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**THE STATUS OF THE CONCEPTS OF «EVENT» AND «ACTION» IN  
PASTERNAK'S *DETSTVO LJUVERS***

It is an established critical position that Pasternak's early prose excludes action. This consensus has not been altered since the first appearance of the works in question. In fact, it has been shared and reinforced by several seminal literary investigators who belong to different schools and different generations. One of the first reactions to Pasternak's prose was that of Evgenij Zamjatin, who in 1918 while hailing Pasternak's first stories and praising the writer as one "without kith or kin" (*без роду и племени*), nevertheless admitted the absence of action material and the fact that the plots were unimpressive. "His own contribution is not in the area of plot (his work is plotless)" - "новое у него не в сюжете. Он бессюжетен".<sup>1</sup> Roman Jakobson in 1935 created a framework which explained this lack of action: Pasternak's natural predisposition to metonymy (in contrast to the metaphoric language of Majakovskij) results in the absence of action.<sup>2</sup> Michel Aucuturier developed Jakobson's position further in 1978. With reference to Pasternak's comparison of art to a "sponge"<sup>3</sup> Aucuturier examines the writer's penchant for the "respective hero". Pasternak's typical character, according to Aucuturier, is of the interest to the writer not in action but in his ability to absorb the world, thus becoming a metonymous part of his surroundings.<sup>4</sup>

Lazar' Flejšman corroborates this view from a novel perspective. According to Flejšman, it is Pasternak's phenomenological stance which defeats the possibility of action, since the character's unity with the observed phenomena obscures the clear delineation of events. Flejšman's view is all the more important for the decisive new direction which he gives to Pasternak's criticism by taking the texture of his prose outside a framework of purely aesthetic predisposition (metonymy rather than metaphor) and placing it in the much wider context of the philosophical world-view of the artist.<sup>5</sup>

In our analysis of *Detstvo Ljuvers* we shall propose a new theory of Pasternak's early prose, a theory which takes account of the views of these commentators, but develops them in a significantly new direction. We shall argue that Pasternak is deeply interested in the status of action, far more so than has hitherto been supposed by his critics and we shall show that in *Detstvo Ljuvers* in particular *he investigates a potential for action* and its consequences in the very

world which he constructs. The growth of the little girl allows for this investigation in the most natural manner: the sequence of the girl's acquaintance, first with inanimate objects, then with nature and its forces, then in turn with the change in locality, and finally with other independent agents, - this sequence, and its unveiling, underscores the impossibility of locating the source of events merely within the changes of this one all-encompassing world. Pasternak's view of reality leads him, as we shall argue, towards the development of a notion of a boundary between two *separate* worlds as the only possible locus and originator of events.

In examining the status of events and actions we have found it helpful to adopt Lubomir Doležel's proposed semantics of narrative motifs and in the following analysis I shall use the main specifications of his exposition.<sup>6</sup> This approach will allow us to examine the texture of Pasternak's prose at a much greater proximity and will, therefore, help to isolate a decisive turning point in its construction.

We shall proceed by examining the narrative motifs in order of their appearance and prominence in the texts, for it will also be a part of our argument to point out that the appearance of each narrative motif is not random in the chronology of the story. As a result, the paper will address the peculiar characteristics of the State-motif and Transitive Action-motif (I), the Processual motif (II), Intransitive Action-motif (III), Interaction (IV) and finally the construction of a separate, second Narrative World as an originator of events (V).

### I. The Children's acquaintance with the inanimate world: the contiguity of State-motif, Action-motif (trans.) and Ment-motif.<sup>7</sup>

In the very first scene of *Detstvo Ljuvers*, namely that in which the little girl is frightened, one finds a peculiar and disturbing quality of presentation. Zanja is frightened not by the truly strange scene of a card game - the wakened child cries because of something that should not have upset her: "Зато ни по чем нельзя было определить того, что творилось на том берегу, далеко-далеко; у того не было названия и не было отчетливого цвета и точных очертаний; и волнующееся, оно было мыльным и родным, и не было бредом" (57).<sup>8</sup> The question of name here is central: Zanja knows the name for the card-game, but not for the object on the other bank. Yet it is also important that the *frightening scene is described as something kindred and dear to her, as something her own.*

Here the major narrative device of the story is explicitly introduced: every important occurrence in the narrative until the girl's meeting with Cvetkov will relate character and outer world by ties of "kindredness". Even her passage from childhood is introduced by means of the same notion: unable to ask all the ques-

tions which will satisfy her exploration of this familiar unknown Motivlika, *the girl behaves exactly like the object of her explorations:*

В это утро она вышла из того младенчества, в котором находилась еще ночью. Она первый раз за свои годы заподозрила явление в чем-то таком, что явление либо оставляет про себя. Она впервые, как и эта новая Мотовилиха, сказала не все, что подумала, и самое существенное, нужное и беспокойное скрыла про себя. (57-58)

We must here assess the result of such a narrative strategy. In the narrative world of *Detstvo Ljuvers* the state of inanimate objects cannot be conceived without its partaking in the dynamic power of human life. By emphasising the kindredness between object and agent, the text describes objects (State-motif) as receiving vitality from the emotional state of humans (Ment-motif), which creates a possibility for the action in and by still-life (Action-motif). Thus, for example, when Ženja is lonely and wonders about her absent parents, she perceives the lamps wondering about the world outside, and the emphasis of the narrative is given not to the absent humans but to the bedroom lamps: "Душой своей они были на улице, где в мокрой земле копошился говор дворни и где, леденея, застывала на ночь редущая капель. Вот где вечерами пропадали лампы. Родители были в отъезде" (61). However, when peace is established between the girl and the mother after the latter's return, the lamps *change* their behaviour: "Лампы были опять свои, как зимой, дома, с Люверсами, - горячие, усердные, преданные" (63).

Pasternak's ability to animate still objects is familiar to his critics.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the metonymic series between the animate and the inanimate world (Jakobson, Aucturier's approach) can be also approached in terms of the relationship between animate agents and inanimate objects where the narrative strategy *obscures the boundary between agent and object* (Flejšman's view). Both positions, however, are rooted primarily in the first part of *Ljuvers*, where the contiguity of the motifs presents the observer as dependent upon the observed and vice versa. In other words, the loneliness and uneventfulness of the children's early years - they are rarely, especially in the beginning of "Долгие дни", surrounded by adults - is described as an interaction, *an acquaintance*, with the inanimate world around them, and therefore, the first part of the text is dominated not so much by Ment-motif or State-motif, but always by Action-motif which we can represent semantically as

SR: Action (Agent, Object).

Interestingly, such a semantic motif is considered to be invariably asymmetrical, since "objects are absolutely incontrovertible affectums, that is, they cannot be converted into affectants, and, therefore, cannot bring about events."<sup>10</sup> However,

in its emphasis upon the similarity, or rather kindredness (contiguity), between the inner world of the agent and the state of the inanimate objects surrounding him, the narrative of *Ljuvers* comes remarkably close to transforming the asymmetrical relationship into a symmetrical one (a pattern which Flejšman would see as dictated by Pasternak's phenomenological stance). As a result, the narrative does not merely animate the still life, but also very often de-animates the agents; and, what is, perhaps, more important, the constructed relationship -

SR: Action (Agent, Object) sym.

due to its very symmetry, can *never* result in an *Event*. In other words, in Pasternak's world the acquaintance with still-life cannot result in action because it is found to be, and *presented* as, resisting action.

An interesting passage, particularly representative of this paradoxical state, is the description of the children's amazement at the beauty of the different stones given by their father. Not only is the unwrapping of the gifts described as a simultaneous action of agents and object (they unwrap, the gift *announces* its appearance) but the children *do not* touch the stones:

Камни с влажным шелестом предупреждали о своем появлении из папиросной, постепенно окрашивавшейся бумаги, которая стфиновилась все более и более прозрачной по мере того, как слой за слоем разворачивались эти белые, мягкие, как газ, пакеты. Одни были слепы, сонны или мечтательны, эти - с резвою искрой, как смерзшийся сок корольков. (65; *my italics*)

There is a simultaneity of the action of the agents and the objects: as the stones are unwrapped, they appear to be born (secreted by the paper). The stones, therefore, *almost* come to life, yet they are frozen, they do not and cannot *move towards* the hands of the agents, and the agents in admiration of this frozen emergence, do not *move towards the stones*: "Их не хотелось трогать. Они были хороши на пенившейся бумаге" (65).

Thus, the action freezes at the very threshold of *Event* - SR: touched (Agent, object) asym. - but never becomes *Event*. The simultaneity of the actions of the agents and objects, of course, testifies to an excited mental state, yet the very animation of still life betrays a motif more active than *Ment*-motif yet less so than *Action*-motif and, thus, creates a blurred demarcation line between both, through which all the story's interaction between agents and objects is presente

Moreover, the passage in question is in my view, *intended* to signify the relationship between the agents and the objects in the narrative world of *Detstvo Ljuvers*. Stone, the most still of all objects, solidifies the agent-object relationship as if in an emblem-scene. The most still object is animated, the agents are frozen on the verge of an event-producing action, their mental state is agitated to the point

of movement; and yet the contiguity of the three motifs, and their mutual interdependence is preserved by the realistic genre of the narrative. State-motif, Action-motif and Ment-motif are balanced against each other in this symmetrical agent-object relationship, and this balance does not allow the event to be born out of *Zenja Ljuvers'* acquaintance with the life of the still object.

## II. A process of Growing. The Status of the Natural-event motif.

Soon the world of *Zenja* stops being totally limited by the inanimate life around her, however lonely her existence "в совершенно пустых, торжественно безлюдных комнатах" (58).<sup>11</sup> A careful examination of the text shows that the physical event of menstruation is by no means an isolated occurrence in the text, but that it plays a role of purgation on several levels of the narrative and at a specific period of its unveiling. The onset of blood corresponds to the simultaneous expulsion of sickness, the girl's childish suspicions, her dislike of her mother and the coldness, the coldness not only within the *Ljuver's* family, but also that of winter.

Let us examine the levels of the narrative surrounding the occurrence of menstruation in which a similar set of descriptions reoccur. We see here the continuing presence of the motifs which characterised the child's loneliness during the winter (namely, State-motif, Ment-motif, Action-motif), but we also find an introduction of two new patterns: that of the girl's physical state (Phys-motif) and that of the phenomenon of the natural force (Natural event-motif). As in the previous part of the narrative, all these motifs appear as contiguous, as invariably possessing similar characteristics. The repetitive themes in the following passages are those of inner swelling, sickness, secrecy, inner concealment, and guilt:

### 1) The description of objects. *State-motif*.

"Они не давали света, но набухали, изнутри, как больные плоды, от той мутной и светлой водянки, которая раздувала их одутловатые колпаки". (61)

### 2) The mental state of the child. *Ment-motif*.

"И так как для девочки это было годы подозрительности и одиночества, чувства греховности ... иногда казалось ей, что лучше и не может быть по ее испорченности и нераскаянности". (58)

"Все таинственное, чурающееся обнаружения, похожее на жар перед сыпью". (59)

"... с течением лет, это перешло у них в затаенную, все глубже укореняющуюся неприязнь". (59)

3) The girl's behaviour during the onset of menstruation. *Action-motif.*

"Приходилось только отрицать, упорно запершись в том, что было гаже всего ... Приходилось вздрагивать, стиснув зубы, и давясь слезами, жаться к стене". (59)

4) Menstruation. *Phys-motif.*

"Суставы, ноя, плыли слитным гипнотическим внушением. Томящее и измождающее, внушение это было делом организма, который таил смысл всего от девочки ... ведя себя преступником ...". (62)

5) The coming of spring. *Natural event-motif.*

"Трудно назревающая и больная, весна на Урале прорывается затем широко и бурно, в срок одной какой-нибудь ночи, и бурно и широко протекает затем". (61)

This juxtaposition of these narrative motifs reveals several tendencies of the textual strategy. On the one hand, it seems that the Natural-event (Processual) motif is singled out as an important event-bearer, since the occurrence is that of a natural development of the body. On the other hand, there is a strong emphasis in the narrative upon the facts that not everything is caused by the *N-force*, and that the events on different levels of the text run parallel without there being a clear affectant (e.g. the organism hides from the girl the real nature of the occurrence, yet *she* hides her secret from everyone else). Moreover, by this parallel organisation of narrative motifs, the text is given the capability of indicating a pseudo-affectant. Thus, it is carefully suggested in the story that nothing else but Ženja Ljuvers starts that spring in the Urals with her courageous confession. Spring in the Urals, as we have just read, "прорывается затем широко и бурно, в срок одной какой-нибудь ночи, и бурно и широко протекает затем". Ženja's confession is described by means of the same set of details: there is in the scene an emphasis on the urgency of the time (i.e. the important *one night* has arrived), there is also a definite image of breaking loose and flowing:

Ковко и студено, но без отлива, шершаво чернела пустынная ночь. Француженка стояла у стены. Ее рука по-адъютантски покоилась на часовом шнурке. Женя снова глянула на звезды и на Каму. Она решила. Несмотря ни на колод, ни

на урывки. И - бросилась. Она, путаясь в словах, непохоже и странно рассказывала матери про это. (62-63)

What we observe in this part of the narrative, therefore, is a pattern more complex than that described as purely metonymic construction or even that dictated by a phenomenological world-view. What we observe is the confusion as to the identity of the agent within each metonymic row of descriptions. The agent of one series is described as initiating the patterning in the other, and vice-versa. Thus, what we observe here is a cross-fertilisation between metonymous series, which adds further depth to the narrative and although it does not break the rule of metonymy or that of a phenomenological view-point, it makes these identifications insufficiently wide to explain the full vitality of the narrative. The above pattern, namely that of cross-fertilisation between the narrative motifs, will characterise the rest of the narrative texture of the story. Thus, a suggestion that a human agent initiates a natural event is far from being an isolated example in the story. In Ekaterinburg, for instance, Ženja (or perhaps not even Ženja but an inanimate object) starts the evening:

Уже низилось солнце. Доставая книжку, Женя по-тревожила поленицу. Сажень пробудилась и задвигалась, как живая. Несколько поленьев съехало вниз и упало на дерн с легким стуком. Это послужило знаком, как сторожев удар в колотушку. Родился вечер. (79)

Therefore, as within the peculiarity of the Action-motif, the narrative here again strives to break the rules of realistic presentation and attempts to offset the asymmetry within Processual motifs:

Event (X, Object) asym.

Event (X, Patient) asym.

Both objects and patients within the Processual motifs of *Detstvo Ljuvers* are not content with the incontrovertibility of the *N-force* as an affectant, but come close to reversing the relationship.

It is even possible to discern something of a pagan spring ritual (i.e. a ritual performed to influence the future) in the firing of the French governess. In this expulsion the sickness swelling within the Ljuvers family is exiled; and the future late spring and summer is affected, mollified as if by a surgical action ... *"убеждающая/ француженка, горничная и доктор ... омытые, обеззараженные светом"* (65; my italics).

It is harder, however, to reverse or minimise the effect of the *N-force* than to de-animate the agents in the Action-motifs. Although the metonymic series of the narrative obscure the affectants, the story's occurrences carefully imitate the tendencies of each season. Table 1 will demonstrate how the story is virtually guided by the change in seasons, and how its span is unveiled between the end

and the beginning of two successive winters. (Parts of the last column will be clarified later in the paper). We can see, therefore, that processual motifs in the story play simultaneously the roles of micro and macro constraints, since it is impossible in such an organisation of the narrative world that Ženja will be sad in the summer, or that a tragic accident will occur in the late spring.

Table 1

	Season	Age of the Child	<i>Motif-motifs</i> contiguous with <i>processual motifs</i>	Occurrences in the story	Stages of the introduction of the <i>narrative motifs</i>
Contiguity, metonymy	First Winter	End of Childhood	Sadness. Loneliness. Experience of parental coldness	Girl's acquaintance with still-life	Action (Ag, Ob-) almost sym.
	Beginning of spring	Beginning of Adolescence	"So ill and labouriously brought to fruition."	Menstruation	Event (X, Pat) parallel
	Late Spring Summer	"	"then flowing in a wild tempestuous stream." Happiness.	Move to Ekaterinburg. Friendship with parents.	Action: Agent (So/i-S o+1)
	Summer	"	Happiness.	Surprise of the girl at the unexpected multivalence of events.	Action (Ag, Pat)-asym. Action (Ag, -Ag) - Action (O)
Replacement, substitution, metaphor	Autumn	Adolescence	Thoughtfulness. Expectancy, then unexpected sadness.	The pregnancy of the mother and the servant. The appearance of Cvetkov.	An awareness of a second separate narrative world.
	Coming of Winter	Maturity	Suffering	Accidental deaths.	Accident as a result of the overlapping of several narrative worlds.
←————— <i>Event-generating structure</i> —————→					

On the other hand, as stated above, this parallelism in construction and the cross-fertilisation between the motifs do not allow one to consider the *N-force* as the main affectant. For example, Mrs. Ljuvers has a miscarriage not because winter has come, but because the tragic accidents within such a narrative construction must take place in the saddest of the seasons. It is also easy to predict that the accident will be in one way or another connected with the processual motif. Thus, the horse, unused to winter, or even perhaps replaying the vehemence of an earlier snowstorm, goes wild, tramples down Cvetkov and brings on Mrs. Ljuvers' miscarriage.

We can therefore state in summary that the processual motifs in *Detstvo Ljuvers guide* the series of metonymous narrative motifs, and that although such a procedure does not allow the *N-force* to become a clear incontrovertible affectant, yet, it serves to raise that natural force to the level of the major macroconstraints in the text. Within such an organisation, the action as such cannot be generated although the narrative becomes more fertile with possibilities. The incontrovertible agent, however, has not as yet been found.

### III. Movement. Intransitive Action-motif.

It may be observed that one of the few events that *does* take place in the story is the actual movement of the characters. However, in Pasternak's rendering of the move it is impossible to find significant differentiation between the original locale (or the original state,  $S_0$ ) and the new destination (that of the intended state,  $S_i$ ). For example, the central action of Ljuvers' family (and thus the entrance of a new narrative motif during the summer season) is the move from Perm to Ekaterinburg. In analysing this move, however, one finds that the semantic representation

Action: Ag ( $S_{0/i} - S_i$ )

cannot be applied to this journey without certain serious restrictions. There exists no demarkation line between two states. The move from Europe to Asia appears to the girl to be remarkably over-rated; there is indeed no change, no border-line between the continents, an original location moves with the mover:

Женя досадовала на скучную, пыльную Европу, мешкотно отдалявшую наступление чуда. Как же опешила она, когда, словно на Сережин неистовый крик, мимо окна мелькнуло и стало боком к ним и побежало прочь что-то вроде могильного памятника, унося на себе в ольху от гнавшейся за ним ольхи долгожданное сказочное название! За Азией давно уже числился не один десяток прогонов, а все еще трепетали платки на летевших головах, летели и летели мимо все той же пыльной, еще недавно европейской, уже давно азиатской ольхи. (69-70)

The move itself, of course, occurred, yet there is major difficulty in experiencing the change. The past and present become so intermingled in the girl's mind, that old and new states become co-existent: "Он говорил, что это прекрасный европейский город. И по неизвестным ходам из еще не известных комнат входила бесшумная белая горничная, вся крахмально-сборчатая и черненькая, ей говорилось 'вы', и, новая, - она как знакомым, улыбалась барыне и детям" (70). The place, indeed, seems so familiar to Ženja that she exclaims to everyone's surprise: "Чем же это - Азия?" (71). Thus, the movement that occurs in *Detstvo Ljuvers* can find its representation only in the following semantic construction

Ag (So/i - So+i),

where intended state, like a sponge, absorbs all the kindred (to the girl) aspects of the original state (that is why Ženja calls the new town Asia and not Ekaterinburg, obviously preferring a more spacious name. The action of moving, therefore, becomes submerged in the narrative, since no clear sense of change or boundary can be experienced.

Furthermore, when the movement does not result in its intended state, - i.e.

Action: Ag (So/i - Sn) -

the new destination within the narrative plays such a trick upon the memory that an unexpected state (Sn) becomes *post factum* an intended state (Si). For example, when the girl on her way to the kitchen expects it to be "very dark" and finds it totally different, she registers no surprise: "Кухня оказалась свежая, светлая, - какую она наперед загадала в столовой и представила" (71).

Such a presentation of intransitive action not only annihilates the intransitive Action-motif as such, but it also fails to provide any possibility of accident, of surprise. The inner world of the girl is so open and elastic that for a long time it absorbs change without experiencing any crisis.

One should emphasise the great importance of the fact that the move to the Urals takes place in the late spring. The *natural unity* of the spring's flow - "then flowing in a wild, tempestuous stream" is paralleled in the text by the Ljuvers' journey to Asia, a journey which in the child's eyes is also an all absorbing unity. In a world governed exclusively by one allabsorbing principle and united in all its forces (i.e. during the spring's flow of regeneration) the notion of an event or an accident cannot be conveyed through the intransitive Action-motif, since this world knows no change.

#### IV. Mid summer: New friends. Interaction

The problem of interaction in perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of *Detstvo Ljuvers*. I shall here analyse only its most essential properties. As with

other narrative motifs, the motif of interaction assumes a prominent place at a specific season – after midsummer. It is displayed most in the asymmetrical relationship of Ženja with those around her. The girl, because of her age, is destined for an entirely passive role (here, perhaps, there is a parallel to the summer which is now being superceded by the rule of autumn). Yet if, indeed, the interactions between children and adults are so asymmetrical -

Act (Ag, Pat.) asym. -

why are they never crowned by a major event? Two related answers present themselves:

1. Firstly, the influence of the agent upon the patient transforms and almost depersonalises the latter. This transformation is particularly emphasised in Sereža's case: "Сережа сдружились с ними в августе. К концу сентября у мальчика не стало лица" (83). (Again the specification of time brings to mind the summer's inability to resist the onslaught of the cold).

Therefore, *the patient in interaction becomes something of a nonpresence, which defeats the goal of action and makes it subjectless in the most literal sense of the word*. Not only is the interaction not symmetrical, but it equates agent and patient through the loss of the latter's identity and, thus, is not long-lived. This is, for example, how Ženja's act of pity for the soldiers is described: "Роты поту-скнели и стали собранием отдельных людей ..., которых стало жалко в ту самую минуту, как введенный в них смысл одушевил их, возвысил, сделал близкими и обесцветил " (85; *my italics*).

2. Not only does the patient in interaction lose his own face but *the personal properties of the agent are also often obscured*. The text is overburdened with impersonal structures: "They told her [Ej ob'javili]" etc. Furthermore, personal pronouns are used in such a way that it is often impossible to identify the real agent. Particularly fascinating here are the breaks between chapters, for the same actions are often displayed by a different set of agents as the chapters close and open. Both sets of agents are usually presented by means of the anonymity of personal pronouns:

С некоторых пор он стал догадываться, что болен и что его  
болезнь неизлечима.

Ей было не жаль не его. (83)

In the first sentence "he" is Mr. Ljuvers, in the second - Negarat. The text here clearly obscures the identity of the agents. This device becomes particularly prominent after the loss of Sereža's personality is established, i.e. after the patient's depersonalisation is demonstrated (217, 219). This uncertainty about the identity of the specified agent is developed in the narrative further when a particular action is described as being attributed to a series of characters in the

text. Ženja, falling sick with measles "В тот самый день, когда узнала после прогулки, что Аксинья родила мальчика" suffers for days on end from "чувство безобразной толстоты" (90).

Here, however, the metonymic series of the text finally find their limitations. The device of obscuring both agent and patient not only sabotages the possibility that events should result from human interaction, but also points towards its own insufficiency in dealing with characterisation. The cross-fertilisation between the series only adds to this limitation: within such a narrative the problem of personality cannot be approached. And it is the problem of personality which begins to haunt the girl, who is shocked by her brother's "loss of face" and particularly by the possibility that her mother may turn into an illiterate cook (both Mrs. Ljuvers and Aksin'ja are pregnant).

In the concluding section of this paper I shall argue that the narrative corrects these limitations resulting from its employment of the metonymic series by constructing a separate narrative world, the relationship of which to Ženja's world of kindredness is no longer that of metonymy. I will also argue that in *Detstvo Ljuvers* the presence of a separate narrative world is not irrelevant to the issues of personality and that it is on the boundary between these two worlds that the event can finally emerge.

## V. The Presence of Separate Worlds. The Appearance of Cvetkov and the Coming of Winter.

In summarising the principles operating in *Detstvo Ljuvers*, Jakobson states that the world of Pasternak's prose knows no inner conflict or struggle.<sup>12</sup> My argument has so far fully supported this thesis. However, it has also been the argument of this paper that Ženja's world operates in accordance with Processual-motifs acting as macroconstraints. It is with the coming of winter that the *unity* of her world is totally shattered, and the significance of this disintegration has not as yet been properly assessed.

I have argued above that no inner demarcation lines, no barriers, operate in the text, as the story unveils through the seasons of spring, summer and early autumn. The notion of the barrier however *is* introduced as something that does *not* happen during the Ljuver's move to Ekaterinburg: "В очарованной ее голове 'граница Азии' встала в виде фантасмагорического какого-то рубежа, вроде тех, что ли, железных брусьев, которые полагают между публикой и клеткой с пумами полосу грозной, черной, как ночь, и вонючей опасности. Она ждала этого столба, как поднятия занавеса над первым актом географической трагедии, о которой слышалась сказок

от видевших, торжественно волнуясь тем, что и она попала и вот скоро увидит сама" (69).

"The curtain", as we have already seen, does not rise in this part of the story. However, the passage in question should not be underestimated, for it does introduce the notion of the borderline as a limit to comfortableness. It is also of the highest significance that the world beyond the barrier is described as possessing the wildness and untamed qualities of nature (a cage full of pumas) and also a world of artistic creation (the curtain and the stage), which displays, interestingly enough, a tragic spectacle. Moreover, the borderline, the curtain and even the wild animals are reintroduced in the text in the autumns.

Let us turn here to the passage where the reintroduction of the borderline occurs, namely to the opening of the second and final part of the story entitled "The Stranger", literally the man from another side (*Po-Storonnij*). It is August, and the girl is warmly dressed ("the girl was swathed from head to knees in a thick woollen shawl"), which signifies the approach of a new cold season. She reads Lermontov's *Demon* and ponders upon the famous mistake in the text, where the lioness is given a mane, the attribute of the male-lion. *Ženja* also folds the book so that the binding lies inside (i.e. the content of the book is open to the outside world, the barrier is taken away). Then *Ženja* forgets about the book and watches a strange spectacle on the street, beyond the neighbouring dark garden. What is important here is the recreation of a stage-setting, where the trees in the garden are both the bars of the cage and a theater curtain; the darkness of the garden is the darkness of the theater, and the street beyond them is illuminated like a stage:

Кустов в чужом саду не было, и вековые деревья, унеся в высоту, к листве, как в какую-то ночь, свои нижние сучья, снизу оголяли сад, хоть он и стоял в постоянном полумраке, воздушном и торжественном, и никогда из него не выходил. Сохатые, лиловые в грозу, покрытые седым лишаем, они позволяли хорошо видеть ту пустынную, малоезжую улочку, на которую выходил чужой сад тою стороной.

Выпесенная мрачным садом с этого света на тот, глухая улочка светилась так, как освещаются происшествия во сне; то есть очень ярко, очень кропотливо и очень бесшумно, будто солнце там, надев очки, шарило в курслепе. (78)

What does *Ženja* see on the illuminated street? Three women whose only unrealistic quality is their subtly evoked and unmistakably absolute likeness to each other. The women whom she sees from behind are dressed in mournful black, yet their posture strikes a familiar note, suggesting something akin to the position of three graces in Botticelli's *Prima Vera* or Canova's *The Three Graces* :

Три ровных затылка, зачесанных под круглые шляпы, склонились так, будто крайняя, наполовину скрытая кустом, спит, обо что-то облокотясь, а две другие тоже спят, прижавшись к ней. Шляпы были черно-сизые, и гасли и сверкали на солнце, как насекомые. Они были обтянуты черным крепом. (78)

The text now becomes both remarkably suggestive yet equally subtle. The women, whom Ženja terms "the happy ones" ("sčastivye", i.e. *beati* or *makarioi*, a name for the Gods in Greek mythology and literature), moving in unison, get up to leave; they are followed by a small lame man who is obviously unaware of them. He carries "an album or an atlas" and Ženja reflects: "Так вот чем занимались они, заглядывая через плечо друг дружке, а она думала - спят" (79). The ambiguity of the last statement allows several readings; the unknown women were either watching the man draw, or making him draw (inspiring) or even creating him and the world (atlas) with him.

The man, thus introduced, is Cvetkov who is to die soon under the hooves of the Ljuvers' horse (Cvetkov, *cvetok*; a flower destined to die in winter and who is already mourned by the graces). Yet this physical features are clearly those of Lermontov whose *Demon* Ženja has just folded inside out and whom she will categorically refuse to read at the end of the story (251): there is the same short stature, lameness and even a suggested love for drawing. Perhaps he is also Hephaestus, the short, lame artist-god, who is holding an album or an atlas, i.e. his own creation equal to the creation of the whole wide world.

All this (and more) the text suggests yet it authenticates much less and I will restrict myself here to the suggestions that are clearly authenticated. Let us consider several directions of enquiry: (1) the link to Lermontov, and (2) the link to the coming winter as the link to a separate world or worlds ("vynesennaja s ètogo sveta na tot" (104)) and its consequences.

### 1. Cvetkov as Lermontov

The connection of Cvetkov and Lermontov is carefully introduced and maintained in the text. Not only Ženja's refusal to read Lermontov after Cvetkov's death strengthens that connection but also Sereža's reference to the lame man - "Помнишь, я рассказывал - собирает людей, всю ночь пьют, свет в окне" (87) - clearly evokes Lermontov's "Tamara":

И там сквозь туман полуночный  
Блистал огонек золотой  
Кидался он путники в очи

Манил он на отдых почной  
 .....

шипели  
 Пред нею два кубка вина.<sup>13</sup>

Yet what can be the point of such connection? I have stated earlier that the problem of personality remains an Achilles' heel of Pasternak's metonymic series. By means of the connection between Cvetkov and Lermontov Pasternak corrects the facelessness of at least this one character: The characterisation becomes possible when the identity of Cvetkov is established by relating the latter to another well established figure from a world unconnected with the world of the story. This is no longer a metonymic equality but a metaphorical substitution which allows the reader of the story to grant particular qualities to the character, qualities which the immediate world of the story cannot provide. This device operates in *all* the prose works of Pasternak: it reappears in "Апельсиновая черта" where the protagonist is given the name of Heinrich Heine, in "Воздушные пути" it manifests itself in the parallelism established between God, the Father, and Polivanov, and even as late as *Doktor Živago* the same device is employed in a parallel between Yurij and Hamlet and is evident in the Christian motifs associated with Yurij. The employment of metaphoric link is by no means a complete equation, yet it prevents Pasternak's characters from being dissipated without trace in their immediate world.

Furthermore, the device thus employed becomes within the story an insight into the struggle of a personality with the annihilating power of death; a metaphoric connection between characters belonging to separate worlds is soon turned into the ability of a personality to cross the barrier between death and life. The link between Ženja Ljuvers and her mother is, perhaps, the most open account (literally, *obnaženje priema*) of this metaphorical substitution which operates as a device of characterisation. When Ženja after the miscarriage of her mother is sent to the Defendovs, it is clear that Ženja's memory of her mother is coloured by tragic overtones of death. Interestingly, the train scene (i.e. the scene of the move from Perm to Ekaterinburg) is reintroduced here, yet this time the past *is* left behind and the demarcation line is only too vivid: "... мать вышла у ней в воспоминаниях: страдающей, оставшейся стоять в веренице вчерашних фактов, как в толпе провожающих, и крутимой там, позади, поездом времени, уносящим Женю" (101; *my italics*). Therefore, the described break between mother and daughter seems complete, the separation line between their worlds is drawn in all finality when suddenly Ženja's mood changes:

Внезапная мысль осенила ее. Она вдруг почувствовала, что страшно похожа на маму. Это чувство соединилось с

ошущением живой безошибочности, властной сделать домысел фактом, если этого нет еще налицо, уподобить ее матери одною силой потрясающе сладкого состояния. ... Она вышла к Дефендовым, пьяная от слез и просветленная, и вошла не своей, изменившейся походкой. ... Она смутно чувствовала, что теперь выбор разговора за ней. А то ее будут утверждать в ее прежнем одиночестве, не видя, что ее мама тут, с нею и в ней самой. (102; *my italics*)

This scene is not only the transformation of Ženja and her emergence as an adult, it also marks the point of Mrs. Ljuvers crossing the boundary of death and entering the life of Ženja and, thus, continuing on with her life. In a similar fashion, we may add, Lermontov enters the world of the story as Cvetkov, moved through Pasternak's "sensation of vivid certainty, sufficiently powerful to contrive that the idea should become reality" (see the italics in the earlier quote).

In 1958 Pasternak wrote in a letter to Eugene Kayden about his attitude to Lermontov in 1917, and what he says is relevant to this investigation: "I dedicated *My Sister Life* not to the memory of Lermontov but to the poet himself as though he was living in our midst - to this spirit still effectual in our literature. What he was to me, you ask in the summer of 1917? - The personification of creative adventure and discovery, the principle of everyday free poetical statement".<sup>15</sup> Thus, the lioness with the lion's mane goes a long way in *Detstvo Ljuvers*. The poet's power of constructing a world is underlined when Lermontov is brought into Cvetkov, when the barriers of the separate worlds are moved against one another in an opposition which is destined to explode the comfortable world of Ženja's childhood.

## 2. *Cvetkov and the coming of Winter.*

In Greek mythology the approach of winter found its allegorical presentation in the story of Hades (Pluto) abducting Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, and bringing her to his underworld kingdom. Neither the power of Demeter nor even that of Zeus, the ruler of all gods, can intervene to free Persephone. What we encounter in this mythological story is the juxtaposition of two alethically different worlds, where the ruler of all the gods, Zeus, finds a limit to his power. Something very similar to this pagan account of the power of winter appears in *Detstvo Ljuvers*: the coming of winter in Pasternak's story is emphatically associated with the appearance of a fascinating, yet death-bringing world(s) full of hidden darkness, whose power and effect cannot be either counteracted or even foreseen in the world so far investigated by Ženja and found kindred to herself. This is how the first snow which brings tragedy into Ženja's world is described in the text:

А мело уже, и не на шутку, и сейчас. Небо тряслось, и с него валялись белые царства и края, им не было счета, и они были таинственны и ужасны. Было ясно, что эти, неведомо откуда падавшие, страны никогда не слышали про жизнь и про землю и, полуночные, слепые, засыпали ее, ее не видя и не зная.

Они были упоительно ужасны, эти царства; совершенно сатанински восхитительны. Женя захлебывалась, глядя на них. А воздух шатался, хватаясь за что попало, и далеко-далеко больно-пребольно взывали будто плетью огретые поля. ... Мело. (94)

Throughout the text Cvetkov is depicted as connected with this onslaught of cold, and even after the children's return from witnessing the storm, Sereža unexpectedly announces that they have just seen Cvetkov:

- Как выезжать, мы видали Негаратова знакомого. Знаешь?
- Эванса? - рассеянно уронил отец.
- Мы не знаем этого человека, - горячо выпалила Женя. (95)

There is, of course, no mention in the text of the children seeing Cvetkov prior to this announcement, and, thus, Ženja's insistence that the family does not know him, solidifies the link between the lame man and the unknown kingdoms of snow.<sup>15</sup> What occurs in the narrative at the start of winter, therefore, is a creation of the world, where several worlds are intermingled; and, interestingly enough, the tragic accident takes place exactly when these worlds come into headlong collision; i.e. when Mrs. Ljuvers steps out of the theatre on the first day of snowfall: " ... А как по окончании спектакля стали выходить, то их жеребец ... Выкормыш ... стал биться, вздыбился, сбил и подмял под себя случайного прохожего ... " (105).

The mention of the theatre is in full agreement with the emphasis, discussed above, upon the boundary between the comfortable world and that of a theatrical stage "full of pumas". The crossing of this boundary line after the darkness and the snow are released proves tragic.<sup>16</sup>

Another important complication in this chain of accidents (i.e. Cvetkov's death and the miscarriage of Mrs. Ljuvers) is the carefully introduced intimation of the coming death of Mr. Ljuvers. This is introduced yet again during autumn, when Sereža loses his characteristics:

К концу сентября у мальчика не стало лица. ... Люверс не препятствовал дружбу сына. ... К тому же голова у него была занята другими заботами. С некоторых пор он стал догадываться, что болен и что его болезнь неизлечима. (83)

No one in the Ljuver's family knows about this sickness. In this sense, Cvetkov, the man from the unknown world, is, as it were, enacting in the story the death ritual still in store for the Ljuvers. The idea of Cvetkov as an actor, or even as a shadow performing a tragic role, is given its fullest expression when Ženja, a week after Cvetkov's death, sees his departure back into the world of shadows:

Хромой поднял лампу и стал удаляться с ней. За ним двинулись, перекашиваясь и удлиняясь, обе яркие полосы, а за полосами и сани, которые быстро вспыхнули и еще быстрее метнулись во мрак, медленно заезжая за дом к крыльцу.

Вскоре лампа опять показалась, и плавно пройдясь по всем занавескам, стало было снова, пятиться назад, как вдруг очутилась за самой занавеской, на подоконнике, откуда ее взяли.

Это было в четверг. (105)

The actor has finished his role and departs not to the land of the living but to the world of shadows, and only the lamp on the window - a symbol associated in the text with Cvetkov and Lermontov - remains.

Also of interest is the theme of death in Lermontov's *Demon*, a text mentioned prior to the appearance of Cvetkov. All the deaths in *Demon* are caused by Lermontov's "demon", yet to everyone in the poem they appear as tragic accidents. An echo of this is preserved in *Detstvo Ljuvers*, where Ženja recognizes, however subjective this may be, that in her bringing Cvetkov into the midst of the family, she has initiated a tragedy: "А плакала Женья оттого, что считала себя во всем виноватой. Ведь ввела его в жизнь семьи она в тот день, когда, заметив его за чужим садом ... стала затем встречать его на каждом шагу, постоянно, прямо и косвенно, и даже, как это случилось в последний раз, наперекор возможности"<sup>17</sup> (108).

Cvetkov, therefore, is simultaneously victim (Cvetkov, a flower dying in winter) and agent of a tragic occurrence, a spirit of winter. One may observe that a character of similar stature reappears in Pasternak much later in *Živago*, where Evgraf, a helping spirit to Yuriij, is nevertheless always associated with death:

He [Yuriij] was delirious ... Only now and then a boy got in his way ... He knew for certain that this boy was the spirit of his death, or to put it quite plainly, that he was his death. Yet how could he be his death if he was helping him to write a poem? How could death be useful, how was it possible for death to be a help."<sup>18</sup>

*Detstvo Ljuvers* ends, therefore, when the world of Ženja has already intermingled with that of the unknown. This presence of several worlds within

one is given an arresting visualization when Ženja's tutor, Dikix, loses the girl in the space of one room in the closing scene of the story: "Он встал, похожий на аиста ... А тем временем, как он тыкался впотьмах на загадки из дерева, шерсти и металла, Женя сидела в уголочке и плакала" (107). Her interruption of his search - "Осторожно, там горка" - suggests not merely precious piece of furniture, but a real mountain growing in the middle of the room.

The all-knowing narrator interrupts the scene and collapses what has opened up as many unknown worlds (so that the tutor needs the legs of the crane not to drown in this world's porous carpet) into *one real world* where Ženja has just encountered something fully independent of her own life: "В ее жизнь вошел другой человек, третье лицо, совершенно безразличное" (107-108). Here the authorial voice introduces the commandments of Christ, as the rules which the girl must follow in her interaction with this part of a world indifferent to her:

... Другой человек, третье лицо, совершенно безразличное, без имени или со случайным, не вызывающее ненависти и не вселяющее любви, но то, которое имеют в виду заповеди, обращаясь к именам и сознаниям, когда говорят: не убий, не крадь и все прочее. "Не делай ты, особенный и живой, - говорят они, - этому, туманному и общему, того, чего себе, особенному и живому, не желаешь". (108)

The commandment brings into one sharp focus what operates unnamed in the last "winter" section of *Detstvo Ljuvers*. No one is responsible for the tragedy, yet tragic accidents do take place. In this sense, it becomes clear how unified the text is in its avoidance of *Action-motifs* caused by individual agents or forces even when it goes beyond its metonymic series. In other words, the organization of the text is such that no event can take place while the metonymic series operate, whereas when events occur on the boundary of separate worlds, they are not caused by actions but by accidents. Therefore, the commandment, unveiled at the end of the story, can be regarded as a major deontic modality operating in the world of the narrative, a modality which forbids any direct action initiated or caused by a personalised agent, "не делай ты". Hence, neither *N-force* (always personalised in the text), nor human agent, nor even Cvetkov (in contrast to Lermontov's demon) can become an incontrovertible effectant. This also signifies not merely that metonymy is responsible for the absence of action-material in the text (since the same absence is found when the narrative moves beyond metonymy) but rather that in *Detstvo Ljuvers* an intensional organisation of the text is initiated by the modal operator, the content of which is disclosed when the authorial voice gives its own interpretation of Christ's commandment. The text here clearly strives for the generation of a new prosaic form, where 19th century

prose (i.e. metonymy according to Jakobson), on the one hand, and romantic symbolism (metaphor, emblematically present through Lermontov), on the other, are given a new direction, a direction where events are caused not by personalised action but by a collision between several narrative worlds.

Pasternak's prose, therefore, matures in its complexity within the narrative account of the maturation of Ženja Ljuvers. At its close *Detstvo Ljuvers* comments upon its own successful discovery of a new prosaic form of prose when it concludes with a suggestion of its own triumph over 19th century classics: "И без дальних слов Лермонтов был тою же рукою втиснут назад в покосившийся рядок классиков" (108).

The deontic modality which operates in *Ljuvers* - a prohibition of direct action caused by a personalised agent -- will not altogether prevail in the later prose works of Pasternak. He himself indirectly comments upon this in *Avtobiografičeskij očerok*, when he speaks with mild irony about the childishness of his youthful belief in predestination and his then profound disregard for any assertive exercise of will: "In real life, I thought everything must be miraculous and preordained, nothing must be planned, deliberate, willful...Almost as far back as the night of the concert I had started to believe in a heroic world which must be served with admiration, although it brings sorrow."<sup>19</sup> This, indeed, summarises best the status of action in *Detstvo Ljuvers*: the absence of a deliberately executed action and the death and suffering that Cvetkov brings into Ženja's family.

The alteration which takes place in Pasternak's later works, however, does not eliminate the motif of several narrative worlds and the boundary between them as an event-generating structural principle. We have mentioned already the relationship between Yurij and Evgraf in *Doktor Živago*. We may add here Lara, "the girl from a different circle" (*Živago*, 27), whose role, in contrast to that of Tonja, is to bring complexity into the life of those around her (*Živago*, 372). The status of action, on the other hand, becomes more pronounced and developed, but even then Pasternak approves only of an action which is carried out as a service to a world which surpasses immediate reality.<sup>20</sup> He says it best himself in *Avtobiografičeskij očerok*: "В настоящей жизни, полагал я, все должно быть чудом, предназначением свыше, ничего умышленного, намеренного, никакого своеволия" (425).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Zamjatin, "The New Russian Prose" (1923) in *A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin*, ed. and trans. by Mirra Ginsburg (Chicago, 1970), 100. In Russian see "Novaja Russkaja Proza" in Zamjatin, *Žitija* (New York, 1977), 203.

- 2 Jakobson, "Marginal Notes on the Prose of the Poet Pasternak", in *Pasternak* ed. Davie and Livingstone (Glasgow, 1969), 135-151.
- 3 See "Neskol'ko Položenij" [Several Propositions] in B. Pasternak, *Sočinenija*, V. 3 (Ann Arbor, 1961), 152.
- 4 Aucuturier, "The Metonymous Hero or the Beginning of Pasternak the Novelist", in *Pasternak: Collection of Critical Essays* (New Jersey, 1978), 45.
- 5 See Flejšman, "K karakteristike rannego Pasternaka", in *Statji o Pasternake*, ed. (Jerusalem, 1977), 19-21.
- 6 See in particular Doležel, "Narrative Semantics in PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature 1 (f1976), 129-151; "Semantic of Narrative Motifs", in *Proceeding of the Twelfth International Congress of Linguists*, Vienna, Aug. 28 - Sept. 2, 1977, publ. 1978, 646-649. Also "Narrative Semantics and Motif Theory", in *Essays in Poetics* 1978 (3,1), 47-57.
- 7 The following four sections (I-IV) will overlap in many conclusions with Jakobson's treatment of metonymy in Pasternak and Flejšman's observations of Pasternak's phenomenological stance.
- 8 See *Detstvo Ljuvers*, in *Vozdušnye puti: proza raznyx let* (Moskva, 1982) p.57. All subsequent quotations from the story and from Pasternak's memoirs will be given from his edition. Occasionally I will turn to the translation of the story, in *The Childhood of Ljuvers* trans. R. Payne in Boris Pasternak, *Prose and Poems*, ed. Stefan Schimanski (London, 1959), 1983.
- 9 Sinjavskij succinctly summarises the principle of animation of the inanimate objects and the forces of nature in Pasternak's poetry, see Andrej Sinjavskij, *Predislovie*, in Boris Pasternak, *Stixotvorenija i poëmy* (Moskva/Leningrad, 1965), 17 ff.
- 10 See Doležel, "Narrative Semantics", 137.
- 11 It is noteworthy, how Pasternak avoids treating the interaction between Ženja and her brother until their move to the Urals, by mentioning that prior to the move - "до сих пор они жили парой" (71).
- 12 See Jakobson, "Marginal notes", 147.
- 13 M. Lermontov, *Sobranie sočinenij* [Collected Works], V. 1 (Moscow, 1975), 116.
- 14 See Kayden's Introduction to Boris Pasternak, *Poems* trans. and intr. Eugene Kayden (Ann Arbor, 1959), IX.

- 15 The connection between Cvetkov and the strange Belgian fellow Negarat is also significant, for Negarat in his turn is always associated with rain: "Иногда он приходил один ненароком, в будни, выбрав какое-нибудь нехорошее, дождливое время" (73). In Cvetkov's move to Negarat's room there is possibly a suggestion of snow succeeding rain.
- 16 Relevant here is similar juxtaposition of narrative world in Pasternak's earlier story *Il Tratto di Apelle*, where Heinrich Heine tells Carmilla about them both being on stage: "Yes, one more piece of play-acting. But why am I not allowed to stay for a while under the rays of a perfect illumination? Am I at fault because the most dangerous places in life-bridges and crossroads - are illuminated more strongly than others". See *Il Tratto di Apelle* in Pasternak, *Prose and Poems*, 141. Here, as in *Detstvo Ljuvers* the characters are also caught in a transition (stage) between worlds, and this transition, this boundary, is also treated as a place of danger. Flejšman observes that invariably the boundary near the theatre is associated in Pasternak with death, "K karakteristike", 16.
- 17 There is of an obvious reflection in this passage upon the creation of the story, a reflection upon fiction-making per se, which becomes even more prominent in the treatment of Evgraf in *Doktor Živago*, to which I am about to refer.
- 18 Pasternak, *Doctor Živago*, trans. Max Hayward and Manya Harari (London, 1958), 188.
- 19 Pasternak, *An Essay in Autobiography*, trans. Manya Harari (London, 1959), 47.
- 20 In this context Pasternak's love for Shakespeare's Hamlet becomes almost predictable. In the early 1940s Pasternak isolates the characteristics of the prince which are potentially present in the world of *Detstvo Ljuvers*: the sacrificial nature of Hamlet's life in the boundary between the two worlds, his submission to a will higher than his own, his chosenness as if by chance by this second separate supernatural world. For this see "Zamečanija k perevodam iz Šekspira".