

Title: Pasternak's *Zhivago* and Rilke's *Malte*: Two Poets' Novels  
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While *Doctor Zhivago* was in the last stage of review for the Nobel Prize, Pasternak wrote to Renate Schweitzer in September 1958:

It seems to me as if I have not done anything new, as if my teachers and predecessors, our great novelists (and Scandinavians), wrote everything with my hands, as if I lit Malte's candle, which stood cold and unused, and stepped out with Rilke's light in hand from home into the darkness, the yard, the streets, in the midst of ruins. (Schweitzer 1963, 49-50)

This quote suggests there is a genetic connection between *Malte* and *Zhivago*, the sole novels produced by Rilke and Pasternak, respectively. Pasternak's life-long admiration for Rilke makes exploring this affinity between these two very different *Künstlerromane* even more promising. Starting with the existing discussion of the "Zhivago poems" as a response to Rilke's poems [Brodsky 1994], the paper explores the links between the two parts of the novel, in prose and in verse. The paper suggests that this structure might have been inspired by a deep interrelation between Rilke's prose and his poems from the period he wrote *Malte*, and Rilke's insertion of densely symbolic and rhythmic parts into the novel's prose. *Zhivago* inherited both structural and thematic elements from *Malte*, from a fragmentary, "mosaic" style of composition, with the inclusions of heterogeneous texts that define Rilke's work, to the underlying theme of the suffering poet's expiatory role in the modern world. The paper argues that Pasternak was envisioning his novel, rather than his poetry, as a resurrection of the European modernist tradition that was interrupted by two world wars and two totalitarian regimes, as well as the possibility to continue the literary dialog through "aerial ways" above the "iron curtain," a hope that brought disastrous consequences upon Pasternak a few weeks after the letter to Schweitzer was sent.

#### Bibliography

Brodsky, Joseph. "Primechanie k kommentariiu." *Marina Tsvetaeva: One Hundred Years, Papers from the Tsvetaeva Centenary Symposium*. Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1994. 262-82.  
Schweitzer, Renate. *Freundshaft mit Boris Pasternak*. Wien: Verlag Kurt Desch, 1963.