



## THE EVOLUTION OF ARTISTIC THOUGHT AND LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION IN BORIS PASTERNAK: A HISTORICAL AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the overarching trends in the artistic journey of Boris Pasternak, tracing the evolution from complex alliterative and associative imagery and intricate tropology to an «unheard-of simplicity» of verse, while preserving its profound philosophical depth.

### KEYWORDS

Poetic philosophy, trope, evolution, text-forming, metaphor, metonymy, epithet, simile, poetics, nature, style, concept.

### INTRODUCTION

The lyrical work of Boris Leonidovich Pasternak is imbued with a unique worldview, characterized by its subtle philosophical undertones, the musicality of its diction, a rich diversity of themes and motifs, and individual traits distinctive to his poetry.

Contemporary philology conventionally identifies four phases within his poetic oeuvre:

The initial phase of Pasternak's career is marked by an infusion of Symbolist imagery, influenced by the lyricism of Alexander Blok, alongside avant-garde motifs associated with the



Futurist group «Centrifuga», exemplified in collections such as «Twin in the Clouds» (1913) and «Over the Barriers» (1916).

Pasternak himself described the subsequent stage as his «poetic birth», correlating with the release of his collection «My Sister, Life» in 1922. Within this period, his poetic imagery vividly captures the elemental force of the revolution, contemplates the dynamics of creativity and love, and reflects on life's future trajectory.

The year 1934 saw the publication of a poetically significant work entitled «Second Birth», comprising poems from the early 1930s. This phase is reflective of personal tumult, notably the dissolution of his first marriage and the onset of a second, which unveiled the full spectrum of love's multifaceted nature.

The final stage, representing the maturity of Pasternak's lyrical voice, spans the 1950s and 1960s. This period includes the collection «Early Trains», poems from the novel «Doctor Zhivago», and the poetic cycle «When the Weather Clears», marking the zenith of his lyrical expression.

### **Literature review**

A multitude of philological studies dedicated to examining various facets of Boris Pasternak's oeuvre ultimately converge on the analysis of the evolution of his artistic thought and linguistic expression. Research practices spanning the 20th and 21st centuries have availed a wealth of sources, among which two primary categories emerge: 1. biographical works, and 2. philological studies dissecting different elements of Boris Pasternak's creative output.

Within the first category, works such as L. Fleishman's «Boris Pasternak, Materials for a Biography» (1977) can be found, where Pasternak's creative endeavors are analyzed in direct relation to various life events that significantly influenced his development and worldview. Similarly, T. Kataeva's novel montage «The Other Pasternak: A Personal Life» (2009) falls into this category, noted for its reflective narrative style. Among international publications, C. Barnes' monumental work «Pushkin and Pasternak» (1976) merits special attention for its focus on the poet and musician duality manifested in B. Pasternak, highlighting the equivalence of these aspects of his identity. This category is also enriched by numerous notes and memoirs from contemporaries, providing a diverse range of insights into Pasternak's life and work.

The poetics of Boris Pasternak have been the subject of scholarly attention in publications by V.N. Alfonsky, V.S. Baevsky, A.K. Zholkovsky, among others. Roman Jakobson, in his seminal article «Notes on the Prose of Poet Pasternak» (1935), highlights the text-forming significance of metonymy. In contrast, D.S. Likhachev posits that the expressiveness of Pasternak's poetic system is primarily generated through the prevalent use of metaphor. A.K. Zholkovsky concurs with Likhachev, stating, «In the realm of tropology, Pasternak's most significant innovations are tied to his emphasis on contiguity relationships (Jakobson 1987), although the abundance of similes and metaphors in his texts precludes the notion of an exclusive dominance of metonymy».



B.Gasparov approaches the study of Pasternak's work with considerable depth, examining not just the evolution of his poetry over time but also various «mechanisms» within the texts themselves. N.A.Fateeva adopts a linguist's perspective in her analysis, focusing not on individual texts or a formal-logical division of tropes but on associative-expressive complexes she terms «metatropes».

Prominent scholars have also analyzed specific poetic texts by Pasternak, including I.P.Smirnov, E.Faryno, and Yu.M.Lotman. For instance, Yu.M.Lotman explores both rhythm and the author's unique approach to text in his studies of Pasternak's early poems.

It is important to note that researchers unanimously agree on the critical importance of the system of tropes to Pasternak's poetics. Indeed, metaphors, metonymies, epithets, similes, and other figurative devices occupy a significant place in the poet's works. This fact forms the foundational premise of our analysis.

## **DISCUSSION**

In the context of Russian poetry of the 20th century, Boris Pasternak stands out as the most «philosophical» poet. He adopts a unique approach to the artistic interpretation of reality, which, through its flexibility and systematic nature, aptly corresponds to the very essence of life, the subject of his examination. The synthesis of philosophical and artistic principles in Pasternak's work originates from specific sources: biographical, cultural, and aesthetic. His disposition towards embracing life in all its

manifestations, the aspiration to comprehend the unity and integrity of existence, and the emotional experience of spiritual revelations—these perception, thought, and style characteristics highlighted by scholars of Pasternak's work allow for an appraisal of his oeuvre in harmony with the historical-cultural process and the epoch's worldview.

As a natural successor to the philosophy of life, maintaining the conceptual, existential notion of life that distinguishes this direction, Pasternak aesthetically transformed its ontological, axiological, and epistemological categories, developing his own worldview concept. This concept found consistent expression in his work. However, discussing his poetic philosophy, it's imperative to acknowledge that the poet's understanding of the world occurs at the level of intuitive grasp of the laws of existence, serving as a poetic reflection on metaphysical themes (questions of being, the human-world connection, principles of knowledge, the relationship between historical and existential time, ethics, and aesthetics).

An exceptional lyricist, Boris Pasternak navigated a complex path in his creative journey—from music and philosophy, from an intricate system of tropes to an «unheard-of simplicity» in verse. This might explain why the early Pasternak's work contains almost no love lyrics. It's not due to a lack of love but because the complex emotion seemed to decompose in his verses into numerous components, with the poet striving to convey a more encompassing and



profound feeling of being in love with life as precisely as possible.

In Boris Pasternak's works, which were deliberately structured as coherent books, the sequence of words was primarily governed by its own set of rules. Consequently, the verses, though born from a vivid emotion, seemed to detach from the life that gave them birth, becoming an autonomous reality of their own.

Pasternak's poetry, inherently lyrical down to its very lines, is imbued with an interest in the external world. This may explain why nature emerges as the principal protagonist within his lyrical works. For Pasternak, the landscape encompassed not just fields and forests but also the stones of cities, streets, and stations - a world suffused with the poet's own soul. To articulate this world was to articulate the soul, and vice versa: expressing one's soul naturally led to the depiction of this vast world. Thus, many of Pasternak's so-called «landscape» poems can be interpreted as love poems, so thoroughly and powerfully do they internalize the poet's inner world.

Over the years, a moral principle increasingly manifested within Pasternak's lyricism, underscoring its moral content. The poet believed that humanity harbors «vast reserves of high moral standards, cherishing the dream of another, more courageous and pure life», which become apparent during moments of upheaval, whether in revolution, national warfare, or love. Love sharply contrasts with vulgarity, rendering it unacceptable to the lover, for love itself is «the purest of all that the universe knows. And this

purity alone, having triumphed so often through the ages, would suffice to cast, by contrast, all that is not it into an abyss of filth».

Pasternak held that salvation could only be offered through art, through poetry. It is these alone, by insisting on love, that do not succumb to instinct and allow each new generation, having overcome a new barrier of emotional development, to preserve within themselves the lyrical truth.

The poem «As with the bronze ash of braziers» embodies significant characteristics of Pasternak's poetics, poetry, and worldview. It presents a slice of living nature wherein the entire cosmos seems to be overturned: «Alongside me, at the level of my candle, worlds in bloom hang». This does not imply an elevation of humanity to the level of the universe, a notion that would be incongruous with Pasternak's text. There is no sense of elevation, pathos, or hyperbolization present. This is how Pasternak perceived ripe apples in a garden. The lines «And as into an unheard faith, I cross into this night», also eschew pathos, spoken softly rather than loudly. They convey a secret, something intimate. Here, the candle is merely a candle, not a symbol of spiritual burning. In Pasternak's vision, humanity and the cosmos are given in a single dimension, as both humans and nature are equally animated and spiritualized for him.

The poem delineates two verbal sequences: «simple» everyday words (ash, brazier, beetles, candle, poplar, night, boundary, pond, pile construction) and elevated terms (revealed secret, unheard faith). Thus, the sublime in



Pasternak's work harmoniously merges with the earthly, the mundane. This integration forms a fundamental aspect of Boris Pasternak's poetics and poetry.

In Pasternak's works, nature speaks and acts on behalf of the author, yet so naturally and directly that it appears to speak on its own behalf. For instance, the poem «With a fragrant branch waving» ostensibly discusses two droplets «kissing and drinking» but also explores the beauty of the world, its perfection, love, and the wholeness and unity of being. Life is inseparable, like two merged droplets. The ability to see and feel the infinite ocean called life in a small droplet highlights the uniqueness of Pasternak's gift.

A characteristic feature of Pasternak's style is a particular, fervent, passionate attention to details and their most delicate, precise reproduction. He is an artist for whom «nothing is trivial» because, for him, the panorama of existence comes alive in details and specifics, achieving the ultimate aim of his poetry. This passion is elevated by Pasternak to a kind of aesthetic credo.

Pasternak's contemplation of nature was more frequent, patient, and intense than that of many others, yet he never ceased to marvel and admire, retaining the freshness of perspective and immediacy of sensations that are the hallmarks of an artist. On occasion, Pasternak explicitly articulates his sense of the primordial nature of existence, as in the phrase, «The entire steppe is as before the Fall». This does not suggest an elevation of humanity to the cosmic level; such a claim would be out of place in Pasternak's

writings. There's an absence of loftiness or hyperbole; this is simply how Pasternak perceived ripe apples in an orchard. When he writes, «And like into an unprecedented faith, I cross into this night», it's not about grandiloquence, since these words are spoken softly, revealing a secret or something deeply personal. The candle is just a candle, not a symbol of spiritual burning. For Pasternak, both human and nature are presented in a single dimension, both equally alive and spirited.

N.A.Fateeva identifies the thematic constants of Pasternak's poetry as the «uniqueness and magnificence of the world», a notion of «unity» that operates on multiple levels within his works. Pasternak masterfully combines disparate images and motifs within a single poem, bringing together subjects from vastly different spheres of human life. This concept even extends to the linguistic level, where he can place colloquial and vernacular expressions alongside formal terms and phrases of a high solemn style. Despite their diversity, these elements become equal in Pasternak's poetic language, never feeling out of place.

The «everydayness» reflected in Pasternak's verses can be demonstrated through numerous examples: «The forest was filled with meticulous twinkling, As if under a watchmaker's tweezers» («In the Forest»); «...the air is blue, like a laundry bundle For someone discharged from the hospital» («Spring»); «the earth smokes, like a pot of schi» («Roosters»); «He drowned in the fog, ... Becoming a cross-stitch on fabric And a mark on linen» («Night»). His uniqueness lies in his



poeticization of the world through prosaisms, infusing his poems with the truth of life and thereby transitioning them from the realm of fabricated fiction to authentic poetry.

Pasternak's style is distinguished by its broad and original use of linguistic devices, notably polysemy, which is manifested through the creation of vivid metaphors and metonyms: «And to the wind's razor the clouds' mane Throws up the sultriness» («Butterfly-Storm»), only swallowing dust in rain pills («Sultry Night»), you hide your lips in the snow of jasmine («Our Storm»); Silver-october, the gleam of frosts tinny. The autumn twilight of Chekhov, Tchaikovsky, and Levitan («Winter is Approaching»), Braids flickered and the shuttle clicked («Birds chirped and were sincere»).

Within the tropes, a notable abundance of similes and epithets is observed. Pasternak's similes are unusual and extensively elaborated, resembling complete studies or sketches, sometimes layering one upon another:

From the balcony windows, like streams  
from the thighs and backs of chilled swimmers,  
the condensation flows. («After the Rain»);  
It was morning. The jaws clenched,  
And the rustle of leaves was like delirium.  
The blue plumage of a drake  
Gleamed over the Kama at dawn.  
(«On the Steamboat»)

His epithets stand out for their originality, diversity, uniqueness, and characterological richness: thunderous slush; sobbing verses; ubiquitous March; September's bloody tears; orphaned, northern-gray, weedy rain; multi-

humped blizzard; a story twirling into a cord; a weeping stanza, and so on.

In Pasternak's works, tropes intertwine with each other, becoming more complex through the insertion of one within another. This process leads to a splitting and enrichment of the semantics of words, the emergence of secondary, metaphorical meanings, sometimes only associatively related to the primary sense.

This complexity contributes to the impression of a sophisticated poetic manner. In Pasternak's early work, this complexity was justified by his brilliant poetry and was inseparable from it. After all, style is ultimately not a collection of technical techniques nor something subjectively intentional but something objective: the expression, the imprint of an artist's individuality.

The later Pasternak «fell into an unprecedented simplicity» in terms of verse form. As for the spiritual content of his poetry, the later Pasternak is by no means simpler than the early one. However, when discussing the early and late Pasternak, it is essential not to emphasize opposition or difference, though opposition and significant differences exist, but to highlight their unity. The main focus should be on how the early and late Pasternak complement each other, forming a harmonious whole, the world we call poetry.

Several researchers of B.Pasternak's work have noted impressionistic tendencies in his poetry. For instance, in «Materials for a Biography,» E.Pasternak talks about the «metaphorical impressionism» characteristic of



B.L.Pasternak's verses, and Yu.Lotman mentions the poet's «obsessive impressionism».

Impressionists pay considerable attention to the sun in their work. In Pasternak's poems, images of the sun frequently appear: at times, he ironically refers to the celestial body as a drunkard, «Reaching out from afar, with a transparent purpose Through the windowpane Towards bread and a glass of brandy» («Summer»), at other times, he compares it to lemonade and «the oozing yolk Of an egg in a cracked shell» («Tracks in the Snow»), or describes how the sun at day's end enters the forest and «Looks around warily, fearing a trap might be hidden within» («Autumn Forest»).

## CONCLUSION

The connection between poetry and life, as well as life and creativity, constitutes a fundamental theme of Russian literature in the 20th century, marked by a distinctive dramatism. The linkage between philosophy and poetry explores the nature of artistic thought and individual authorial strategy. Within B.Pasternak's artistic framework, these aspects—ethics, aesthetics, and the philosophy of creativity—are intertwined with the direct and imperative comprehension of life. The emblematic declaration «In everything, I seek to reach the very essence» was not merely rhetorical for him. The poet aspired with absolute conviction to an unceasing dialogue with the reader and the world in which he lived. His interpretation of the world and perception of life evolve into an independent aesthetic-philosophical system.

Therefore, it is crucial to highlight several points characterizing the evolution of Pasternak's manner, style, and poetics: the synthesis of philosophical and artistic principles, the unity and spiritualization of humanity and nature, attention to details and marvel at the primordial essence of being, impetuosity, dynamism and emotionality of the verse, the ability to merge disparate images and motifs within a single poem using stylistically diverse linguistic means, and a gravitation from a complex system of tropes to simplicity in verse form.

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