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**A CASE OF FLUID IDENTITY: BORIS PASTERNAK AS FLÂNEUR
AND AN INVITATION AU VOYAGE¹**

As Michel Foucault explains, "the great obsession of the nineteenth century was history: themes of development and arrest, themes of crises and cycles, themes of accumulation over the past, a great overload of dead people, the threat of global cooling. [...] The present age may be the age of space instead. We are in an era of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the scattered."² It would be no exaggeration to suggest that Pasternak's poetry anticipated Foucault's concerns because many of Pasternak's contemporaries viewed his works as a clear manifestation of the modern concepts of simultaneity and space. Thus, in her 1932 essay "Epos i lirika sovremennoi Rossii" ("Epic and Lyric of Contemporary Russia") Marina Tsvetaeva describes Pasternak in terms similar to common definitions of a modern metropolis in a state of flux, self-renewal and constant evolution. This helps Tsvetaeva present Pasternak as a true modernist poet in search of a new style and novel experiences. Furthermore, Tsvetaeva's portrayal of Pasternak conceals a homage to Charles Baudelaire. In explicitly Baudelairean manner Tsvetaeva describes Pasternak as an invitation to travel:

Pasternak is solely an *invitation au voyage* of self-discovery and world-discovery, solely a point of departure; a place from which. Our unmooring. Just enough space for weighing anchor. [...] Something leads beyond. You might say that the reader himself writes Pasternak.³

The implied comparison between Baudelaire and Pasternak evokes the unmistakable bond existing between modern poetry and urban experience. While the vision of modernity as part of urban experience is a hallmark of Baudelaire's poetry, his 1859 poem "Le Voyage" instigates a search for a new dwelling and

¹ I wish to thank Professors Olga Peters Hasty, Carol Ueland and Vera Zubarev for all their support, valuable comments and corrections they made to the first draft of this article.

² Michel Foucault, "Different Spaces", *Aesthetics: Essential Works of Foucault: 1954-1984*, volume 2, edited by James D. Faubion, translated by Robert Hurley and others, Penguin Books: London, 2000, 175-185, 175.

³ Marina Tsvetaeva, "Epic and Lyric of Contemporary Russia", *Art in the Light of Conscience*, translated with Introduction and Notes by Angela Livingstone, London: Bristol Classical Press, 1992, 129, 119.

creates a metaphor for modern lyric poetry that sets readers' minds in perpetual motion of self-renewal.

Clearly Tsvetaeva applies to Pasternak Baudelaire's vision of the lyricist comparable to a courageous traveller committed to the onward journey and whose passionate assertion of life triumphs over the moralist's withdrawal from it. Richard Burton's characterisation of Baudelaire's travellers echoes Tsvetaeva's image of Pasternak, stating:

As they set sail, the travellers are inwardly afire, unafraid, wholly and willingly committed to the onward journey [...] and their cry 'Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe' is not at all the cry of nihilistic defiance it is sometimes taken for, but an affirmation of life whatever it may bring, a triumph for the lyricist's passionate espousal of life over the moralist's horrified recoil from it.⁴

Burton regards "Le Voyage" as anti-Odyssey narrative because it challenges the teleological assumptions that constitute the mythological universe, pointing out that the modern world has

no tutelary gods or goddesses, no predestiny or precognition, no supernatural interventions of any kind [...], no framework of tradition, belief or authority, no Eumenides other than the relentless goad of human Desire itself [...]; above all no Ithaca at the beginning and end of time.⁵

As will be demonstrated below, many strolls along the streets of the modern city found in Pasternak's poetry of the 1910s also challenge teleological beliefs of the past. Tsvetaeva is also correct to show a relation between the spaces of writing and dwelling in Pasternak's poetry. Pasternak's lyric hero frequently undertakes a journey in which urban experiences converge with linguistic discoveries and cognitive mapping of the world. Tsvetaeva's description of Pasternak further suggests a participatory role for the reader invited to join the author in urban activities and imaginary journeys. And as will be shown below, Tsvetaeva's reading of Pasternak's texts as an invitation to voyage stands close both to Martin Heidegger's notion of dwelling and to Henri Bergson's concept of simultaneity.⁶ Surprisingly, the influence of Bergson on Pasternak has received

⁴ Ibid., 89.

⁵ Ibid., 73.

⁶ Christopher Barnes mentions Henri Bergson and Edmund Husserl as the most important philosophers who influenced Pasternak's worldview and artistic philosophy. See: Christopher Barnes, *Boris Pasternak: A Literary Biography*, volume 1: 1890-1928, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 122.

scant scholarly attention, despite Pasternak's claim that before World War I most students at Moscow University "were carried away by Bergson."⁷

An early poem of Pasternak's—"Fevral'. Dostat' chernil i plakat'..." ("February. To get ink and to cry!...", 1912, 1928) — can be understood as an invitation to undertake an imaginary journey, experienced both as poetic exercise and physical sensation. The image of ink that would help express the lyric hero's deep melancholy is almost interchangeable with the image of black slush on streets that sounds under the feet of passers-by and cars: "Poka grokhochushchaia sliakot' / Vesnoiu chernoiu gorit"⁸ ("While the rumbling slush / Is burning as black spring"). The lyric hero uses the imperative that urges readers to escape with him into a suburban park, bypassing thereby the noisy slushy streets: "Dostat' proletku. Za shest' griven, / Chrez blagovest, chrez klik koles / Pere-nestis' tuda, gde liven' / Eshche shumnei chernil i sliez" ("Take a cab for sixty kopeks / And transport over / Through the chimes of the church bells / And through the sound of wheels into the space / Where the rain is even louder than ink and tears"). In his poem Pasternak describes the imaginary destination as a space where the lyric hero feels at peace and free of constraints, and experiences the act of writing poetry as therapeutic sensation. In other words, it is his creative dwelling that gives birth to poems. It can be argued that "Fevral'. Dostat' chernil i plakat'!" exemplifies the notion of dwelling as poetic category, in terms suggested in Heidegger's works that bind building, dwelling, thinking and speaking together through a cognitive connection.

For Heidegger, dwelling is a poetic category and a fundamental feature of the human condition that internalises the sense of dwelling. In his analysis of Hölderin's poem "In lovely blueness..." Heidegger explains that the Poet constructs the dwelling of himself, presents Being as man and even dwelling through poetry.⁹ As Henri Lefebvre outlines, Heidegger describes a search for dwelling as a double movement that makes readers "think through the deeper existence of the human being by taking dwelling and the dwelling as our starting point — thinking of the essence of Poetry as a form of 'building', a way of 'making dwell' [*faire habiter*] *par excellence*."¹⁰ Lefebvre points out that the traditional house filled with symbols and mysterious attics uniting dreams and memories and safeguarding people has been vanishing in the modern world, re-

⁷ Boris Pasternak, *Okhrannaia gramota*, Rome: Aquario, 1970, 20. Quoted in: Hilary L. Fink, *Bergson and Russian Modernism: 1900-1930*, Northwestern University Press: Evanston, Illinois, 1999, 117.

⁸ Boris Pasternak, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, volume 1, Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989, 53. (Translation is mine. — A.S. All translations of Pasternak's texts here are mine, unless specified otherwise.)

⁹ Martin Heidegger, "Poetically Man Dwells", *Poetry, Language, Thought*, [translated and with introduction by Albert Hofstadter], New York: Harper and Row, 1971, 213-229, 215.

¹⁰ Henri Lefebvre, "Preface to the Study of the Habitat of the Pavilion," *Key Writings*, edited by Stuart Elden, Elizabeth Lebas and Eleonore Kofman, New York, London: Continuum, 2003, 122.

placed with lodgings built for technological demands lacking the body and poetic soul of a patriarchal dwelling. In Lefebvre's view, Heidegger's works articulate a world violently destroyed by technology, that through its ravages leads towards another dream, another world that is not yet perceived.

In the poem "Fevral'. Dostat' chernil i plakat'!" the image of city noises suggest violent destruction of the sublime world sought by a young poet for preserving and recreating in his own manner. Curiously enough, in a modernist vein the lyric persona of Pasternak's poem finds himself displaced into the margins, into a suburban park with landscape strongly resembling Aleksei Savrasov's most famous painting "Grachi prileteli" ("The Rooks Have Come", 1871). It depicts Susanino village on the outskirts of Kostroma and signifies the beginning of spring inscribed with utopian overtones suggesting the social and spiritual transformation of 1870s Russia. Pasternak's poem, describing a hysterical outburst of emotions and an urge for renewal of life, corresponds well to Savrasov's landscape paintings, which are usually known as mood landscapes. Savrasov's oil canvas "Grachi prileteli" is considered the canonical work which most typifies the Russian national landscape. The realistic depiction of a rook-filled tree on a hill with a church in the background transforms the trivial episode of returning birds into an emotional symbolic representation of the transition of nature from winter to spring. In Pasternak's poem the lyric hero frightens the rooks sitting comfortably on the branches and makes them fly away, thereby destabilising the traditional representation of Russian idyllic space. Pasternak seizes the sense of rupture of the idyllic with the help of the image of puddles that in their frozen gaze capture the reflection of flying birds: "Gde, kak obuglennnye grushi, / S derev'ev tysiachi grachei / Sorvutsia v luzhi i obrushat / Sukhuiu grust' na dno ochei" ("Where a thousand rooks would fall from the trees, like burnt pears, / Into puddles and make / Dry melancholy fall into the wells of eyes."). Arguably, Pasternak translates Savrasov's image and insignificant details of life from his own unique perception into a colourful design made up of aural and visual impressions. Certainly, the image of burnt pears subverts the idyllic and stable image of Savrasov's landscape in the painting "Grachi prileteli". It disrupts its optimistic overtones by referring to a subjectivised image of the world framing the melancholic mood of the lyric hero and abandoning any pretence in the poem to reconstruct a national identity.

The poem "Fevral'. Dostat' chernil i plakat'!" might be also read as a palimpsest with embedded references to Russian modernist poetry. It is known, for example, that this poem was initially dedicated to Pasternak's friend Konstantin Loks who introduced Pasternak to the poetry of Innokentii Annensky and pointed to similarities between the two poets.¹¹ Annensky's poem of 1906 titled

¹¹ In "Liudi i polozheniia" Pasternak states that it was Loks who showed him Annensky's poems that were akin to Pasternak's own works. Pasternak defines Annensky as a remarkable poet and characterises Annensky's poems as "wanderings". See: Boris Pasternak, "Liudi i

"Chernaia vesna" (Black Spring) features death, birds and an image of a stupid black spring looking into the eyes of a dead man: "Da tupo-cher-naia vesna / Gliadela v studen' glaz" ("And a stupid black spring looked into the frozen eyes").¹² Taking into account Ian Lilly's observation that, for Pasternak, the new poetic language is "clearly the language of urbanism"¹³, one cannot but notice Pasternak seeing the big city as potentially positive, as an *invitation au voyage* appreciative of Alexander Blok's portrayal of the modern urban milieu which he sustained throughout his creative career.¹⁴

More importantly, Pasternak's engagement with modes of traditional representations of Russian landscapes is akin to Bergson's metaphysics that opposes the two extremes of perceiving reality: the fluid and the static. As David Wedaman points out, while "Bergson associates the fluid with reality, deeper truth, qualitative states, divinity, art, hope, and the improvement of the species", the stable is manifested for him by social convention, static matter, repressive religion, and scientific systems.¹⁵ Wedaman claims that Bergson's dynamic vision of reality is of paramount importance both to biological evolution and to artistic creativity:

It is Bergson's particular gift to show that the stable element in any field of investigation can never account for the richness of our experience. Rather, stability is something of a façade that conceals fluid truth. In fact, the occasional 'eruption' of this fluid truth, be it the guiding impulse of nature, *élan vital*, the artist's inspiration, or the mystic's call, is necessary both to explain phenomena as we encounter them and to guarantee continual evolution and improvement.¹⁶

This search for a poetic soul, creative impulse and another world that is yet to evolve — one that can be also defined as fluid truth — is articulated in Pasternak's poetry of the 1910s with the help of the flâneur image found in many Russian and European modernist works, including those of Blok and Elena Guro. The image of a flâneur in Pasternak's poetry presents a panoramic vision of a modern city linked to poetic discovery and linguistic cognition. It appears that Pasternak the poet collects in a surrealist vein the fragmented images of the city given to him by the flâneur. Pasternak reassembles these images from a vast

polozhenia", *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, volume 4, Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991, 317.

¹² Innokentii Annensky, "Chernaia vesna", *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988, p.102.

¹³ Ian Lilly, "Moscow as City and Symbol in Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*", *Slavic Review*, vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer, 1981), 241-250, 243.

¹⁴ The discussion of Blok's influence on Pasternak is included in: Henry Gifford, "Pasternak and the 'Realism' of Blok", *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, 13, 1967, 96-106.

¹⁵ Wedaman, David. "Apollinaire and Mayakovsky: Applied Bergsonism", unpublished PhD dissertation, Brandeis University, February 2003, 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

range of familiar objects, buildings, collective memories, landmarks and spaces into a novel and illuminating order, thereby manifesting the Bergsonian notion of the eruption of fluid truth. It can be argued that Pasternak's flâneur functions as a moving camera that provides the poet with the sensory assessment of space, as discussed in Pasternak's research paper "On the Object and Method of Psychology" which he wrote for his assessment at Moscow University in 1913. Christopher Barnes points to the existence of Bergsonian propositions in this paper. Thus one passage manifests Pasternak's interest in the concepts of duration and creative flow that can be understood as the objectified view of nature. It states:

From subjective quality to an objective concept of it there is a reflex following the same path as leads from sensory assessment of space or time to an objective measurement of it [...]. A scientific explanation of psychic phenomena can mean nothing other than their objectification as processes of nature [...]. Immediate data will not submit — without damage to this immediacy — to immediate definition [...]. Can one go directly to the *phenomenon*, the *manifestation*, as the *object* of one's judgement? [...] Direct judgement, even if descriptive, creates or places a construction upon the object.¹⁷

A definition of the flâneur which will be used here is provided in Walter Benjamin's essays "The Flâneur" and "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" included in his book *Charles Baudelaire: Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*.¹⁸ If in the first essay Benjamin defines flâneur as a gentleman of leisure, a man of the crowd fascinated with passers-by and sympathetic to the crowd, in the second essay the condition of the male urban observer, a middle-class figure, is threatened by his modern environment marked by rapid industrial development and commercialisation. The urban figures featured in Baudelaire's poetry fit Benjamin's definition of a man of leisure as constructed in nineteenth-century literature. Benjamin characterised the flâneur as a man who "demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forego the life of a gentleman of leisure", "someone abandoned in the crowd" for whom the crowd acted as a narcotic compensating for numerous humiliations.¹⁹ However, in "On Some Motifs of Baudelaire" Benjamin uses the image of the flâneur as a metaphor for the dialectical urban aesthetics of twentieth-century surrealism. Benjamin's redefined image of the flâneur is more detached from the crowd and is forced out of the arcades. He flees the street crowd and city shocks in order to retain some form of individual control and order over the chaos of urban dwelling. Pasternak's lyric hero conflates with

¹⁷ Quoted in : Barnes, op. cit., 132-133.

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, translated by Harry Zohn, London: Verso, 1989.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

the second type of flâneur who can no longer personify the spectatorial authority within the chaotic and bewildering space of the modern city in flux. With the collapse of the arcade habitat the flâneur attempts to retain his spectatorial authority by retreating to the authority of the past, to the spectatorship of the eighteenth-century dandy or to an overlooking position above the streets. All of these retreats can be found in Pasternak's early poetry.

Thus in Pasternak's 1913 poem "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to..." ("Everyone puts on a coat today...") the lyric persona differentiates himself from the crowd in his attempt to preserve his sense of wholeness and individual control over the chaotic environment: "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to / I zadenut za porosli kapel', / No iz nikh ne zametit nikto, / Chto opiat' ia nenast'iami zapil." ("Everyone will put a coat on today/ And will touch the streams of raindrops. / But nobody will notice / That I am drunk again on rainy days").²⁰ The crowd represented by impersonalised images of overcoats corresponds to the notion of façade that conceals fluid truth and prevents the free manifestation of a creative impulse. Pasternak's description in this poem of a crowd comprising conformity and robotic walkers is akin to Bergson's notion of rigidity, or mechanical inelasticity. In his fundamental philosophical work *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* Bergson advocates elasticity as important component of the evolution of life. He refers to the example of a comic poet to illustrate the importance of disruption by automatism and habitualisation:

Look closely: you will find that the art of the comic poet consists in making us so well acquainted with this particular vice, in introducing us, the spectators, to such a degree of intimacy with it, that in the end we get hold of some of the strings of the marionette with which he is playing, and actually work them ourselves; this [...] explains part of the pleasure we feel. Here, too, it is really a kind of automatism that makes us laugh — an automatism [...] closely akin to mere absentmindedness. The comic person is unconscious. As though the wearing of Gyges with reverse effect, he becomes invisible to himself while remaining visible to all the world.²¹

In Bergsonian vein, Pasternak's lyric hero in the poem "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to..." has a distinctly fluid identity and associates his fluid subjectivity with rain, fog and morning dew. It is suggested in the poem that urban passers-by hurrying to work resemble the unconscious somnambulars defined by Bergson as comical. Thus the lyric persona confesses: "No iz nikh ne zametit nikto, / Chto opiat' ia nenast'iami zapil" ("But no one would notice / That I became ad-

²⁰ Boris Pasternak, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, volume 1, Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989, 53.

²¹ Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, [translated from the French by Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell], Green Integer: Kobenhavn and Los Angeles, 1999, 20.

dicted to drinking rainy days").²² The phrase "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to" is twice repeated in the poem, reinforcing the comical appearance of a man of the crowd hiding under the mask of conformity defined as "vse" (everyone). Furthermore, the rhyming pattern Pasternak uses in this poem brings together such words as "pal'to – nikto" (coat – nobody) and "pal'to – nichto" (coat – nothingness). By contrast, the beloved of the lyric persona is compared to the image of a northern melancholy-looking sun and is juxtaposed through a rhyming scheme to a raspberry bush's silvery leaves turned inside out. The image of the inebriate, drunk on love and rainy days, converges with the image of a jester, a student or holy fool who exposes the void behind the masks of bourgeois looking passers-by. He probably just wears a scarf round his neck and is unafraid of exposure to the elements or to sensual interaction with the natural world around him.

The linkage of the inner self of the lyric hero and his beloved to images that represent warmth, life, fluid truth and elasticity, to use Bergson's term, also invokes Nikolai Gogol's powerful image of the overcoat in his famous Petersburg tale "Shinel'" ("The Overcoat"). It appears that Pasternak uses "Shinel'", which exposes the void behind the rigid conformity. Just like Gogol, who underpins the artificiality of the modern metropolis and the futility of the mechanical way of life brought about by technological advancement and modernisation, Pasternak uses metatextual and theatrical setting as a framing device to portray his own urban life in 1910s Moscow. In his study of Gogol, Vladimir Nabokov characterises modern urban conformity as the apotheosis of mask. His understanding of Gogol's story seems to echo Pasternak's interpretation of it in the poem "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to" that celebrates the carnivalesque nature of modern city life. Nabokov states:

Something is very wrong and all men are mild lunatics engaged in pursuits that seem to them very important while an absurdly logical force keeps them in their futile jobs — this is the real 'message' of the story. In this world of utter futility, of futile humility and futile domination, the highest degree that passion, desire, creative urge can attain is a new cloak that both tailors and customers adore on their knees.²³

Nabokov's comment that "the gaps and black holes in the texture of Gogol's style imply flaws in the texture of life itself"²⁴ can be easily applied to Pasternak's "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to..." This poem's metre can be characterised as "dolnik" that uses four regular stresses in every line, with the exception of just the fifth and sixth lines containing three stresses: "Zasrebiatsia maliny

²² Pasternak, vol.1, op. cit., 53.

²³ Gogol, Nikolai. *Vladimir Nabokov*, A New Directions Paperbook: New York, 1961, 143.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

listy" ("the raspberry bush's leaves will turn silver") and "zaprokinuvshis' kverkhu iznankoi" ("having turned inside out facing the sky"). By contrast with the rest of the poem, the twelfth line contains only two stresses: "zatumanivshegosia napitka" ("of the drink that went cloudy"). The lines corresponding to the cyclical repetition inscribe a sense of regular movement and contain examples of trochee, a rapid metrical foot of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one found in many Russian folk songs that feature moving objects. The sensation of rapid movement is especially felt in such phrases as: "vse nadenut" and "solntse grustno", "solntse nynche" and "nynche nam". But this pattern is broken in lines that contain two long participles "zaprokinuvshis'" and "zatumanivshegosia" that give an impression of the lasting duration of movement.

It seems that Pasternak's usage of language in the poem is also highly original and whimsical. It instigates readers' participation and breaks their automatic reception of language as something repetitive and semantically transparent. More importantly, however, is that Pasternak's unexpected raspberry bush image in an urban setting conveys the poetic discovery upon which the poetic persona of his poem stumbles. This image signifies a search for a deeper, richer understanding of life and is linked to the lyric persona's memories of long-gone early summer. It seems likely that the reference to a northern, subdued sun image corresponds to autumn. The juxtaposition of trivial and unremarkable everyday details with the exotic images of a raspberry bush and its unusually placed leaves and of the subdued northern sunlight match the poem's rhythmical pattern with its broken monotony, as manifested in the fifth and tenth lines of the poem "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to...". Thus, while the sixth line bears only three stresses ("zaprokinuvshis' kverkhu iznankoi"), the twelfth line symmetrically concludes the poem with only two stresses: "zatumanivshegosia napitka". The allusion to a heavy clouded drink, either affected by movement in fast walking, or by the fact that it was brewed over a long time, inscribes into the poem a gesture of lingering over the moment that follows bygone events captured by the gaze of Pasternak's flâneur who acts as moving camera while strolling around Moscow. It is as if Pasternak tries to preserve in a fluid form the fundamental energy of the verse itself, its rhythmical and creative flow.

According to Vladimir Mayakovsky, a much-admired friend of Pasternak, "rhythm is the fundamental force, the fundamental energy of verse" that cannot be explained properly but can be talked about in terms of "magnetism or electricity."²⁵ The image of electric flow is easily compared to the manifestation of the creative flow described in Bergson's writings. Pasternak's "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to..." can be seen as a philosophical meditation on the fundamental

²⁵ Vladimir Mayakovsky, "How Are Verses Made?", [translated by G.M. Hyde], London: Jonathan Cape, 1970, 37.

energy of verse understood in terms similar to Bergson's description of duration. Thus, for example, in "Concerning the Nature of Time" Bergson writes:

There is no doubt that for us time is at first identical with the continuity of our inner life. What is this continuity? That of a flow or passage, but self-sufficient flow or passage, the flow or implying a thing that flows, and passing not presupposing states through which we pass; the *thing* and the *state* are only artificially taken snapshots of the transition; and this transition, all that is naturally experienced, is duration itself. It is memory, but not personal memory, external to what it retains, distinct from a past whose preservation it assures; it is a memory within change itself, a memory that prolongs the before into after, keeping them from being mere snapshots and appearing and disappearing in a present ceaselessly re-born.²⁶

Bergson says that we pass the inner time to the time of things through perceiving the world inside and outside simultaneously.²⁷ Pasternak's image of the leaves in "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to..." being turned inside out symbolises precisely the same notion of simultaneity that Bergson discusses in his essay.

As Bergson puts it, "To each moment of our inner life there thus corresponds a moment of our body and of all envioning matter that is 'simultaneous' with it; this matter then seems to participate in our conscious duration."²⁸ This results, states Bergson, in our extended sense of duration to the whole physical world that enables us to see the universe as a single whole and grasp in an instantaneous perception various "multiple events lying at different points of space."²⁹ Pasternak, the poet, also invites his readers to acquire such consciousness through the use of grammatical categories and poetic devices. Thus, he uses the verbs of the perfect aspect in the future tense ("nadenut", "zadenut", "zasrebriat'sia", "prozhivem" and "ne zametit") and conveys the images of the sun and his beloved with the usage of the present tense: "solntse grustno segodnia, kak ty, — / Solntse nynche, kak ty, severianka" ("the sun is melancholic today just like you; it resembles you, northern girl"). Although Pasternak uses the word "segodnia" ("today") as a specific reference to the present moment, he inserts twice the colloquial word "nynche" ("now, at this particular moment") that constructs a simultaneous perception of several objects and events at the same time.

Pasternak also employs in "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to..." a simile to compare the image of the melancholy sun to his beloved girl from the North of Russia whose northern temperament might be seen as subdued. The lyric hero's desire for his girl overshadows the brightness of the sun, placed in his subjective

²⁶ Henri Bergson, "Concerning the Nature of Time", *Key Writings*, edited by Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey, New York, London: Continuum, 2002, 205-22, 207.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

model of the universe second in importance to the girl. The expression of repressed feelings of love brings into the poem the experience of the sublime entwined with memory of a raspberry bush and summer evenings. In this respect, the intuitive perception of the sublime understood as an evolving artistic creation is stressed in Pasternak's concluding line alluding to a bottle of clouded drink. In his 1916 poem "Marburg" Pasternak assumes the mask of a vessel that carries a non-rational substance, but at the same time does not deny the involvement of intellect in the creative process: "Rassudok" [...] My v družhbe, no ia ne ego sosud" ("Yes, I'm friends with Reason. But I'm not the vessel that carries it"³⁰). Thus it is possible to identify the image of a cloudy-liquid bottle in "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to..." with the poet himself whose authentic voice is equated with the fluid truth and relies on intuitive perception of reality.

In addition to the above observations, it can be argued that in "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to..." Pasternak also engages with Baudelaire's portrayal of the sun in "Chant d'Automne" ("Song of Autumn"), a poem included in the famous poetry collection *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Evil). This observation can be supported by Barnes's listing of Baudelaire among Pasternak's favourite poets in the 1910s.³¹ Both poems express the need of the human heart to escape from the finite. However, Baudelaire's "Chant d'Automne" differs from Pasternak's "Vse nadenut segodnia pal'to..." inasmuch as it puts forward the image of the radiant sun above the sea as a symbol of the sublime that overshadows the image of a beloved woman whom Baudelaire addresses thus: "Et rien, ni votre amour, ni le boudoir, ni l'âtre / Ne me vault le soleil rayonnant sur le mer" ("And nothing, neither your love, nor the boudoir, nor the hearth, / Is worth as much to me as the sun shining over the sea").³² Pasternak's urge to embark on a poetic journey ("dostat' proletku") is entwined with an act of writing ("dostat' chernil") that invites his readers to escape from the finite and the familiar, and induce them to search for novel experiences in Baudelairian manner.

The Baudelairian urge to escape the finite, which identifies sublime aspects with autumn landscape, is also strongly echoed in Pasternak's 1913 poem "Son" (Dream) in which the concluding stanza features a sunrise as dark as autumn. It presents another landscape in flux giving the impression that it is carried away by the wind beyond the present moment of perception and its finite framing: "Ia probudilsia. Byl, kak osen', temen / Rassvet, i veter, udaliaias', nes, / Kak za vozom begushchii dozhd' solomin, / Griadu begushchikh po nebu berez." ("I woke up. The sunrise was dark as autumn. / And the wind was disappearing into the distance / Carrying a ridge of birch-trees / Just as it carries a rain of straw

³⁰ Pasternak, vol. 1, op. cit., 108.

³¹ Christopher Barnes, *Boris Pasternak: A Literary Biography: volume 1: 1980-1928*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 188.

³² Wallace Fowlie, editor and translator. *A Bantam Dual-Language Book: Flowers of Evil and Other Works by Charles Baudelaire*, New York: Bantam Books, 1964, 63-64.

behind a cart").³³ Taking into account Heidegger's assumption that language remains the master of man and his claim that "poetry does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it" but rather "brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling",³⁴ I would like to suggest that Pasternak's "Son" makes precisely the same point about the function of poetry. For Pasternak, the goal of poetry is to bring man onto the earth and make him create his own space. The poem starts with a description of the lyric persona's bedroom that frames his dream about his beloved girl surrounded by a merry group of friends either walking a city street or partying inside a house. They are portrayed in carnivalesque manner as a loud group of jesters ("druz'ia i ty v ikh shutovskoi gur'be").

Heidegger's belief that, by following in thought Hölderlin's poetic statement on the poetic dwelling of man we enter the path through which we "come nearer to thinking the same as what the poet composes in his poem",³⁵ is akin to Bergson's assumption that an artist creates a formal shell for his intuitive perception of the fluid truth, and his intuition could be transmitted to the recipient. In Bergson's worldview the external world is associated with the stable element and the individual with the fluid element, but according to Wedaman it is Apollinaire and Mayakovsky who develop Bergson's ideas into a more coherent approach that can be defined as Applied Bergsonism. It argues for "the necessity of simultaneity within artistic creation" and for "sensitivity to the confrontation of self and world — and the hoped-for resolution of this tension."³⁶ It can be proposed that if we see Pasternak's poem "Son" in the Baudelairean vein as an *invitation au voyage*, the implication of a dreaming in the poems suggests a sense of displacement in terms discussed by Tsvetaeva in her essay "Epos i lirika sovremennoi Rossii". Such an interpretation also expresses the Bergsonian desire, manifested at its best in Apollinaire's poetry, to see the world as a creation in progress. The vision of the world-in-making presupposes an urge to engage readers to participate in this creation. Thus, the "dwelling", to use Heidegger's terminology, of Pasternak's poetic creation is a building in flux, a temporary dwelling that is open to the participatory role of readers and is actualised in the process of reading and reception. The simile that compares the dream to a bell's chimes ("i son, kak otzvuk kolokola smolk") adds to the experience of the internal and external spaces simultaneously: "No vremia shlo i starilos'. I rykhlyi, / Kak led treshchal i taial kresel shelk. / Vdrug, gromkaia, zapnulas' ty i stikhla, / I son, kak otzvuk kolokola, smolk" ("But time passed, and grew older, / And the silk of chairs was bursting and melting away / And suddenly you, a loud one, stopped and went quiet, / And my dream, just like the memory of the bell's

³³ Pasternak, vol. 1, 51.

³⁴ Heidegger, 218.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 219.

³⁶ Wedaman, *op. cit.*, 3-4.

sound, stopped").³⁷ In this stanza the lyric persona perceives simultaneously the sound of bursting silk on chairs, his beloved talking, and a sound similar to the aural memory of the church bell sound. All three aural effects cease to exist simultaneously, prefiguring the awakening moment of the lyric persona who here can be compared to a flâneur who collects fragmented impressions of external and internal worlds on his imaginary journey. The boundary between the external and internal worlds is blurred in the poem. The awakening of the lyric persona might be compared to the poet's intellectual impulse to grasp and organise in formal manner the fluid reality perceived as dream, resolving thereby the tension between the self and the exterior world. The perception of reality in the poem is demonstrated through the alternation of stable and fluid images.

This corresponds to a Bergsonian model of artistic creation that was modified and developed in the work of the American philosopher Newton Stallknecht. This model — which Wedaman labels Applied Bergsonism — allows for the involvement of intellect comprehended not in terms of preconceived ideas and pure calculation. "Reason and intuition," notes Stallknecht, "are not equipped to handle different material, but differ rather in the way they handle it."³⁸ As Wedaman elaborates, "Instead of the artistic process being a linear procession with two 'moments', that of intellect being secondary and reflexive only, Stallknecht makes artistic creation a cyclical or circular process in which the creative moment feeds the intellect, and is adjusted and honed by that intellect."³⁹ Wedaman also points to the work of Ruth Lorand who stands close to Stallknecht inasmuch as she suggests that intuition can operate on geometrical or intellectual levels. Lorand sees the interaction between intellect and intuition as a vital part of artistic creation.⁴⁰ Once again, in Pasternak's poem "Son" the typical Russian landscape consisting of birch trees is presented in a subverted manner, as a fluid element, that resists finality. The most interesting aspect of the poem is the fact that time is represented as a person growing deaf and old ("no vremia shlo, i starilos', i glokhlo"). By contrast, the fluid truth is conveyed through sounds that signify rupture, awakening and living memory.

Pasternak's allusion to musical existence through aural perception in "Son" is akin to Aleksei Losev's meditations on Aleksandr Scriabin's mystical anarchism and alogical musical elements, from which logos and myth are born. Losev's belief that music annihilates the world of abstractions and fundamental laws can be fully applied to Pasternak's experience of dreaming as described in "Son". For example, Losev writes about the bottomless depths of music as a manifestation

³⁷ Pasternak, vol. 1, op. cit., 51.

³⁸ Stallknecht, Newton P. *Studies in the Philosophy of Creation, With Especial Reference to Bergson and Whitehead*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, 102. Quoted in: Wedaman, op. cit., 42.

³⁹ Wedaman, 43.

⁴⁰ Lorand, Ruth, "Bergson's Concept of Art", *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 39, 1999, 400-415, 409. This point is discussed in Wedaman's work: Wedaman, op. cit., 44-45.

of infinity: "Pure musical existence is experienced as complete anarchy, unprincipled and goalless, as an existence in which there is no stone fortress of norms and laws, for they spread and dissolve in the bottomless depths of music. Clearly, this is why, in every ancient religion, music is often a symptom or a symbol of orgiastic rites and ecstatic cults, of every kind of emancipation from earthly confines and the laws of 'individualisation' in order to dissolve in the mad element of primordial life."⁴¹ In the light of Losev's observations, it would not be difficult, in fact, to visualise Pasternak's image of the ridge of running birch-trees against the sky in the concluding line of "Son" ("griadu begushchikh po nebu berez") as a sheet with transcribed musical notes which attempts to represent the sounds that the lyric persona heard at night.

Indeed, the image of running trees against the sky can be understood here as an expression of Scriabin's mystical anarchism. This observation can be supported by Pasternak's confession in "Okhrannaia gramota" (Safe Conduct): "Bol'she vsego na svete ia liubil muzyku, bol'she vsekh v nei – Skriabina."⁴² Reflecting on the confluence of city writing and music, Pasternak aptly remarks:

My vovlekaem prozu v poeziiu radi muzyki. Tak, v shirochaishem znachenii slova, nazyval ia iskustvo [...]. Vot otchego oshchushchen'e goroda nikogda ne otvechalo mestu, gde v nem protekala moia zhizn'. Dushevnyi napor vseгда otrasyval ego v glubinu opisannoi perspektivy."⁴³ ("We imbue prose with poetry for the sake of music. I understood art in these terms in a very broad sense of this word. [...] That is why my perception of city space did not correspond to any particular place where I lived. My inner impulse always threw me into the depths of the space I described").

In his autobiographical essay "Okhrannaia gramota" Pasternak recollects Scriabin's rehearsals of *Poème de l'Extase* (Poem of Ecstasy) at the Moscow Conservatoire, situated near the Kuznetsky and Furkasovsky Boulevards that have several churches with single-bell towers: "Sonnoi dorogoi v tuman pogruzhalis' visiachie iazyki kolokolov. Na kazhdoi po razu ukhal odinokii kolokol" ("Bell tower tongues merged with the fog during the journey. Every bell-tower chimed at least once").⁴⁴ In this essay Pasternak's account of Scriabin's morning rehearsals of his *Poème de l'Extase* is presented as musical montage: the narrator tells us about his reception of Scriabin's music as something that was complementing the chiming of local bell-towers. This association is es-

⁴¹ A.F. Losev, *Forma. Stil'. Vyrashenie*, Moscow: Mysl', 1995, 467. Quoted in: Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "Losev's Development of Themes from Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*", *Studies in East European Thought*, No. 56, 2004, 187-209, 194.

⁴² Boris Pasternak, "Okhrannaia gramota", *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, vol. 4, Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991, 149-239, 154.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

pecially interesting if we bear in mind that in his essay Pasternak expresses his profound dissatisfaction with the title of Scriabin's symphony, which he compares to a tightly wrapped soap bar.⁴⁵ In the poem "Son" he portrays chairs tightly wrapped in silk that bursts as soon as the sounds become overpowering for a lyric persona who sees the dream. This dream also features memory of a fading chime. The description of the bell-towers in "Okhrannaia gramota" contains references to dreamy and misty streets presented similarly to the description of a surreal space in "Son". Thus it is possible to suggest that the two works reflect on the same spiritual experience of awakening from a dream evoked by music that expands spatial boundaries and destroys any existing boundaries between the internal and external worlds. It can be argued that Pasternak's references to church bells in his autobiographical essay and early poems remind readers about different historical periods when daily life was regulated by the bell. For Foucault, religious colonies and monasteries represent an extreme type of heterotopia. Foucault singles out the ship as a placeless place "that lives by its own devices" and "that is self-enclosed" standing out as a symbol of creative impulse and "the greatest reservoir of imagination." He explains: "The sailing vessel is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without ships the dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police that of corsairs."⁴⁶ Conversely, Pasternak's aspiration to embark on a poetic journey is also linked to an imaginary space, a placeless place, a self-contained dwelling that moves from landscape to landscape, from street to street, in search of the most precious discoveries and treasures. It appears that Pasternak's lyric hero escapes any attempts of the outside world to regulate his life in an orderly and ritualised manner.

In both works Pasternak implies that artistic creation is about dreaming and dwelling. Thus, the reference embedded in "Son" to a room with chairs that produce a bursting sound, at the same time as the bells stop chiming, might be seen as an allusion to the reception of the beautiful music described in the poem. This musical experience gives birth to artistic creation emerging during the process of dreaming. In other words, the title of the poem alludes to dream as creation-in-making, as a fluid form of dwelling. Such an interpretation can be supported by Pasternak's description of Scriabin's *Poème de l'Extase* in "Okhrannaia gramota". Pasternak talks about the overwhelming effect that Scriabin's symphony had upon him in the early 1910s, in terms similar to how Heidegger describes lyric poetry as dwelling. Pasternak writes:

It was the first human dwelling in these worlds, that was discovered by Wagner [...]. The imaginary lyric dwelling was being constructed in the yard; in its materiality it was equal to the whole universe. Van Gogh's sun

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Foucault, op. cit., 185.

started to burn above the wicker fence of this symphony. [...] I could not listen to it without tears.⁴⁷

In "Son" Pasternak also portrays the sunrise that showers windows with the bloody tears of September ("zaria iz sada obdavala stekla / Krovavymi slezami sentiabria") with one stroke merging in expressionist manner the image of flying red leaves with the image of patches of dawn light on the windows. In Jerzy Faryno's observation on the use of space in Pasternak's poetry, Pasternak's winter imagery signifies an otherworldliness and is excluded from the natural cycle of four seasons. Faryno thinks Pasternak's winter space clearly demarcates external and internal worlds, by contrast summer space blurs their boundaries with the help of references to open windows and doors.⁴⁸

I would like to challenge Faryno's assessment of Pasternak's landscapes and cityscapes and argue that in "Son" readers are invited to participate in the creation of a synthetic landscape that brings simultaneous perception of the external and internal worlds and metatextual realities. This synthetic landscape signifies a dynamic space that encompasses Scriabin's music and Van Gogh's paintings. Although Pasternak's "Son" features a sunrise, in the richness and intensity of the poem's abundant use of the red colour ("kak s nebes dobyvshii krovi sokol", "krovavymi slezami sentiabria", "kak osen' temen rassvet") this sunrise image stands close to Van Gogh's landscape "Willows at Sunset" painted in autumn 1888 in Arles with the help of a stroke technique. It presents brushstrokes as straws. In any event, the poem significantly expands space by merging realist details with surreal and metatextual overtones, to achieve a powerful animation effect. Pasternak playfully reinforces the idea that readers should consider the spectacle of the text, instead of reducing it to descriptive information or moral conclusion.

Similar playful expectations are embedded in Pasternak's other poems written in the 1910s. For example, his 1913 poem "Vokzal" (Railway Station) portrays a railway station and a train journey using a rhythmic pattern similar to waltzing; his 1913 poem "Venetsiia" (Venice) brings to the fore a playful image of Venice as a soggy bagel floating on water; and his 1913 poem "Piry" (Feasts) juxtaposes the process of creation of a poem with the mythical dwelling of the fairy tale about Cinderella's journey to the ball promising her glory and happiness. In many of Pasternak's early poems — especially "Dostat' chernil i plakat'!", "Kogda za liry labirint", "Peterburg" and "Marburg" — cityscapes and strolls are entwined with the act of writing and constructing a poetic dwelling out of the poet's inner world. This dwelling is not finalised, but presented as a blank space placed beyond the framework of a particular poem and yet to be

⁴⁷ Ibid. (Translation is mine. — A.S.)

⁴⁸ Jerzy Faryno, *Vvedenie v literaturovedenie*, Warszawa: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991, 370.

verbalised. Thus the ending of the poem "Marburg" with the concluding lines "Ia beloe utro v litso uznaiu" ("I recognise a white morning by its face")⁴⁹ gives the impression that the lyric persona is a true modernist poet who recognises the emergence of the sought-for new creation he intuitively understood prior to formalising it in words. The acts of walking and becoming are therefore given a new twist in Pasternak's poem because they are not identified with linear development, but invite readers to consider the ramifications of theatricality and role-playing for a reading of his whole texts that can be characterised as spectacles and mini-dramas. The concluding lines of such poems, with references to the not-yet-actualised, might be seen as a presentation of an authentic voice, and a point at which the poet ceases to assume masks and becomes sincere.

Perhaps, the most interesting example presented in the Bergsonian vein of Pasternak's portrayal of walking and becoming is his 1914 poem "Vozmozhnost'" (Opportunity) in which the myth of Pushkin is employed as part of the poem's playful space celebrating the moment of evolving artistic creation and allows participation by the reader. In fact, it has a double framing and presents the lyric persona both as a reader of Pushkin's text and of the city landscape that boasts a monument to Pushkin on Moscow's Tverskoi Boulevard. The monument was opened in June 1880 coinciding with a three-day commemoration. In their studies on Pushkin, both Marcus Levitt and Stephanie Sandler link this event to the emergence of the Russian national identity.⁵⁰ Levitt's characterisation of this commemoration, as

a brief and intoxicating moment when it seemed as if the long and painful conflict between state and nation would be happily and peacefully resolved, the moment when modern Russian national identity consolidated around its literature, with Pushkin as its focus,⁵¹

is supported by witness accounts of speeches delivered by Fedor Dostoevsky and Ivan Turgenev. For example, in his essay "Otkrytie pamiatnika v Moskve" (The Opening of the Monument in Moscow) D. N. Liubimov, a Russian émigré critic, wrote that Dostoevsky's speech, delivered during a commemorative ceremony to mark the opening of the monument to Pushkin, made some people faint. Liubimov's essay also reproduces Ivan Aksakov short speech that states: "Dostoevsky's speech is an event. Everything is explained, everything is clear. There are no more Slavophiles, no more Westernisers. Turgenev agrees with me

⁴⁹ Pasternak, vol.1, op. cit., 108.

⁵⁰ Levitt, Markus C. *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989, 4; Sandler, Stephanie. *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004, 88. I also discuss the Pushkin myth, monuments to Pushkin and Pushkin readers in my recently published book: Alexandra Smith, *Montaging Pushkin: Pushkin and Visions of Modernity in Russian Twentieth-Century Poetry*, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006.

⁵¹ Levitt, op. cit., 4.

on this point".⁵² According to Liubimov's account Dostoevsky's suggestion, that Pushkin's death at the height of his creative capacity did not allow him to explain fully the mysterious message concealed in his writings, had an overpowering impact on his audience, especially because of the implication that his audience responded to Dostoevsky's call to participate in the search for an explanation of the poet's mystery.⁵³

Translated into aesthetic categories, Dostoevsky's vision of Pushkin's life as an unravelling mystery and a theological spectacle stands close to the Symbolist understanding of the poet's life in artistic terms. This mode of aesthetisation of life can be also sensed in Pasternak's early poetry. It would not exaggerate to suggest that the playful and performative aspects of the poems discussed above, written before the publication of Pasternak's collection of poetry *Sestra moia zhizn'* (My Sister Life), contain strong traits of what Pasternak defines in "Okhrannaia gramota" as the Romantic mode of writing and worldview that he linked to understanding of the poet's life as artistic creation-in-making which he inherited from the German Romantics and Russian Symbolists. Pasternak associated this model of the poet's fate and life with the martyr complex and ritualised suffering exemplified in Orphic cults and in Christian symbolism, in accordance with which a Romantic poet is expected to pay for his art with his life.⁵⁴ For Pasternak, the drama of the poet's life understood as public spectacle should come with its own plot and legends that highlight the poet's qualities as a martyr. Moreover, Pasternak calls this mode of artistic becoming as "zrelischnoe ponimanie biografii" (understanding of biography as spectacle):

Without a legend this romantic dimension is false. The Poet, an integral part of this legend, cannot be comprehended without the lives of other poets, which act as his background. This is because the poet is not just a living person obsessed by ethical learning but is also a visual-biographic emblem that relies on its own background to make it more distinct.⁵⁵

In light of the above observations it would be appropriate to suggest that Pasternak's poem "Vozmozhnost'" provides us with a vivid illustration of Pasternak's understanding of a poet's biography as an emblem of the poet's fate that could be animated and consumed as visual spectacle. The fact that the Pushkin monument comes alive in Pasternak's poem suggests that Pasternak once again took a symbol of Russian national identity and presented it in a novel way, as comical, to use Bergson's term. Pasternak's dissatisfaction with the canonical form of writing is also felt in his 1917 statements that play down Push-

⁵² D.N. Liubimov, "Otkrytie pamiatnika v Moskve", *Illustrirovannaia Rossiia: Pushkinskii numer: 1837-1937*, No.7 (613), Paris, February 6, 1937 (no pagination).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Pasternak, "Okhrannaia gramota", *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, op. cit., 227.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 227.

kin's metrics in favour of the strophic and metrical innovations of Mayakovsky, Arthur Rimbaud and Pierre Laforgue. Thus, one of Pasternak's rhetorical questions is: "How can one admire Pushkin who is so unlike Laforgue and Rimbaud?"⁵⁶ Barnes informs us that Laforgue and Mayakovsky were of interest to Pasternak in 1914-15 especially because of his experimental and innovative mode of writing as conveyed in a subsequently destroyed book of verse. As Barnes puts it, the two poets "shared a common avoidance of regular strophic and metrical patterns, a rejection of traditional notions of harmony and balance, an interest in contemporaneity, and a tendency to use self-defensive irony and comedy."⁵⁷ It is also important to bear in mind that one of Pasternak's meetings with Mayakovsky, Loks and Vladislav Khodasevich took place in 1914 near the Pushkin monument in Moscow in a Greek coffee house, not far from the Strastnoi Boulevard. It is described in great detail in "Okhrannaia gramota" and is also mentioned in Pasternak's poem "Vozmozhnost". For Pasternak, this part of Moscow appears to form an important literary landscape that juxtaposes modernist poetry with canonical writing and acts as a distinctive background for Mayakovsky's recital of his narrative poem-tragedy "Vladimir Mayakovsky". The space of Mayakovsky's poem, the sounds of his poem and the visual and aural perception of Moscow summer street life merge in Pasternak's description into a dynamic surreal space with strongly pronounced metatextual overtones. Pasternak describes his simultaneously perceived impressions from Moscow and Mayakovsky's performance of his poem thus:

I listened to it and was completely absorbed by it. My heart was aching and my breathing went quiet. I never heard anything like it. It included everything: the boulevard, dogs, poplars and butterflies. It also included hairdressers, breadmakers, tailors and steam-engines. [...] In the distance steam-engines roared like sturgeon. Deep down in the throat of his creativity there was the same bottomless depth that existed on the earth. It had the depthless spirituality which is essential for any originality together with the infinite vastness visible from any point of life and stretchable in any direction; without which poetry is impossible.⁵⁸

Once again, Pasternak talks in the above-mentioned passage of the poet's dwelling in terms suggested by Holderlin, Heidegger and Bergson. To Pasternak's mind, Mayakovsky constructed his own "elastic" dwelling from his inner world and summer cityscapes of Moscow in 1914.

By the same token we can approach Pasternak's poem "Vozmozhnost" as his own poetic dwelling that combines surreal overtones with vivid descriptions

⁵⁶ This comment appears in his review "Vladimir Mayakovsky. *Prostoe kak mychanie*". Quoted in: Barnes, op. cit., 188.

⁵⁷ Barnes, *ibid.*, 188.

⁵⁸ Pasternak, vol. 4, op. cit., 219.

of Tverskoi and Strast'noi Boulevards. It seems that the reference in the opening line of the poem to Strastnoi Boulevard ("v deviat', po levoi, kak vyiti so Strastnogo"⁵⁹ — "At nine o'clock, to the left, as soon as you depart from Strastnoi Boulevard") is of paramount importance to the semantic unity of the poem. Strastnoi Boulevard is used both as a point of departure for the lyric persona who starts his evening stroll in Moscow and is employed as paronomasia, since the name of the street alludes to "strast'" (passion). The introduction of the theme of passion at the beginning of the poem is double-edged: it alludes both to Pushkin's jealous and passionate personality and to his death through duel, preserved in Russian cultural memory in Christian terms as a martyr's death. Yet Pasternak's poem offers a playful reading of Pushkin's fate, subverting any static and emblem-like representations of his life that the Pushkin monument personifies. The lyric hero of Pasternak's poem assumes the conversational tone of storytelling that parodies a series of poses and multiplicity of voices in constant and changing tension. It evolves as a dynamic process of role-playing. It would be futile to read Pasternak's poem as a narrative of experience because the vibrant energy of its language presents the described interaction between a passer-by and the monument to Pushkin as just one possible imaginary adventure on a Moscow street, giving way to the infinite variety of ways to destroy the Pushkin as monument and to animate the story of his life.

In other words, Pasternak stages a theatrical spectacle that takes place in the centre of Moscow. The lyric persona once again is presented as a flâneur who acts like a moving camera, gathering an impressionistic assessment of the space where the drama of the poet's life is about to unfold. Thus, on his walk to the monument to Pushkin, the lyric hero observes the wet façades of important companies that bear no signs ("na srykh fasadakh — ni edinoi vyveski"). Pasternak's flâneur registers in his mind that all the plaques might have been taken down for the night because of wind and snowstorm ("shchity meshaiut spat', i ikh veleli vynesti"). He also notices a textile fabric that resembles a mask, in the style of Gogol's overcoat: it attempts to hide its identity and looks almost dead ("Sukonshchiki S. Ia. [...] / Fortochki naglukho, kontorshchiki v ot-luchke"). In other words, Pasternak sees the city as a sleepy space that bores him to death. This impression is reinforced in the line that suggests that Tverskaia Street sleeps as if it is dead ("spit, kak ubitaia, Tverskaia"). The usage of the colloquial expression "spat' kak ubityi" (the sleep of the dead) in this context adds a humorous overtone to the poem that prefigures, farcically, a theme of violent death. By juxtaposing the dead street with the dead body of Pushkin turned into a monument, Pasternak's poem reverses the roles of his characters and presents Pushkin more alive than all citizens of Moscow.

⁵⁹ Pasternak, vol. 1, op. cit., 65.

Furthermore, Pasternak's monument to Pushkin is empowered with ability to remember the beginning of his immortal life: "on pomnit, kak nachalos' bessmertie". Pasternak identifies this point as a finalised moment; the lyric persona explains that Pushkin's immortality started as soon as he returned home from his duel ("totchas po vozvrasheni s dueli, doma"). Thus, the interior space is shown here as a vessel that contains Pushkin's body as if it is made of fluid. In a symbolic way, the fluidity of Pushkin's authentic voice is identified with the infinity understood as immortality that is not static but dynamic and unfolding. Such an interpretation echoes Dostoevsky's approach and mocks any attempts of Russian ideologists to create the myth of a national poet out of Pushkin's life. This is especially felt in the fourth stanza of the poem in which Pushkin the monument is portrayed as a living person who kisses the hand of Tverskaia Street.

The erotic overtones which are inscribed into the city landscape imply an analogy with Pushkin the poet and his wife Goncharova. It is suggested that Pushkin the monument is just as jealous of Tverskaia Street as Pushkin the poet was jealous of his wife. This jealous rage has potential to finish in a duel and thereby destabilise the sleepy existence of Moscow in winter. As Pasternak explains playfully: "I delo nachinaet pakhnut' duel'iu. / Kogda kakoi-to iz novykh vozdushnyi / Potselui ei shlet, legko vzmakhnuv metel'iu"⁶⁰ ("And this incident could turn into a duel / When one of the newcomers blows Tverskaia a kiss / having waved to it lightheartedly."). An implied infatuation between poet and street brings to the fore the intimate bond that exists between *flâneur* and city space. The poetic dwelling that Pushkin the poet constructs out of his internal world and the Moscow landscape is threatened in Pushkin's eyes by the newly-emerging modernist poet-*flâneurs*. Thus the identities of Pushkin the poet and Pushkin the monument merge at this point, because both of them are presented as idols who zealously guard their own space. It can be also argued that the male narrator of Pasternak's poem lives entirely within a surrealistic dream world of his own making, in order to escape the fragmentation and facelessness. He feels threatened by the city outside his own apartment and feels that urban life encroaches on his private world. His dream world relies on simultaneous experience of the past and the present, as well as on the simultaneous perception of Petersburg and Moscow landscapes. The poem locates the emergence of Pushkin the immortal genius in Moscow rather than in St. Petersburg where Pushkin was killed in a duel. Thus Pasternak inscribes into this poem a powerful gesture to rebuff both the historical truth and all the legends and myths that surround Pushkin's life and personality.

In addition to the above observations, it is important to point out that Pasternak's "Vozmozhnost'" also largely reflects on Russia's everlasting fascination

⁶⁰ Ibid.

with violence and duels. In her painstaking and penetrating study of ritualised violence in Russia, Irina Reyfman claims that

Russian cultural memory has preserved a glamorous image of the Russian duelist: a gentleman, he is always true to his honour; he elegantly challenges his offender for some equally elegant indiscretion, behaves courageously and magnanimously at the duelling site, and shows fortitude in the face of possible punishment afterward — if he survives.⁶¹

According to Reyfman, Russians' persistent fascination with duellists continues to result in the erection of new monuments to famous duellists, including Pushkin's contemporaries. Thus, Pasternak's "Vozmozhnost'" introduces the theme of contemporary rivalry between modernist poets and not just the rivalry between newcomers and canonical figures.

Pasternak addresses the duelling theme as a means of discussing his own physical and moral integrity that helps him examine several important metaliterary issues related to his poetic identity. In Reyfman's view, the tradition of duelling as a subject of literary study, handed down by Dostoevsky to Russian modernist authors, had virtually disappeared by the 1920s, but the duelling discourse did not evaporate completely in the 1930s. As Reyfman convincingly argues, in various modernist texts "an idealist guarding his honour and dignity against all odds became a figure to admire, whereas a rationalist unconcerned with his personal space began to look suspicious and even ominous."⁶² Indeed, Pasternak's poem expresses a desire to protect the poet's identity and his own space in the face of some criticism of his strangeness and originality that did not conform to the expectations of Russian modernists of the 1910s. Thus Lazar Fleishman, in his major study of Pasternak's life and writings, points to the fact that Pasternak's city poems differed from the urban poetry of Valery Briusov because "they were demonstratively timeless in character" and they were "out of tune equally with the passéist and with the modernist line in Russian poetry."⁶³ Fleishman makes the penetrating observation that some critics attempted to ascribe strange traits of Pasternak's lyric poetry to his Jewish origin.⁶⁴ In the light of this background to the reception of Pasternak's poetry in the 1910s, it comes as no surprise that in "Vozmozhnost'" Pasternak wishes to fashion himself in the clothes of Pushkin, the famous duelist and gentleman, who needs to defend his honour and cultural space in Russia at the beginning of his career. He chal-

⁶¹ Irina Reyfman, *Ritualised Violence Russian Style: The Duel in Russian Culture and Literature*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999, 1.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 275.

⁶³ Lazar Fleishman, *Boris Pasternak: The Poet and His Politics*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1990, 42.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

lenges his hostile critics and mocks their values which revolve around Russian national identity and established stereotypes.

The present article has attempted to read Pasternak's early poetry in conjunction with the theoretical statements of modernist philosophers, notably Bergson, Benjamin and Heidegger. I believe that such a reading helps to link Pasternak's experimental lyrics with the European modernist tradition, especially with the poetry of French modernists. The construction of fluid identity and indeterminate subjectivity, compared by Tsvetaeva to an invitation to travel, in fact stands close to Bergson's theory of creative evolution that requires participatory reader involvement in actualising the creative possibilities embedded in the texts they perceive. It has been argued here that recent attempts to shape the Bergsonian approach into a new methodological approach labelled Applied Bergsonism are especially helpful when it comes to interpreting Pasternak's treatment of space and time in his early lyrics. However, it is essential to bear in mind that for a fuller understanding of Pasternak's devices and playful presentation of his poems as series of spectacles it is also essential to combine the Applied Bergsonism approach with the tools of reading modernist texts produced by Heidegger and Benjamin. Both thinkers link poetry to city writing and dwelling. Such a corrective enables us to demonstrate that Pasternak uses a flâneur figure as a collector of fragmented impressions of urban life. Yet, as has been demonstrated in this paper, the role of Pasternak the flâneur is not to provide a graphic map of the city. Pasternak's writing of the city in texts results from his walking the city as text, i.e. as metatextual space and palimpsest. His lyric poems discussed in this paper embody the surrealist motion of modernity as mythology in motion, reflecting on the paradoxical figure of the Baudelairean male flâneur and on the elusive nature of the urban walker-poet himself.