

# Death and Heterotopias: Representations of Modernity in Rilke's The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge

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**Date :** 23 June, 2018

## Abstract

This essay explores the thematization of death and modernity in Rilke's The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge through a framework of Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia. Described as spaces that are simultaneously mythic and real, heterotopias are special spaces embedded with more than one apparent layer of meaning. The special qualities of heterotopias open up a space that is not bound by normal laws of geometry and instead becomes an intersection or point of view between the mythic and real. This essay's main focus is on an integrative examination of scenes from The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge and Foucault's concept of heterotopia. After outlining the overlap between the prevalence of images of death strewn throughout the novel and the cultural pressure exerted by modernity on the metropolis, I suggest that it is possible to understand the protagonist's quest for self-realization by examining his encounters with diverse heterotopic spaces.

## Keywords

Rilke, Foucault, death, heterotopia

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