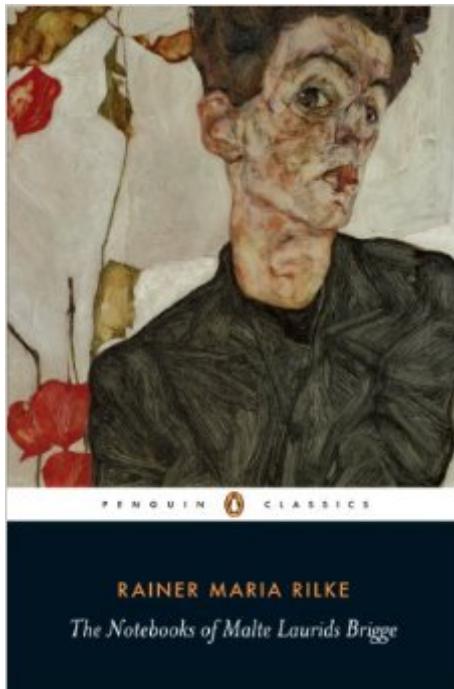


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The Notebooks Of Malte Laurids Brigge (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

A masterly new translation of one of the first great modernist novels. In the only novel by one of the German language's greatest poets, a young man named Malte Laurids Brigge lives in a cheap room in Paris while his belongings rot in storage. Every person he sees seems to carry their death with them, and with little but a library card to distinguish him from the city's touchables, he thinks of the deaths, and ghosts, of his aristocratic family, of which he is the sole living descendant. Suffused with passages of lyrical brilliance, Rilke's semi-autobiographical novel is a moving and powerful coming-of-age story. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

This proto-existentialist novel features a main character (Malte) that is frightened by the possibility of faceless-ness; that is, he is terrified by the collapse of a coherent subject/identity in modernity. This work is highly critical of the traditional narrative where everything occurs in a logical and temporal order that is coherent and teleological. Through the character of Malte, Rilke illustrates the decay of such an understanding of one's self and the chaos that results. Rilke read a lot of Nietzsche prior to writing this book, and many of the same themes Nietzsche contemplated in *The Gay Science* and

Thus Spake Zarathustra are reworked by Rilke in this novel. It is my interpretation that Rilke was trying to work out a theory of modern, fragmented, existential subjectivity and then offer some way to make such a life livable. Rilke explores such themes as memory's transience, unpredictability, and instability, the role of a God in a world after the "death of God", and a dissolving of the conceptual categories between the self and the other, or the inside and the outside, all play into this fascinating book. The book is written in notebook form, which plays into the notion of fragmentary identity and problematic narrative. Entries jump from the past to the present to imagined futures in an often random and chaotic order. There is no "plot" to speak of, although there are bits and pieces of narratives, but nothing sufficient enough to create a comprehensible 'Malte'. All the while, you are in the mind of a character that is trying and failing to make sense of it all (to 'impose' a narrative). The later Martin Heidegger always lauded Rilke (despite Rilke's being too metaphysical) for being able to express ways of interacting with the world that were non-humanist.

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