Modern Judgements

PASTERNAK

MODERN JUDGEMENTS

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Note on Translations

Responsibility for the translations in the present volume is as follows:

Translation from the Russian of articles by Ehrenburg, Tsvetayeva, Mandel'shtam, Aseev, Lezhnev, Weidle, Tynyanov and Sinyavsky – Angela Livingstone; translation from the Russian of poem by Akhmatova – Donald Davie; translation from the German of article by Jakobson – John Rignall and Angela Livingstone; translation of verse quotations from Pasternak throughout the volume – Donald Davie.

Footnotes to each article that is translated from Russian are provided by the translator, except where it is indicated that they are by the author of the article.

General Editor's Preface

LITERARY criticism has only recently come of age as an academic discipline, and the intellectual activity that, a hundred years ago, went into theological discussion, now finds its most natural outlet in the critical essay. Amid a good deal that is dull or silly or pretentious, every year now produces a crop of critical essays which are brilliant and profound not only as contributions to the understanding of a particular author but as statements of an original way of looking at literature and the world. Hence, it often seems that the most useful undertaking for an academic publisher might be, not so much to commission new books of literary criticism or scholarship, as to make the best of what exists easily available. This at least is the purpose of the present series of anthologies, each of which is devoted to a single major writer.

The guiding principle of selection is to assemble the best *modern* criticism – broadly speaking, that of the last twenty or thirty years – and to include historic and classic essays, however famous, only when they are still influential and represent the best statements of their particular point of view. It will, however, be one of the functions of the editor's Introduction to sketch in the earlier history of criticism in regard to the author concerned.

Each volume will attempt to strike a balance between general essays and ones on specialised aspects, or particular works, of the writer in question. And though in many instances the bulk of the articles will come from British and American sources, certain of the volumes will draw heavily on material in other European languages – most of it being translated for the first time.

P. N. FURBANK

Introduction

It would be presumptuous and contradictory for us, having collected what we judge to be the best critical essays on Pasternak, to preface our selection by a critical essay of our own. That would suggest that having mastered what Tynyanov and Jakobson and Sinyavsky have to say, we can supplement, correct and synthesize them; as if we were school-masters and they our class of talented but still immature pupils.

What may be useful on the other hand is to take their insights, which they have expressed naturally and properly in the perspective of the Russian poetic tradition, and try to find whatever analogies there may be between that tradition as Pasternak inherited and augmented it, and the tradition of Anglo-American poetry as it was inherited and enriched by the British and American poets who were Pasternak's contemporaries. This is a sufficiently hazardous undertaking. But since there would be no point to this publication if we did not believe that Pasternak is important to readers who have no Russian, it must be true that there are bridges, if only we can find them, by which we may grope uncertainly from the poetry we know in our own language to the poetry in the unknown language of Pasternak.

*Pasternak: the Early Collections*¹

At first sight, however, one is dismayed by the extent to which all the bridges are down. In respect of the early collections by which Pasternak made his name, there are in particular three areas in which misunderstanding is very likely, and yet may be avoided; three bridges which

¹ *Twin in the Clouds* (1914); *Over the Barriers* (written 1914-16; published 1917); *My Sister Life* (written 1917; published 1922); and *Themes and Variations* (written 1916-22; published 1923).

need to be repaired. They may be labelled as Sound, Symbolism and Syntax. And we may briefly consider these in turn.

It is Tynyanov in particular who shows how appreciative readers of early Pasternak were enthralled by his compositions considered as textures of sheer sound. This is at once a large stumbling-block for Anglo-American readers. It is not that this feature is peculiarly untranslatable, for in fact it is often possible for the translator to create equivalent harmonies. The trouble is that in the present century many of us have been schooled either to disregard this dimension of poetry altogether, or else, more grievously, to suspect it. We have been told to beware of poets who work upon us particularly by means of euphony, onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance. Ever since I. A. Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism* there have been influential critics warning us that the semantic aspect of poetry must be primary, and that the musicality of poetry can legitimately be exploited only so as to point up and emphasize the play of meanings. Only very lately have we begun to realize that the interplay of sound and sense in poetry is too subtle to be schematized in this way. And investigations of this interplay, such investigations as Tynyanov's, still seem to us very risky:

THE RISK: to suggest that the conquest of babble by the ear – to distinguish and organize, to make significant, to relate as experience, to name – is the origin of speech and emotion. Speech at this level articulates internal sensations. 'The inner voice' as a counterpart of the inner light. The recurrence of vowels and consonants, the tonal structure, is related to heart and alimentary tract in its rhythmic organization; it is expressive. It is 'moving' – melopoeia is the passionate system of the poem.¹

In Pasternak's lifetime, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is the one ambitious work of the English-speaking world which explores this region in which sense grows out of sound, as much as sound grows out of sense. The young Pasternak, on the other hand, explored this possibility constantly. In many of his early poems he dramatized 'the conquest of babble by the ear' in search of meanings. And an American scholar, Dale L. Plank, has lately most valuably dotted the *is* and crossed the *ts* of Tynyanov's observations to this effect.²

¹ Robert Duncan, 'Notes on Poetics, Regarding Olson's Maximus', in *Agenda*, III (Dec. 1964) vi 32.

² Dale L. Plank, *Pasternak's Lyric: A Study of Sound and Imagery* (The Hague, 1966).

Perhaps the poet in English who comes nearest to emulating Pasternak in this respect is Hart Crane. At any rate Hart Crane, for instance in *White Buildings*, orchestrates his verses very voluptuously. And not many English-speaking critics have been ready to trust Crane's 'music' as the Russian critics in this volume have trusted the music, the luxuriant clash and crackle of sheer sound, in Pasternak. In Pasternak as in Crane the rich orchestration often goes along with synaesthesia, the mingling or deliberate muddling of appeals to the five senses. This is what Louis Zukofsky, when he writes of Crane, refers to as 'the Wagnerian ideal'.¹ And Zukofsky quotes Ezra Pound's description of this method of proceeding: 'You confuse the spectator by smacking as many of his senses as possible at every possible moment, this prevents his noting anything with unusual lucidity, but you may fluster or excite him to the point of making him receptive.' Some of Pasternak's poems seem to fluster or excite the reader into receptivity, rather than presenting him with one image at a time sharply edged and lucid. An example is 'Margarita', a poem from *Themes and Variations* (1918), which is quoted in full and approvingly by Wladimir Weidle (below, p. 116). British and American readers in our time are more suspicious of being flustered in this way than are for instance French-speakers and Spanish-speakers, if only because the French and the Spanish poetic traditions have come to terms with surrealism, as the Anglo-American tradition has not.

But 'the Wagnerian ideal', as Zukofsky and Pound define it, does not account for more than a few of Pasternak's poems in which the texture of sound counts for a great deal. Apart from anything else many such poems, particularly in *My Sister Life*, are notable for sharply edged and immediately lucid images, particularly of landscape and weather. Dale L. Plank, in painstaking analysis of several such poems, discovers that many of them 'are more densely, more consciously . . . organized in their sounds at first, less so as the poem progresses'.² In other words 'the conquest of babble by the ear' is something that happens in the course of the poem, as we move through it from first to last; the poem begins in 'babble' and ends in 'conquest'. And this brings us to the second of our broken bridges, that of 'Symbolism', specifically, of Pasternak's relation to the French *symboliste* poets. For Plank points out very justly that in the case of poems which progress in this way,

¹ Louis Zukofsky, 'American Poetry 1920-1930' (1930), in *Prepositions* (1967) p. 131.

² Plank, *op. cit.* p. 26.

We may assume that the poem's composition proceeded according to the plan described as follows by Valéry:

If I am questioned; if anyone wonders (as happens sometimes quite peremptorily) what I 'wanted to say' in a certain poem, I reply that I did not *want to say* but *wanted to make*, and that it was the intention of *making* which *wanted* what I said. . . .

As for the *Cimetière marin*, this intention was at first no more than a rhythmic figure, empty, or filled with meaningless syllables, which obsessed me for some time. . . .

Russia had had its own Symbolist school of poets. For that matter Valeri Bryusov, himself an ex-Symbolist, recorded that as late as 1922 self-styled 'Symbolists' were advertising public readings of their poems, as were acmeists, futurists, expressionists, neo-classicists, realists, and neo-realists, neo-romantics, and comically many others.¹ And the Russian Symbolists were aware of having some intentions in common with the French *symbolistes*, though the Russian school and the French came to stand for such different things that the common title 'Symbolist' is misleading. Pasternak, however, if we except an early and not very decisive connection with Centrifuga, a group of moderate Futurists, never aligned himself with any consciously instituted school, and the things he has in common with French *symboliste* poets (Mr Plank convincingly finds parallels with Mallarmé and Verlaine as well as Valéry) are to be thought of as 'parallels', not in terms of derivations, allegiances or influences. Certainly Pasternak could never have subscribed to Valéry's categorical insistence that Art is superior to Nature. Quite the contrary, indeed, as we shall see. On the other hand in his autobiography *Safe Conduct* (1931) he declared something that Valéry would have subscribed to, when he wrote: 'The clearest, most memorable and most important thing in art is its coming into being, and the world's best works, while telling of the most diverse things, are in fact narrating their own birth.' And Plank shows how poem after poem by Pasternak is like Valéry's *Cimetière Marin* or Mallarmé's *Prose pour Des Esseintes* in having for subject nothing but its own way of coming to birth, sustaining itself, and drawing to a close.

Unless I misunderstand T. S. Eliot's 'Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', that poem is another of the same kind, as are the *Four*

¹ Valeri Bryusov, 'Vchera, sevodnya i zavtra v russkoi poezii', in *Pechat' i Revolyutsiya*, VII (1922) 38-67.

Quartets also. And indeed Eliot was so explicit about his kinship with the French *symbolistes* – Laforgue in his youth, Valéry in his maturity – that there is no excuse for Anglo-American readers when they find the *symboliste* poetic bizarre and sterile. Unfortunately, ‘aestheticism’ is a word of such ill omen in modern English usage, and a term which cloudily comprehends so much, that we commonly dismiss out of hand any poem which is related to ‘life’ so indirectly, so far below the surface, as are the poems written in the *symboliste* tradition. In order to save Eliot from the imputation of Art for Art’s Sake, our philistinism has distorted him by insisting on looking for help with his poems anywhere but where he pointed, to France. And it is likely enough that we shall try to do the same with Pasternak. Accordingly it needs to be said that in Pasternak’s poetry, no less in his theory of poetry as we find it in Section VII of *Safe Conduct*, there is a marked strain of what the English-speaking reader will take to be haughty aestheticism.

The musicality of *symboliste* poetry is not always a matter of what I have called ‘orchestration’. Valéry mocks any attempt to define *symbolisme* by pressing the notion of ‘symbol’, and declares instead that what defines it is ‘the common intention of several groups of poets (otherwise mutually inimical) to “reclaim their own from Music”’.¹ And the context makes clear that Valéry has in mind far more than patternings of sound, important as that is to *symboliste* poetry and to all poetry. Even Verlaine, when he declared ‘De la musique avant toute chose’, may have intended to stress, along with orchestration of sounds, the *continuity* of music, its way of never stopping but to start again. In this way *symboliste* poetry, notably in Valéry as earlier in Baudelaire, is as much concerned with the unsounded rhythms of syntax, the swerving and coiling and unwinding of the poetic sentence, as with the sounded rhythms that are governed by prosody. And this is the third of the bridges that need to be built or rebuilt if we are to cross from the world of our poetry to the world of Pasternak. To Mayakovsky, according to Ehrenburg in his memoirs, it seemed in 1923 that Pasternak’s poetry manifested ‘application of a dynamic syntax to the revolutionary task’. And to Yevgeni Zamyatin writing in the same year on Pasternak’s stories in prose (*Russkoye Iskusstvo*, II–III) it appeared that ‘The shift he has made, the new thing he has given, that which is his own, is not in his plots (he has no plots) and not in his vocabulary,

¹ Paul Valéry, ‘A Foreword’ (1920), in *The Art of Poetry*, trans. Denise Folliot (1958), p. 42.

but on a plane where hardly any one else but he is working: in syntax.' However, the fullest and most valuable statement of this, again in 1923, came from Mandel'shtam:

In poetry the truly creative age is not the age of invention but the age of imitation. When the prayer-books have been written then it is time for the service to be held. The last Poetic Breviary to have been issued for general use in Russia is Pasternak's *My Sister Life*. Not since the time of Batyushkov has such a mature new harmony been heard in Russian poetry. Pasternak is no mere thinker-up of novelties, no conjuror; he is the begetter of a new way of writing, a new structure for Russian verse, which corresponds to the virile maturity attained by the language. In this new harmony everything can be expressed, and every one, whether they want to or not, will use it, because from now on it is the common achievement of all Russian poets. Hitherto the logical structure of the sentence has been growing weaker, along with the weakening of the poem itself, i.e. it was but the shortest way to express a poetic idea. Frequent poetic use wears down the customary path of logic until it becomes – as such – unnoticeable. Syntax, which is poetry's circulatory system, is attacked by sclerosis. Then there comes a poet who resurrects the virgin vigour of the logical sentence-structure. This was what Pushkin was amazed by in Batyushkov; and now Pasternak awaits his Pushkin.¹

To be sure, the concern for syntax which produced in Pasternak's poetry the effects that Mayakovsky and Mandel'shtam respond to need not be the sort of concern for syntax that we find in Valéry. Indeed Mayakovsky's word 'dynamic' and Mandel'shtam's 'virgin vigour' suggest something rather different. And it may be in fact that there is a much nearer parallel to be found in English than in French. I have in mind a well-known letter of 1926 written by W. B. Yeats to H. J. C. Grierson. Here Yeats declares:

The over childish or over pretty or feminine element in some good Wordsworth and in much poetry up to our date comes from the lack of natural momentum in the syntax. This momentum underlies almost every Elizabethan and Jacobean lyric and is far more important than simplicity of vocabulary. If Wordsworth had found it he could have carried any amount of elaborate English. Byron, unlike the Elizabethans though he always tries for it, constantly allows it to die out in some mind-created construc-

¹ *Russkoye Iskusstvo* (1923) 182.

tion, but is I think the one great English poet – though one can hardly call him great except in purpose and manhood – who sought it constantly.¹

This concern remained with Yeats until his last years, when it crops up in his letters to Dorothy Wellesley, and the effect of this preoccupation is to be seen in the poems which he wrote from 1916 onwards. His reference to 'Elizabethan and Jacobean lyric' is significant in a letter to Grierson, the editor of John Donne. For the syntax that has 'natural momentum' appears in Yeats's poems whenever we are aware of the presence of Donne. If his 'momentum' corresponds to Mayakovsky's 'dynamic' and Mandel'shtam's 'virgin vigour', it may be that in Pasternak as in Yeats we encounter a syntax that has to do, not with *symboliste* 'music', but with the dramatic or histrionic illusion of a man's presence and his impassioned speech.

Unfortunately, the grammatical structures of Russian and of English are so different that the translator despairs of producing any equivalent to this feature of his style which Mandel'shtam and Mayakovsky thought so important. Five polysyllabic words can be ranged in two lines of Pasternak as massively as blocks of masonry – an effect available only in a highly inflected language, something that English, with its clutter of prepositions and particles, can hardly attain to.

Pasternak and the Formalists

By 1922 Pasternak's reputation in Russia was already assured. What is striking, among Russian critics who respond to him in 1922 and 1923 (the first years after the Revolution when reliable publication of books and journals was resumed), is the stress on Pasternak's originality, his 'newness'. And there was no particular strangeness or difficulty, in those years, about acknowledging Pasternak's remoteness from political activity and at the same time seeing a profound affinity between the Revolution of 1917 and this poet's revolutionary attitude to his art, and his revolutionary handling of his medium.

For Bryusov in his 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow of Russian Poetry', yesterday was represented by Symbolism, today by Futurism, and tomorrow by 'proletarian poetry'; and when poetry emerged which expressed the 'new world-view' of the proletariat, then (Bryusov

¹ *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (New York, 1955) p. 710.

believes) Pasternak would be left behind as a 'poet of the intelligentsia':

To the same extent that Mayakovsky, in the moods of his poetry, is close to the proletarian poets, Pasternak is without doubt a poet of the intelligentsia. In part, this leads to a breadth of creative range: history and the present age, the data of science and the talk of the day, books and life – all these things on equal terms get into Pasternak's poems and there, in accord with his special sense of what the world is, they are all set out as it were on one level. In part, though, this excessive intellectuality makes his poetry anaemic, pushing it towards anti-poetic reflections, turning some poems into philosophic discussions, sometimes substituting witty paradoxes for living images.

Bryusov, apparently concerned in this article to deny his Symbolist past and prove himself a supporter of the most modern, the Bolshevik cause, none the less acknowledges:

Pasternak's poems have had an honour, accorded to almost no works of poetry (except those that were prohibited by the Tsarist censorship) since about the time of Pushkin: they have circulated in manuscript. Young poets have known by heart poems by Pasternak that have not yet anywhere appeared in print, and they have imitated him more entirely than they have imitated Mayakovsky. . . .

And accordingly Bryusov is eager to enlist Pasternak as a poet of the Revolution *à son insu*:

Pasternak has not written any poems specifically about the Revolution but, perhaps even without his knowing it, his poems are steeped in the spirit of the present; his psychology is not borrowed from books of the past, it is an expression of his own being and could have been formed only in the conditions of our life.¹

Very strikingly Bryusov agrees with the resolutely a-political Mandel'shtam (with Tynyanov also) in seeing Pasternak as pathfinder and trail-blazer, as pioneer and innovator, not as the 'classic' master, Pushkin to his Batyushkov, who characteristically takes over and consummates the innovations of others; an Ezra Pound, we may say, rather than a Yeats.

However, the twenties in Russia were the years of a school of gifted

¹ Bryusov, *op. cit.*

critics who were not, like Bryusov, mainly concerned with the significance of the Revolution nor yet, like Mandel'shtam, creative writers concerned to understand their contemporaries so as to find their own way forward. These were the Formalists. It is no accident, for instance, though to the English-speaking reader it is very unexpected, that in the very years of the Revolution, immediately after Pasternak's experiments with orchestration of sounds in poetry, there should have appeared 'the pioneer study directed at the discernment of patterns in sounds in poetry and their classification',¹ Osip Brik's 'Zvukovye povtory'.² Brik's studies are a contribution to a revolution in poetic theory and critical method which parallels Pasternak's revolution in poetic method, as that in turn parallels the Bolsheviks' revolution in political method and political structure. And this is the revolution which called itself 'Formalism'.

The Formalist critics are represented in our selection by Tynyanov and by Roman Jakobson. Formalist criticism as a whole gave no specially prominent place to Pasternak's writing, yet there are illuminating parallels between Pasternak's theory and practice and Formalist doctrine. In the first place, according to Formalist doctrine what art does is *ostranenie*, making strange. Art by the distortions it effects makes the world strange and novel, restoring to the reader, who is blinkered and dulled by habit and linguistic cliché, a child-like vision. In the words of Viktor Shklovsky: 'Thus in order to restore to us the perception of life, to make a stone stony, there exists that which we call art.'³ There has to be some connection between this and Pasternak, the poet who was acclaimed in the twenties by critics and reviewers in Russia as above all a man who sees the world as if 'for the first time'. And in his poems Pasternak is constantly fascinated by this capacity of poetry for renewing and refreshing perception – yet with this crucial difference, that for him it is poetry that does this, not the poet; that it is the world which thus renews itself, through the poet and his poem, but not at the poet's behest. Equally the distortions, deformations or displacements by which reality refreshes itself in poems are for Pasternak something that happens in the world, something that the poet notices and records, whereas to the Formalists the displacements are effected by the poet. To this end, as they understand it, the poet may

¹ Plank, *op. cit.* p. 19.

² In Osip Brik, *Sborniki po teorii poeticheskovo yazyka* (Petrograd, 1916-17).

³ Quoted in Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism* (The Hague, 1963) p. 76.

employ certain devices. And indeed the notion of 'device' is central to Formalist criticism. For them subject-matter is unimportant. And by taking the work as device, or as a structure of devices, they proclaim their indifference to the work in its aspect as a reflection of biographical circumstances, psychological or social. There are closely related attitudes to be found in Pasternak, and it is these indeed which can mislead the English-speaking reader into thinking him an aesthete. Not that Pasternak busies himself with detailed study of this or that poetic device. But like the Formalists he declares himself to be centrally concerned, in any work, with the presence of Art in it; not at all with the overt subject-matter, still less with the personality of the author, or with his representativeness:

When we suppose that in *Tristan*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and other great works a powerful passion is portrayed, we under-estimate their content. Their theme is wider than this powerful theme. Their theme is the theme of power.

And it is from this theme that art is born. Art is more one-sided than people think. It cannot be directed at will, wherever you wish, like a telescope. Focused upon a reality that has been displaced by feeling, art is a record of this displacement. It copies it from nature. How then does nature become displaced? Details gain in sharpness, each losing its independent meaning. Each one of them could be replaced by another. Any one of them is precious. Any one, chosen at random, will serve as evidence of the state which envelops the whole of transposed reality. (*Safe Conduct*)

Tynyanov similarly notes how any one of Pasternak's images by itself is fortuitous (random, and replaceable), yet the whole which they make up (the 'theme') is obligatory. This obligatoriness (*obyazatel'nost'*) is, however, in Pasternak's understanding total. For art 'is a record', it 'copies from nature'.

This humility at the heart of what looks like arrogance is what sharply distinguishes Pasternak not only from the Formalists but also from other gifted Russian poets of his time, from Blok, Mayakovsky and Yesenin. This is what he means in *Safe Conduct* when he records that, as early as *Over the Barriers*, 'I abandoned the Romantic manner':

But a whole conception of life lay concealed under the Romantic manner which I was to forbid myself from henceforth. This was the conception of

life as the life of the poet. It had come to us from the Symbolists and had been adopted by them from the Romantics, principally the Germans.

This idea had taken possession of Blok but only during a short period. In the form in which it came naturally to him it was incapable of satisfying him. He had either to heighten it or abandon it altogether. He abandoned the idea, Mayakovsky and Yesenin heightened it.

In this poet who sets himself up as the measure of life and pays for this with his life, the Romantic conception is disarmingly vivid and indisputable in its symbols, that is in everything that figuratively touches upon Orphism and Christianity. In this sense something not transient was incarnate both in the life of Mayakovsky and in the fate of Yesenin, a fate which defies all epithets, self-destructively begging to become myth and receding into it.

But outside the legend, the Romantic scheme is false. The poet, who is its foundation, is inconceivable without the non-poets to bring him into relief, because this poet is not a living personality absorbed in moral cognition, but a visual-biographical 'emblem', demanding a background to make his contours visible. In contra-distinction to the Passion Plays which needed a Heaven if they were to be heard, this drama needs the evil of mediocrity in order to be seen, as Romanticism always needs philistinism and with the disappearance of the petty bourgeoisie loses half its content.

The notion of biography as spectacle was inherent in my time. I shared this notion with everyone else. I abandoned it while it was still flexible and non-obligatory with the Symbolists, before it bore any implication of heroism and before it smelt of blood. And in the first place, I freed myself from it unconsciously, abandoning the Romantic devices for which it served as basis. In the second place, I shunned it consciously also, considering its brilliance unsuited to me, because, confining myself to my craft, I feared any kind of poeticizing which would place me in a false and incongruous position.

With this crucial passage (which incidentally brings out some of the ways in which Russian Symbolism was radically different from French *symbolisme*) we come at last to something which the Anglo-American reader should be able to respond to eagerly. For what Pasternak here sets his face against is that which Louis Zukofsky in 1930 called, with obvious distaste, 'overweening autobiographies of the heart'.¹ And our poetry ever since 1920 has been marked generally by a revulsion against Romanticism conceived in this way, on the grounds that it is 'overweening'.

¹ Zukofsky, loc. cit. p. 141.

It is important to get this clear. For Pasternak's writing, early and late, is full of the lyrical 'I', and he has not shared the reluctance of Zukofsky and of our poets in the Imagist tradition, to reflect upon the experience which he renders, even as he renders it. Moreover Pasternak dedicated *My Sister Life* to an arch-Romantic, Lermontov. What does this mean, in view of the anti-Romantic stance declared in *Safe Conduct*? George Reavey records how, in Cambridge in 1927, he graduated to Pasternak from Yesenin:

Pasternak, when I discovered him, seemed to have no public face . . . he was all contained in the movement of his own verse, in the rhythm of the creative act, and this very act of apparently spontaneous creation, and the resulting chain of his images, were what seemed to absorb him wholly.¹

This may be taken in several ways. One way of mistaking it would be to envisage Pasternak as self-absorbed in a tiresomely self-regarding and egocentric way, with no interests outside the rarefied ecstasies of his own sensibility and the drama of his personal, vocational destiny. And an unsympathetic reader of Lermontov might recognize him in this description.

The apparent contradiction was removed in one way by Renato Poggioli when he observed, 'The raw material of Pasternak's poetry is introspection. Yet Pasternak treats the self as object rather than as subject.' But this is still cryptic. Victor Erlich glosses it more helpfully:

His work does not so much project a coherent and dramatically effective image of the poet as dramatize what Edgar Allan Poe calls the poetic principle – the power which brings the poem into being.²

In other words, the 'autobiography' is not of the poet's heart, but of the heart of poetry. And it is against this background, with these weighty qualifications, that one must understand Pasternak's dedication of *My Sister Life* to the most confessional of Russian poets, Lermontov; his poem to the same effect, 'In Memory of the Demon'; and his explanation of this to Eugene Kayden.³ But in any case Pasternak was quite explicit, not only in *Safe Conduct* but elsewhere:

¹ George Reavey, *The Poetry of Boris Pasternak, 1917-1959* (New York, 1959) p. 45.

² Victor Erlich, *The Double Image* (Baltimore, 1964) p. 140.

³ Eugene Kayden, *Poems by Boris Pasternak* (Ann Arbor, 1959) p. ix.

People nowadays imagine that art is like a fountain, whereas it is a sponge. They think art has to flow forth, whereas what it has to do is absorb and become saturated. They suppose that it can be divided up into means of depiction, whereas it is made up of the organs of perception. Its job is to be always a spectator and to look more purely, more receptively, more faithfully than anyone else; but in our age it has come to know pomade and the make-up room, and it displays itself from a stage. . . .¹

In this statement of the early 1920s, we see Pasternak once again implying that the poet is 'a living personality absorbed in moral cognition', and not 'a visual-biographical "emblem"'. This represents a deliberate turning away by Pasternak from the precedents of Blok, Mayakovsky and Yessenin, who all projected an image of the poet or of themselves as poets. Much more than any of these Pasternak eschews 'overweening autobiographies of the heart', and this marks him off from Hart Crane or W. B. Yeats by just so much as it aligns him rather with Pound, William Carlos Williams or Zukofsky.

Pasternak: the Middle Period

In the 1920s Pasternak made several attempts to compose long poems. *The Lofty Malady* consists of two sustained passages which appeared in periodicals, the first in 1923, the second in 1928. The long poem *Nineteen Hundred and Five*, consisting of six sections with a prologue, was published as a book in 1927; and bound up with it was *Lieutenant Schmidt*, a poem in three parts about the revolt of the Black Sea Fleet in 1905. *Spektorsky*, consisting of nine parts with a prologue, was published as a book in 1931.

Nineteen Hundred and Five, with its public theme (the abortive revolution of that year), was welcomed by many who had found the earlier lyrics too difficult. Gorky probably spoke for many Russian readers when he wrote to Pasternak in 1927:

To be frank, before this book I have always read your poems with a certain effort, for they are excessively saturated with imagery, and the images are not always clear to me; my *imagination* found it difficult to contain your images, wilfully complicated as they are and often incompletely drawn. You know yourself . . . that their abundance often makes you speak – or

¹ 'Neskol'ko polozhenii' ('Some Theses'), 1922; see *Sochineniya (Works)* (Michigan, 1961) III 152.

paint – too sketchily. In *Nineteen Hundred and Five* you are simpler and more chary of words, you're more classical in this book, which is filled with a pathos that infects me, as a reader, very quickly, easily, and powerfully. Yes, it is an excellent book. This is the voice of a genuine poet, and of a social poet, social in the best and profoundest sense of the word.

Even so, Gorky wrote again the next day to tell Pasternak that

the 'imagery' is often too small for the theme, and still more often it capriciously fails to agree with it; thus you make the theme unclear.¹

The émigré D. S. Mirsky, on the other hand, had responded readily to *My Sister Life* and *Themes and Variations*.² And yet it is hard not to see the welcome which Mirsky gave to *Lieutenant Schmidt* as a stage in Mirsky's reconciliation with the régime, a reconciliation which in 1928 was almost complete. For, when he calls Pasternak 'a great revolutionary and transformer of Russian poetry', Mirsky goes further than anyone before in identifying Pasternak with the Revolution. Mirsky thought that in *Lieutenant Schmidt* Pasternak had 'given to the whole old tradition of Russian sacrificial revolutionariness its creative fulfilment'. That tradition, he thought, had culminated in Pasternak, or rather in this work of Pasternak's; and Pasternak was 'the starting-point of all future Russian traditions'.³

There is no way of knowing how far some of these poems represent a deliberate attempt by Pasternak to graduate from lyric to epic, nor how far, if this was the case, he was swayed by exhortations to this effect from Gorky or others. It was in any case a very arduous task that he set himself. For as some of the early reviewers had recognized, Pasternak's talent was lyrical in an absolute sense. Of *My Sister Life* one reviewer exclaimed:

Reality represented solely by lyrical means! Contemporaneity lives in this book as a scent, as a rhythm, as an unexpected epithet, as an apt definition, as a structure. . . .⁴

And Dale L. Plank notes in Pasternak's lyrics 'the effort to overcome

¹ Gorky's correspondence with Pasternak in *Literaturnoye Nasledstvo* (1963) LXX 300, 301.

² D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature* (1949) p. 502.

³ D. S. Mirsky, *Versty*, III (1928) 150-4.

⁴ Ya. Chernyak, in *Pechat' i Revolyutsiya*, VI (1922) 303-4.

the temporal successiveness of the poem itself by squeezing in as much action as possible in the shortest possible space, the fascination for things caught in flight, the constant preoccupation with images of water, storm, the seasons, anything that represents change and evanescence'. Plank comments:

To the lyrical imagination chronology is chaos and is opposed to the order of the world's metaphorism. Pasternak's historical and biographical poems of the twenties . . . , as well as his prose, illustrate throughout the displacement of the narrative and sequential by the momentary; the scraps of days and hours that refuse to cohere.¹

Thus in these poems, Pasternak does not abandon his lyrical procedures but on the contrary attempts to build larger structures, and to compass the rhythm and shape of whole lifetimes, by pressing his lyricism further. It may be that the nearest parallel in Anglo-American poetry is once again Hart Crane, who in *The Bridge* similarly tried to build a structure of epic scope by lyrical means. Sinyavsky's comments on *Spektorsky* show something of what this means in practice.

Nineteen Hundred and Five awaits a translator. For of recent years, since the appearance of Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, poetry in English provides an idiom equivalent in many ways to Pasternak's idiom in his poem. This is true for instance of the curt and abrupt metre which Pasternak finds. Up to this point in his career Pasternak had been comparatively unadventurous in his metres. One of the exceptions, however, is a particularly splendid one, a sequence of lyrics in *Themes and Variations* called 'Razryv' ('The Break'), of which Mirsky wrote that 'For emotional and rhythmical force, these nine lyrics have no rivals in modern Russian poetry.'² Aseev (below, pp. 73-84) remarks of this work:

The lines are all fastened to one another by knots of intonation which carry the voice without pause for breath from one line to the next. The stops are conditioned solely by the taking of new breaths. Who will assert after this that a stanza thus constructed observes the principle of rhythm but not that of intonation?

This represents a recognition by a Russian critic as early as 1929 of

¹ Plank, *op. cit.* pp. 85-6.

² Mirsky, *History of Russian Literature*, p. 502.

something that our criticism came to securely only in the 1950s, with Charles Olson's *Projective Verse*: the recognition that the distinction between metrical verse and free verse does not take us far enough to be useful. On the other hand intonational verse, in the sense that Aseev gives to that term, was certainly being written in English at the same time as Pasternak was writing 'Razryv'. Different as it is in every other respect, Pound's *Homage to Sextus Propertius* (1917) is structured upon intonations.

Accordingly Plank is a little misleading when he says of the new collection of lyrics which appeared in 1932:

Although the tone of the poems of *Second Birth* is strikingly different from that of Pasternak's earlier books – it is now reflective, even elegiacal – the sounds are, if anything, more intensely organized in their patterns and, especially, as metaphors. The illusion of spontaneity that distinguished the earlier books is now almost absent; but in its place we have, not a new poetics, but an application of the old poetics, perfected and even enriched, to the needs of a man speaking.¹

For as we have seen 'the needs of a man speaking' determine the structure of 'Razryv' in *Themes and Variations*. And indeed if we take seriously Pasternak's tribute to Verlaine, we must suppose that Pasternak was concerned for the cadence of the speaking voice from the start, for Verlaine stands behind some poems that Pasternak wrote as early as 1912. Pasternak says of Verlaine:

He gave to the language in which he wrote that boundless freedom which was his own lyrical discovery and which is found only in the masters of prose dialogue in the novel and the drama. The Parisian phrase in all its virginal and bewitching accuracy flew in from the street and lay down entire in his lines, not in the least cramped, as the melodic material for the whole of the subsequent composition. Verlaine's greatest charm lies in this directness and spontaneity. For him the idioms of the French language were indivisible. He wrote not in words but in whole phrases, neither breaking them into separate units, nor rearranging them.

Pasternak's reference here to 'prose dialogue in the novel and the drama' is interestingly near to that admonition which Ford Madox Ford gave to Pound, and transmitted through him to Eliot: the

¹ Plank, *op. cit.* p. 112.

warning that in the twentieth century poets are in competition not only with poets of the past but also with the great realistic novelists of the previous century. Equally, one of the things that Wladimir Weidle objected to, in his intelligently hostile response to Pasternak (see below, pp. 108–25), is the way in which Pasternak's verse is densely furnished with workaday *things* in all their weightiness and angularity. And this may be just what Pound, true to his Flaubertian allegiance, aimed for in some of his *Cantos*, and what he admired in a pre-Flaubertian realist, George Crabbe. The novelist that Pasternak had chiefly in mind may have been Tolstoy. Or if it was a French novelist, it is less likely to have been Flaubert than Balzac. However, Pasternak's specifying *dialogue* in the novel doubtless means that he might not have thought, with Eliot, that 'Poetry must be at least as well-written as good prose'; but only that it must be as well-written as good *speech*.

With this exception, however, Plank's characterizing of *Second Birth* is very just. In particular 'the illusion of spontaneity' which at this point tends to disappear from Pasternak's lyrics is not anything that we need grieve for; for this illusion sometimes gave the earlier poems a flurried air and a raucous tone. It is the more important to realize with Plank that habits of luxuriance and daring wantonness, in imagery and orchestration alike, survive from the earlier poems into *Second Birth*, although there is seldom by this stage any question of synaesthesia, still less of surrealism. An example is a poem on the death of Mayakovsky, which is quoted almost in its entirety by Sinyavsky:

They would not credit it, dismissed it as
 So much wild talk – then two advised them, three,
 Then all the world. There aligned themselves in the series
 Of a term run out and halted
 The houses of Mistress Clerk, of Mistress Huckster,
 Yards of those houses, trees, and on the trees
 The dulled rook, stupefied in the sun's eye, screamed
 His inflamed curses after Mistress Rook
 That, what the deuce, henceforward boobies should not
 Obtrude their offices, bad cess to them.
 Only upon the faces came a damp
 Subsidence, as a tattered fishnet crumples.

A day there was, a blameless day, still more
 Blameless than a dozen you have lived through.

They crowded in, they dressed their ranks in the forecourt
Like a shot, as if a shot had dressed them,

As if, though razed, there fountained out of channels
Pike and bream, as when a mine explodes,
So from the fire-squib charged and laid in the sedges
Was this exhaled as from sediments still ungelded.

You slept, you pressed the pillow with your cheek.
You slept, and with clean heels, with raking strides,
Now with one turn of speed, now with another, you
Entered the constellation of young legends.
And among these you burst so much the more
Notably that you made it in one jump.
The detonation of your shot was Etna's
Upon its foothills, Craven and Mistress Craven.

Here the luxuriance is not a matter of logically incompatible similitudes colliding and jarring against each other, but of extraordinarily rapid as it were cinematographic 'cutting' from one similitude to the next. The flow of association, from urban scenes to nursery-rhyme to geological to sporting metaphors and back to the geological volcanic metaphor of Etna in the last lines, is not, as in surrealist writing, the uncontrolled association of the unconscious in dreams. It may seem so, but this is an illusion brought about by the copiousness of the poet's invention, the rapidity and impetuosity of his transitions. It is the quality we associate with Shakespeare above all, and in a later poet such as Dryden only when we detect a Shakespearean note in him. An example of the wanton or arbitrary image might be the unannounced swerve into a metaphor from fishing 'as a tattered fishnet crumples'. Yet this too, in thoroughly Shakespearean fashion, is taken up into the poem as it were retrospectively when we reach (in the original version which Sinyavsky quotes) the later image of fishing by depth-charges:

As if, though razed, there fountained out of channels
Pike and bream, as when a mine explodes. . . .

Pasternak and Mayakovsky had been close friends. And the tact of their relationship is beautifully preserved in the way in which the shot

by which Mayakovsky killed himself, though it is central to the metaphors of Pasternak's poem, is nowhere brutally stated. Those who know how affectingly Pasternak wrote of Mayakovsky's death in his prose memoirs may not notice how in the poem Pasternak writes not in the first place as a friend nor as a member of the same circle, but publicly, seeing the poet's death as impinging upon his society in the widest sense, affecting people not normally affected by poetry at all. This, at least, is how I read the 'sediments still ungelded', as levels of Russian society which Pasternak had thought of as brutalized into spiritual inertia, which yet show themselves still capable of fructification by virtue of the response they make (however muddled – the rook's response of irrationally alarmed irritation) to the death of the laureate poet. The rook's injunction to his wife not to meddle is perhaps the finest stroke in the poem; it is true to life as we know it, yet true also to the idea of *noli me tangere*, of the poet as tabu because sacred.

It is the public quality of this poem which allows us momentarily to think of that most public of English poets, Dryden. Yet, of course, in Pasternak's case this is the exception that proves the rule. Pasternak as a whole is challenging to the Russian reader because, by writing for the most part so insistently as a private person, he flies in the face of the traditional Russian emphasis (much older than the Revolution) on how the writer has civic responsibilities. *Doctor Zhivago* was to explore the paradox that, in certain states of society, such an insistence on the rights of the private life may itself be a civic duty of a particularly exacting and dangerous kind. And the tumult which surrounded the awarding of the Nobel prize to Pasternak was to show, from the poet's own life, how fulfilling this duty can have momentous and explosive consequences in the public domain. There is no analogue to this in the Anglo-American tradition in the present century. For British and American poets are, as it were, condemned to the private life; and many of them have worried, so far to no purpose, about how to break into the public realm, to take on that civic responsibility which their societies indulgently deny them. The only partial exception among greatly gifted poets in English has been W. B. Yeats, whose society, because it was Irish, permitted him for a while civic responsibility, and the public oratorical style which befits a public rôle. The word 'huckster' in our translation is a Yeatsian word, and may be allowed to hint at the Yeatsian parallel.

From 1934 to the end

The first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in August 1934 inaugurated a period when the tension between the private life and public responsibility was, for many Russian writers, stretched to breaking and beyond. A main theme of the Congress was that of the speech in which Maxim Gorky declared that the creative impotence of twentieth-century literature in Europe was to be explained by the fact that man had turned out to be 'a social unit, not a cosmic one', and that 'individualism, which turns into egocentrism, breeds "superfluous people"'. One speaker who spoke at some length about Pasternak was Nikolai Bukharin, whose words are interesting because they define the category – of exquisite but valetudinarian minor talent – which was the most indulgent that official spokesmen could find for Pasternak to the day of his death:

Boris Pasternak is a poet most remote from current affairs, even in the broadest sense of the term . . . a singer of the old intelligentsia, which has now become a Soviet intelligentsia. He unquestionably accepts the Revolution but he is far removed from the peculiar technicism of the period, from the din of battle, from the passions of the struggle. As early as at the time of the imperialist war, he had intellectually broken away from the old world . . . and had consciously risen 'above the barriers'. The bloody hash, the huckstering barter of the bourgeois world were profoundly loathsome to him, and he 'seceded', retired from the world, shut himself up in the mother-of-pearl shell of individual experiences, delicate and subtle, of the frail trepidations of a wounded and easily vulnerable soul. He is the embodiment of chaste but self-absorbed laboratory craftsmanship, persistent and painstaking labour over verbal form, the material for which is afforded by the precious things of the 'heritage of the past', by profoundly personal – and hence, of necessity, constricted – associations, interwoven with inward stirrings of the mind.¹

The tone is plainly apologetic.

Pasternak's life during the thirties can be reconstructed from partial and fragmentary evidence, as has been done for instance by Robert Conquest.² But neither Conquest nor any other has yet explained why

¹ Nikolai Bukharin, 'Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the U.S.S.R.', in *Problems of Soviet Literature (Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress)* (Moscow, 1935) p. 233.

² Robert Conquest, *Courage of Genius* (1961) pp. 36–40.

Pasternak escaped the purges which carried off so many of his friends and colleagues, especially since from time to time he spoke out rashly. In his literary career the late 1930s are the years of his work as a translator. In 1935 appeared a volume of lyrics translated from the Georgian, which was praised in a review by Mirsky; and this was followed by another collection of Georgian lyrics in 1937. A volume of Selected Translations in 1940 included versions by Pasternak from Shakespeare, Raleigh, Keats and Byron. Translations of *Hamlet*, of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Othello* appeared during the war. It is clear now that already in the 1930s Pasternak was at work on what was to become *Doctor Zhivago*, and that this was no secret within the circle of his friends. The playwright Afinogenov, for instance, wrote in his diary under 21 September 1937:

Conversations I have with Pasternak are unforgettable. He comes in and at once starts to talk of something that is important, interesting and real. For him the main thing is art, and nothing but art. That is why he doesn't care to go into town but chooses to live here the whole time, going for walks by himself or reading Macaulay's *History of England*, sitting by the window and looking out at the starry night, sorting out his thoughts, or else, finally, writing his novel. But all of this is inside art and for the sake of art. He is not even interested in the end-product. The main thing is the work at it, the enthusiasm for it; as for what will come of it – well, let's see many years from now. His wife has a hard time, they have to find money and live somehow, but he knows nothing about it, only sometimes when the money problem gets really acute, he gets down to work translating. 'But I'd do just as well being a commercial traveller. . . .' Set him down anywhere you like, he'll still keep his open gaze on nature and people – like the great and rare verbal artist that he is.

It's just the same when you go to see him, he leaves behind everything that's petty and he hurls at you subjects, judgments, conclusions – with him everything gets delineated in a real and meaningful way. He doesn't read the newspapers – and this is queer for me, who can't get through a day without the news. But he would never spend all his time up to 2 o'clock in the afternoon, as I did today, doing nothing. He's always taken up with his work, with books, with himself. . . . And if he should ever find himself in a palace or on the plank-bed of a prison cell, he'll still be taken up like this, perhaps even more than he is here – at least then he wouldn't have to think about money and worries, but could give the whole of his time to thinking and creating. . . .

A man of rare integrity, rare interest. And your heart goes out to him

because he can find wonderful human words of comfort, not out of pity but out of his conviction that better things are on the way: 'And these better things will come very shortly – as soon as you put all of yourself into your work, and you start to work and forget about everything else. . . .'¹

The 'work' which so much mattered to Pasternak, at the time Afinogenov writes of, certainly was not his translations. It may have been some of the poems subsequently printed in *On Early Trains*, in 1943. But more probably it was work directed towards the novel that was not to appear until twenty years later. And *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published in December 1938 a piece of prose by Pasternak under the title, 'Two Excerpts from a Chapter of a Novel: A District behind the Front'.²

In his *Essay in Autobiography*, Pasternak declared that all his verse before 1940 was written in a style no longer to his liking. And this is one among many pronouncements to similar effect. The most enlightening of them appears at a point in *An Essay in Autobiography*³ where Pasternak says that it was his reading of the poems of Marina Tsvetayeva which crystallized his dissatisfaction with his own early verse; and he expresses that dissatisfaction by saying that, in the work he had come to dislike, 'I wasn't looking for the point of things, only for their incidental sharpness.' This is accurate self-criticism. *Ars est celare artem*; and in Pasternak's early poetry the art seldom conceals itself. Knowing itself to be brilliantly resourceful and brilliantly perceptive, it makes no attempt to seem otherwise. Why should it? However this unashamedness consorts rather uncomfortably at times with the illusion of spontaneity which these poems set out to create; for then the poem can seem to be self-congratulating at times quite raucously.

This set aside, however, the matter of Pasternak's revulsion from his earlier styles has been given too much prominence. It is common and indeed inevitable for an artist who keeps moving throughout his life, to regard his own youthful self as a stranger to the man he has become, and to resent it irritably if fame and esteem is given to that stranger too exclusively. Thus Thomas Gray in his later years was impatient with admirers of his *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, and Yeats came to hate 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'. Thus Pound, looking back in 1934, felt that

¹ A. N. Afinogenov, *Stat'i, Dnevniki, Pis'ma. Vospominaniya* (Moscow, 1957) pp. 152–3.

² Other prose fictions by Pasternak are *Il Tratto di Apelle* (1915); *The Childhood of Luvers* and *Letters from Tula* (1918); *Aerial Ways* (1924) and *A Tale* (published in 1934).

³ *An Essay in Autobiography* trans. Manya Harari (1959) p. 105.

his own poetry to that date counted for next to nothing when set beside Thomas Hardy's.¹ We are sure Pound was mistaken, though we like him for making the mistake; and this surely ought to be our attitude to Pasternak also. Certainly we must resist any suggestion, basing itself on these pronouncements by Pasternak, to the effect that the poems written since 1940 are superior to those before; that in *Doctor Zhivago* and the poems of his last years Pasternak at last found the ways of writing which he had been groping for unsuccessfully throughout his earlier years. *Doctor Zhivago*, and the poems which Pasternak gives to Yuri Zhivago, are no doubt the crown and consummation of Pasternak's artistic career, but not in any way that supersedes the earlier writing. To regard *My Sister Life* as in this way 'prentice work would be absurd. Equally, though those who can approach *Doctor Zhivago* down the perspective afforded by Pasternak's earlier writings will almost certainly think that this is the way to see *Doctor Zhivago* most accurately; yet, of course, this perspective is not open to the vast majority of those who read Pasternak's novel, and our selection from critics of *Doctor Zhivago* shows that valuable insights can be achieved by looking at it down quite different vistas, for instance in the context of the nineteenth-century realistic novel.

As for the latest poems, it was Yuri Zhivago who claimed to have worked all his life for 'an unnoticeable style'. Boris Pasternak could not have claimed this, and did not claim it. Moreover, it is not in any writer's power to decide whether his style should be 'noticeable' or not. For this is all in the eye of the beholder, it depends upon the prepossessions as well as the attentiveness of the reader. In any case the talented translator of Pasternak's last collection, *When the Weather Clears*, was on the wrong tack when, after recalling Zhivago's wish for an unnoticeable style, he confessed, 'A major criticism of these translations is their failure to be as un-literary as the originals.'² For a perky or jaunty colloquialism, such as we encounter in many versions from Pasternak, makes a style even more 'noticeable' than literary stiltedness does. And it would be a bitter irony if the man of whom Afinogenov said 'For him the main thing is art, and nothing but art' were to be called to testify, on the score of certain late pronouncements taken out of context, in the cause of those who believe that art and literature are

¹ Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, ch. 52.

² Pasternak, *Poems 1955-1959*, trans. Michael Harari (1960), prefatory note.

always guilty until proved innocent, and that they can prove their innocence best by going in disguise.

DONALD DAVIE

Chronology

- 1890 Born in Moscow.
- 1903 Meets the composer Scriabin and begins a serious study of music.
- 1907 Joins a literary group called Serdarda.
- 1908 Leaves school. Works as tutor.
- 1909 Enters Moscow University as a student of law.
Changes to philosophy (on the advice of Scriabin).
- 1910 Gives a talk on 'Symbolism and Immortality'.
- 1911 Joins Centrifuga, a group of moderate Futurist writers.
- 1912 Spends a semester studying philosophy under Hermann Cohen and
Nicholai Hartmann at Marburg University.
- 1912 Visits Italy.
- 1913 Passes his state exam at Moscow University.
- 1913 Works as a tutor in Moscow.
- 1914 Meets Mayakovsky.
- 1914 Works as tutor in the family of the Lithuanian poet Baltrushaitis.
- 1914 Publication of his first volume of poetry, *Bliznets v tuchakh* (*Twin in the Clouds*).
- 1915 Travels, working in the management of chemical factories in the
Urals.
- 1917 Returns from the Urals to Moscow.
- 1917 Publication of volume of poems, *Poverkh bar'erov* (*Over the Barriers*).
- 1918 Works as a librarian in *Narkompros* (People's Commissariat of
Education).
- 1921 His parents emigrate to Germany.
- 1922 Travels to Marburg and Berlin.
- 1922 Publication of volume of poems: *Sestra moyá – zhizn'* (*My Sister Life*).
- 1922 Marries Yevgeniya Lourié.

- 1923 Publication of volume of poems: *Temy i variatsii* (*Themes and Variations*).
- 1923 Birth of his son Yevgeni.
- 1924 Publication of the long poem *Vysokaya bolezni* (*The Lofty Malady*) and the story *Detstvo Lyuvers* (*The Childhood of Luvers*).
- 1925 Publication of a collection of four short stories under the title of one of them, *Vozdushnye puti* (*Aerial Ways*).
- 1926 Publication of the verse epic *Lieutenant Schmidt*.
- 1927 Publication of the verse epic *1905-god* (*The Year 1905*).
- 1931 Is divorced from his first wife. Travels to Tiflis with his future second wife, Zinaida Neuhaus.
- 1931 Publication of the autobiographical work *Okhrannaya gramota* (*Safe Conduct*) and the epic poem *Spektorsky*.
- 1932 Publication of volume of verse, *Vtoroye rozhdeniye* (*Second Birth*).
- 1934 Speaks at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, in Moscow.
- 1934 Publication of the story *Povest'* (*A Tale*).
- 1934 Marries for the second time. Moves into a house in Peredelkino.
- 1934-43 Works at translations.
- 1935 Goes to Paris, though ill, as a member of the Soviet delegation to the International Congress of Writers in the Defence of Culture.
- 1936 Speaks at the Congress of Soviet Writers in Minsk.
- 1936 Second trip to the Caucasus.
- 1938 Birth of his son Leonid.
- 1943 Publication of volume of verse, *Na rannikh poyezdakh* (*On Early Trains*).
- 1944 Publication of volume of poems, *Zemnoi prostor* (*Earth's Vastness*).
- 1946 Attacked by Fadeev, First Secretary of the Writers' Union.
- 1947 Speaks at literary meetings in Moscow.
- 1954 Publication of *Ten poems from Doctor Zhivago*.
- 1956 Publication of two more 'Doctor Zhivago' poems and of eight from *Kogda razgulyayetsa* (*When the Weather Clears*).
- 1956 *Novy Mir* refuses to publish the novel *Doctor Zhivago*.
- 1957 Publication of *Doctor Zhivago* in Italy.
- 1958 Is awarded the Nobel prize, but refuses it 'because of the significance given to this award in the society to which I belong'. Press campaign against him in Russia.
- 1958 Publication of his *Biograficheski ocherk* (*Essay in Autobiography*) outside Russia.

Chronology

37

- 1959 Publication of volume of verse, *Kogda razgulyayetsa* (*When the Weather Clears*) in Paris.
- 1960 Dies in Moscow.