

C.M. Bowra's "Overestimation" of Pasternak and the Genesis of *Doctor Zhivago*

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You have invented me and gave me a renown,
you made my life difficult and responsible by
your overestimation.

Pasternak to Bowra, September 1956

By the mid-1940s Cecil Maurice Bowra (1898–1971) was already an extremely distinguished figure: an accomplished classical scholar and literary critic with an impressive range of publications (twelve books by the age of forty-seven in 1945), an established authority on classical and modern poetry, recognized through his appointment to the Oxford Chair of Poetry in 1946, and a prominent figure in academic life at Oxford University (Warden of Wadham College from 1938, and later Vice-Chancellor from 1951 to 1954). His many literary enthusiasms included a long-standing love of Russian poetry, which he cultivated in a variety of ways: through translations, critical essays, reviews, the publication of editions of poetry, and the compilation of two remarkable anthologies of Russian verse.

In the case of two particular Russian poets, Bowra's interest in their work developed a personal dimension, leading to an exchange of letters, translations, and literary works. From 1946 to 1948 he maintained a lively correspondence about humanism (in Greek, Latin, French and English) with the Russian émigré poet and fellow classicist, Viacheslav Ivanov, travelling twice to Rome to meet him.¹ Between 1945 and 1956 he also received four letters from Boris Pasternak in response to his translations and reviews of the poet's work. Bowra shared with both writers a fascination with the heritage of symbolism and similar tastes in modern verse. With Ivanov he enjoyed a common academic background and passion for

classical antiquity; in the case of Pasternak he was evidently most attracted by his poetry.

Pasternak wrote his first two letters to Bowra in December 1945 and June 1946, just at the time when he was beginning work on *Doctor Zhivago*, and the last two some ten years later in September and November 1956, about a year after he completed the novel. His letters clearly reflect the strong impression that Bowra made on his self-image and sense of direction at these two crucial stages of his creative path. Certain passages, such as the following extract from his letter of September 1956, invite further speculation about the extent to which his contact with Bowra may have played a role in the genesis of his novel:

Handfuls, armfuls, heaps of thanks to you. My gratitude to you is enormous.

<...>

You have invented me and gave me a renown, you made my life difficult and responsible by your overestimation.

But now, that the novel «Доктор Живаго» is finished near about a year ago (and is written with a frankness that will a long time hinder its publication) and that it seems to me to be fit for my acquittal and to justify your exaggerations, I pardon you and turn my reproaches to thankfulness to which I find neither limits nor expressions.²

This passage suggests a direct link in Pasternak's mind between Bowra's high regard for him and the writing of his novel. Pasternak's sense of unbounded gratitude, coupled with his notion that Bowra had somehow "invented" him, established his reputation, and thereby affected the course of his life, together with all its difficulties and responsibilities, is followed by the statement that *Doctor Zhivago* could now retrospectively justify Bowra's earlier "overestimation" and "exaggerations". Were these feelings just a wishful projection on Pasternak's part, or was there something more behind them? If so, how exactly could Bowra's high opinion of Pasternak have played a role in the genesis of *Doctor Zhivago*? This essay will explore some possible answers to these questions, drawing on Bowra's writings and Pasternak's correspondence. Bowra's contribution to the creation of Pasternak's literary reputation will first be outlined, followed by an analysis of Pasternak's responses and their possible connection to the writing of his novel.

I. Bowra's contribution to Pasternak's reputation

Bowra made a substantial contribution to the growth of Pasternak's reputation in the West in three different ways: he translated his verse, published critical reviews of his work (at a time when foreign reviews of the poet's work were sparse), and was the first person to nominate him for the award of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1946 (carried over to 1947 and repeated soon afterwards in 1949, when the poet fell into disgrace in late Stalinist Russia).

The translation of poetry and literary criticism were an integral part of Bowra's passion for classical and modern European poetry, which he perceived and sought to present as a single, living tradition. According to a close friend, he was in fact not so much an Oxford academic as a "deeply romantic" "poet manqué".³ This aspect of his temperament was recognized as the source of his personal charm, experienced by Ivanov when they first met in Rome in 1947:

Et le secret de ce charme que je subis si délicieusement, je crois l'avoir deviné:

c'est que vous êtes justement poète, sans y songer peut-être, incessamment, inconsciemment, lorsque vous composez vos strophes grecques et que vous vous adonnez à des recherches austères, à des analyses critiques, en causant avec des amis aussi bien qu'en vous inspirant (tel un ὑποφῆτης de Delphes)⁴ pour interpréter des inspirés. Il semble qu'il vous soit difficile de ne pas chanter avec ceux qui chantent, de ne pas partager les enthousiasmes et même les folies des poètes que vous avez à juger.⁵

Translating verse and writing criticism clearly provided Bowra with a vital outlet for his partly suppressed poetic leanings and with a personal way of paying tribute to his preferred authors. Two recently discovered bound collections of his favourite poems in Greek, Latin, and seven modern languages testify to the unusually wide range of his tastes in verse.⁶

The roots of his "life-long interest in Russian poetry" can be traced back to the month he spent in Petrograd in September 1916 at the impressionable age of eighteen.⁷ On his way back to England via Siberia after visiting his parents in China, he stayed with a well-connected English Russophile, Robert Wilton, who was a friend of the painter Il'ia Repin and also of the young Kornei Chukovskii.⁸ Bowra became good friends with Chukovskii and kept in touch with him through to the 1960s.⁹ He was disappointed at the time not

to meet Chukovskii's acquaintance, Vladimir Maiakovskii, but made many other interesting contacts.

This visit bore fruit many years later in Bowra's pioneering *Book of Russian Verse*, printed in London during the war in 1943 and reissued in 1947. Although Bowra chose only one poem by Pasternak for his first anthology,¹⁰ he published four more translations of Pasternak's verse in the September 1945 issue of *Horizon*,¹¹ and included seventeen poems by him in his *Second Book of Russian Verse*, printed in London in 1948.¹² This remarkable number made Pasternak the third most represented poet in the second anthology, preceded only by Pushkin and Blok. All seventeen translations were also included in the landmark American edition of Pasternak's *Selected Writings* with a preface by Stefan Schimanski, published in New York in 1949.¹³

The extraordinary jump – from just one poem in 1943 to seventeen in 1948 – requires some word of explanation. To some extent it evidently resulted from Bowra's parallel work on his essay about Pasternak, first published in *The Creative Experiment* (New York, 1948; London, 1949), which included several translations from the poet's verse. Another important contributing factor was his close friendship with Isaiah Berlin, who helped him prepare some of the versions of Russian poems included in the *Second Book of Russian Verse*.¹⁴ Bowra and Berlin were both on friendly terms with Pasternak's sisters in Oxford,¹⁵ and Berlin was able to visit Pasternak on several occasions during the months he spent working in Moscow between September 1945 and April 1946. At a welcome dinner at the British Embassy he met Bowra's old friend, Chukovskii;¹⁶ thereafter, he regularly acted as a go-between, passing publications and letters from Bowra to Chukovskii and Pasternak and back again. On 25 October, for example, Bowra wrote to Berlin:

My dear Isaiah,

I have packed off two numbers of *Horizon* with Pasternakiana to you, and hope that they will arrive. Herewith some versions from Blok. Do you think you could give them to Korney with my warmest regards? They may interest him. Why should not All Souls give K.C. a job for his declining years: He would add a lot to our gaiety. I will talk to that stuffed Sumner about it.¹⁷

The two numbers of *Horizon* that Bowra sent to Berlin were almost certainly the two latest issues, containing Bowra's translations of four poems

by Pasternak, published in September, as noted above, and his review of Pasternak's translation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and verse collection *Earthly Expanse* (*Zemnoi prostor*), included in the August issue and discussed below (as we shall see, Pasternak praised both publications in his first two letters to Bowra).

Later in the same letter Bowra added some significant words: "I have collected some 24 pieces by B.P. and am publishing them with a bogus new press. It is the only way to do it, and I feel it is a duty to keep him and others in the public eye".¹⁸ Although this plan did not come to fruition, the very idea of such an enterprise demonstrates Bowra's determination, linked to a strong sense of inner duty, to promote Pasternak's visibility and reputation.

During this period Bowra regularly sent Berlin extensive shopping-lists of books to buy for him in Moscow; on 5 November, he despatched "a statement of needs" for books, including "works by any member of the lost generation <...>. This is what I really like – this is my date, and I find it almost impossible to get. <...> No expense to be spared". At the end of the same letter he added: "I sent off two books for Borya <Pasternak> and Kornei <Chukovskii>, if you think it suitable to present them. It might make them feel less isolated. I shall be interested to hear reactions".¹⁹ In his first letter to Bowra of 25 December 1945 (brought back to Oxford by Berlin), Pasternak reacted very warmly to both gifts: *A Book of Russian Verse* and *The Heritage of Symbolism*, comprising chapters on Valéry, Rilke, Stefan George, Blok, and Yeats.

As a critic, Bowra consistently rated Pasternak's verse very highly in several essays that he wrote during the 1940s.²⁰ Two in particular deserve special mention. In the August 1945 issue of *Horizon* he published a joint review of Il'ia Ehrenburg's *Verses about War* (*Stikhi o voine*, 1943) alongside Pasternak's translation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1944) and latest verse collection *Earthly Expanse* (*Zemnoi prostor*, 1945). After describing Pasternak as "one of the greatest translators who have ever lived, even in Russia, the home of great translations", Bowra continued: "His version of *Antony and Cleopatra* proves that genius can achieve the impossible and transpose the poetry of one language into another without losing any of its essential qualities". He refers to Pasternak as "one of the most original and powerful poets now alive in Europe" and makes some astute comments about the differences between the poems of

his latest collection and his earlier verse.²¹ When a slightly abridged Russian translation of this review appeared some five months later in the Moscow weekly newspaper *Britanskii soiuznik*, Pasternak's "Western" reputation, as presented and validated by Bowra, was made accessible in Russian to a new readership.²²

Bowra's placing of Pasternak in a European context was developed by him three years later in *The Creative Experiment*, where his remarkable essay on Pasternak's early verse of 1917–1923 stands alongside chapters on Cavafy, Apollinaire, Maiakovskii, Eliot, Lorca, and Alberti. Bowra introduces Pasternak as a poet who picked up and combined the different threads of the Futurists, Acmeists, and Imagists, correcting their excesses and adapting them to meet modern needs. After recognizing Pasternak's debt to Blok, he dwells on the complexity of his physical and intellectual sensibility and illustrates his original pictorial method. In his discussion of the poet's treatment of nature, love and political events, he challenges the notion that Pasternak was unpolitical or reactionary by showing how deeply he assimilated his political experiences into his verse.²³

As well as introducing Pasternak's verse to an English readership through translations, reviews, and critical essays, Bowra also made persistent efforts to gain a more public, external form of recognition for Pasternak's work. In January 1946 he was the first person to nominate Pasternak for the award of the Nobel Prize in literature on the basis of his achievement as a lyric poet.²⁴ The text of his original letter of nomination is published below for the first time.

Wadham College,

Oxford

January 9th <1946>.

Gentlemen,

I am much honoured that you should ask me to nominate a candidate for the Nobel prize in Literature, and I wish strongly to urge the claims of the Russian poet, BORIS PASTERNAK. His most important volumes of verse are *Sestra moya zhishn*, *Tem i Variatsii*, and *Na rannikh Poezdakh*. This poetry is all of the purest quality, and no concessions are made in it to contemporary fashions or – which is more difficult in Russia – to political demands. Pasternak keeps a strictly classical form with a vivid modern outlook in which his unrivalled sensibility passes into words of great liveliness and brilliance. This poetry is

extremely original in its imagery, its almost pantheistic vision of the world, its compactness and intensity, and omission of anything that is not pure poetry. Pasternak is one of the very few poets of our time who has succeeded in conveying a contemporary frame of mind without breaking with the past or falling into ugliness and bathos. He sees life with a noble, creative vision, in which man has his place in nature and nature is much more than a background or a scene. He shows how natural powers affect man and work in him. Even when he writes on political issues he keeps his lyrical purity and transforms political emotions into something personal, moving, vivid and imaginative. For political reasons he is not officially regarded by the Russians as their greatest poet but I have no doubt that in fifty or a hundred years from now it will be clear that he is their leading poet in this age. He continues in his own way with his modern sensibility the classical art of Pushkin and makes every word carry its full weight and influence. I am sure that he is well worthy of the Nobel Prize.

Yours truly
C.M. Bowra.²⁵

It is clear from the opening of the letter that Bowra was first approached by the Nobel Committee, who asked him to suggest a candidate for the prize in literature.²⁶ His advice was evidently sought because of his reputation as an expert on contemporary European poetry, based on his recently published study *The Heritage of Symbolism* (1943). Although Tat'iana Marchenko has stated in her book on Russian writers and the Nobel Prize that Pasternak was nominated "thanks to the efforts of his sisters, who lived in England",²⁷ this claim is not supported by any evidence other than the fact of Bowra's acquaintance with Pasternak's sisters. Bowra was clearly acting on his own initiative, prompted by a request from the Nobel Prize Committee and encouraged, no doubt, by Isaiah Berlin's enthusiastic accounts of his personal conversations with the poet and by the recent publication of two of Pasternak's books in England.

In his first letter of nomination Bowra summarises many of the key points already made by him in his review of 1945 and subsequently developed in *The Creative Experiment*. He draws attention to Pasternak's ability to combine a strictly classical form with a modern sensibility, to be contemporary without breaking with the past, to the originality of his imagery, and to his organic vision of man's intimate relationship with nature. He also places considerable emphasis on Pasternak's independence

from official political demands and on his personal, imaginative treatment of political emotions (the word "political" occurs four times in his letter). Here he is clearly anticipating and seeking to rebut possible objections on the part of the Nobel Prize Committee to the candidacy of a Soviet writer. His worries on this score were not unfounded; the continuing prevarications in the statements issued by the Nobel Prize Committee about Pasternak's nominations from 1946 to 1950 clearly derived in part from a sense of uncertainty about the future development of his art in relation to the political demands of the Soviet state and socialist realism. Bowra's nomination was an important milestone: for the first time the possibility of awarding the Nobel Prize in literature to a Soviet (non émigré) Russian writer was introduced, thereby paving the way for subsequent nominations such as those of Mikhail Sholokhov in 1947 and Leonid Leonov in 1949.²⁸

The report of the Nobel Committee for 1946 noted that it was not able to discuss Pasternak's case as the expert statement about his work had not yet been received.²⁹ The Committee therefore carried over Bowra's letter from 1946 to 1947 in order to consider it one year later without the need for a new nomination to be initiated. The expert statement commissioned by the Committee was completed by the Swedish philologist Anton Karlgren in June 1947.³⁰ The report for this year indicated that the Committee had decided to adopt a wait-and-see policy concerning the candidacy of Pasternak, as Karlgren's report was rather critical; it also commented on Pasternak's relation to official state policy and socialist realism.³¹ In 1948 Professor Martin Lamm (1880–1950), a member of the Swedish Academy and expert on Swedenborg, put Pasternak's name forward, evidently following Bowra's lead. Once again, however, the Committee was not convinced by the case.³²

In 1949 Bowra wrote for the second and last time in support of Pasternak. He may have hoped that his repeat nomination would carry more authority on this occasion, following his election to the prestigious Oxford Professorship of Poetry (1946–1951) and the publication of *The Creative Experiment* in 1948. He may also have been encouraged by the fact that the Nobel Prize in literature for the preceding year had gone to another poet, T.S. Eliot. Bowra could with some justification consider himself well qualified to make a comparative evaluation of the work of both poets; in *The Creative Experiment* his essay on Pasternak was directly followed by a chapter on Eliot. In his second letter of nomination, dated 24 January

1949 and published below for the first time, he made it quite clear that he regarded Pasternak as the greater poet.

as from

Wadham College
Oxford
January 24th <1949>.

Dear Sir,

Many thanks for your letter. May I press on you as strongly as I can the claims of the Russian poet, Boris Pasternak? To my mind he is the greatest poet now living in Europe, having a finer imagination and a greater power than Eliot and being in his own way both a modernist and an inheritor of a great tradition. I would point out that in very different circumstances and under every kind of political pressure he has maintained a flawless art and has suffered much because of it. I know that the Nobel Committee has doubts about giving its prizes to Russians, but in this case there is no cause for doubt, since Pasternak is a great European writer. For sheer force and music and art he is without an equal, and I would press his claims strongly on you.

Yours sincerely

C M Bowra.³³

Bowra reiterates the same points as before about Pasternak's relation to tradition and modernity and his ability to rise above political pressure through his art. This time, however, he openly confronts the Nobel Committee's doubts about awarding the prize to a Soviet Russian writer and seeks to counter them by stressing Pasternak's standing as a great *European* writer. In its report, however, the Committee still found the case put forward by the "English connoisseur" inadequate; mention was also made of the possible undesirable consequences of making an award to Pasternak, given his delicate situation.³⁴

In response to a further nomination by Martin Lamm in 1950 (his last, as he died in the same year), the Committee noted Pasternak's growing reputation in the English literary world but regretted the paucity of information about his later work after 1930; once more his case was put on hold, pending further developments.³⁵ After a lull of seven years the last two nominations of 1957 and 1958 culminated in the final award to Pasternak. Although the official announcement of the Swedish Academy that Pasternak had received the Nobel Prize "for his notable achievement in both contemporary poetry and the field of the great Russian narrative

tradition" made no explicit mention of *Doctor Zhivago*, it is clear from the guarded reference to "the great Russian narrative tradition" that the publication of the novel, alongside the poetry, finally tipped the balance in favour of Pasternak by providing clear evidence of the direction of his later work.³⁶

Bowra did not write any more letters of nomination after 1949, but continued to express his support for Pasternak in other ways. In September 1958, soon after the publication of the English translation of *Doctor Zhivago* in August, he wrote a very positive and perceptive review of the novel, drawing attention to Pasternak's astonishing mastery of this new form. Rejecting inevitable readings of the work as a "commentary on Soviet life" or "tract for the times", he stressed its value as a consummate work of art, revealing and inspiring an elevated outlook on life. He emphasised the essential role of the poems in the novel and the fact that Pasternak had achieved "something which he has hardly done in his actual poetry, but <...> has been able to do <...> only because he is a poet".³⁷ In October, when moves were made to expel Pasternak from the Writers' Union following the award of the Nobel Prize, Bowra (now President of the British Academy) despatched a telegram of protest to the Chairman of the Writers' Union, together with a group of distinguished intellectuals.³⁸

After Pasternak's death, Bowra maintained a steady flow of publications paying tribute to his work. In November 1960 he reviewed a collection of his late poems of 1955–1959, published in parallel Russian and English versions; he compared them to the poems from *Doctor Zhivago* and noted their particular "purity and strength," reflecting an "inner peace <...> found by a prodigious effort of will". He praised Pasternak's lack of concessions to political demands and loyalty to his own convictions, and confirmed his status as the greatest Russian poet since Blok.³⁹ In 1962 he wrote a foreword to the bilingual edition of Pasternak's late verse, *In the Interlude. Poems 1945–1960*, containing the poems from *Doctor Zhivago* and the cycle "When the skies clear" ("Kogda razguliaetsia").⁴⁰ Ever mindful of his academic training, he continued to emphasise the classical quality of Pasternak's verse. He also devoted a few pages to Pasternak in his late work of 1966, *Poetry and Politics, 1900–1960*, highlighting the poet's concern with the integrity of art, refusal to compromise, and view of art as a form of religious activity. In the course of discussing the award of the Nobel Prize for literature to Pasternak, he made no reference to his

own earlier nominations, but condemned the decision as an “incredible blunder” on the part of the Nobel Committee, a blessing that turned out to be a curse and hastened the writer’s death.⁴¹

II. Pasternak’s response to Bowra

Whereas Pasternak was well acquainted with Bowra’s translations of his verse and articles about his work (and had copies of several of his publications), it seems unlikely that he was aware of Bowra’s efforts over the Nobel Prize – either at the time, or subsequently.⁴² When considering Pasternak’s response to Bowra, we shall therefore leave aside all the activity surrounding the Nobel Prize and concentrate on his reaction to Bowra’s publications. We have seen that the core of Bowra’s contribution to building up Pasternak’s reputation in the 1940s amounted to the translation of some seventeen poems (slightly more, if the translations scattered throughout his critical writings are included), first published between 1943 and 1948, one review of 1945, published in English and again in Russian in the following year, and one substantial critical essay of 1948. Although from today’s perspective this may not seem much, it is important to appreciate the tremendous impact that these publications made at the time. As the criteria for evaluating the literary standing of Russian writers became increasingly confused and distorted in the Soviet literary establishment, any publication appearing in the West played a vital role in giving non-conformist writers a sense that their voices were still heard and valued.

Something of the intensity of the reactions generated by the appearance of Bowra’s first *Book of Russian Verse* can be gauged from a letter that Pasternak sent to Mandel’shtam’s widow in November 1945. Prompted by his excitement at discovering Bowra’s translation of Mandel’shtam’s “Tristia” in the anthology (printed immediately before his own poem), he was moved to write to her:

Вы, наверное, ищете повода, послужившего толчком к такому неурочному письму? Вот он: в русской антологии издательства Macmillan and Co под редакцией Оксфордского профессора древнегреческой литературы, автора большой книги о наследии символизма (о Рильке, Валери, Блоке и Итсе) и переводчика Блока и др. С.М. Вовра напечатаны Tristia Осипа Эмильевича. В слезах переписываю Вам первую строфу (по-моему, хорошо; перевел этот самый Баура).³⁴

The tears were evidently tears of joy, in recognition of Mandel'shtam's "survival" in the pages of this anthology after his disappearance from the pages of official Soviet literary history since 1934 and his second arrest followed by death in the camps in 1938.

In December 1945, in a long letter sent via Isaiah Berlin to his sisters in Oxford, Pasternak described Bowra's translations as "astonishing" and explained at some length how such small pockets of recognition created a "крошечный уголок": "это <...> точки чудодейственного какого-то, необъяснимого моего соприкосновения с судьбою и временем, это мистерия или роман, который мог бы дать много пищи для суеверья, так тут все непревосхитимо сказочно". Living in the "sober, cold Soviet era," he had "never imagined that all this could still be possible".⁴⁴ Significantly, immediately after listing various other forms of recognition of his work in the West (with much space devoted to the 1945 edition of his *Collected Prose Works* introduced by Schimanski), he went on to describe his determination to write a novel, suggesting a connection between these pockets of external recognition and his own inner resolve and sense of creative direction.

In the same letter Pasternak announced his intention to contact Bowra directly.⁴⁵ His first letter to him, written on 25 December 1945 in charmingly eccentric exuberant English with an even more ecstatic postscript in Russian, conveys his deep appreciation of the critic's writings and translations:

When I read in your beautiful "Heritage of Symbolism" your admirable lines

about Rilke and Blok, when afterwards I saw your deep, exact and melodious translation of the Twelve, I dreamed. Would this man (this Bowra) ever hear of me, could I some day attract his high attention, and, perhaps, deserve his recognition! And, on a sudden, these wonderful, incomparable translations!!

Pasternak prepares the ground for his response to Bowra very carefully.

He first approaches him as the author of *The Heritage of Symbolism* (1943), highlighting the chapters on Rilke and Blok, and then mentions his translation of Blok's "The Twelve", published in *Horizon* in July 1944. Pasternak's deep sense of affinity with both Rilke and Blok is well known; in his letter of December 1945 to his sisters, he expressed his delight at finding himself linked by the group of British personalists with the three names dearest to him, Rilke, Blok and Proust.⁴⁶ His reference to Bowra's

chapter about Blok in *The Heritage of Symbolism* and to his version of “The Twelve” before mentioning his translations of his own work serves to align himself with Blok – a line of succession later confirmed in Bowra’s *Second Book of Russian Verse* (1948), where Pasternak follows Blok as the third most represented poet in the anthology.

As in his letter to his sisters, Pasternak attributes great significance to his discovery of Bowra’s translations: “If once I knew that the fate will give me such sort of response, the anticipation of it would restrain me from many excesses, from which no power of tradition or of contemporaneity could withhold me, as I was young”. Pasternak clearly views the response that he has received through Bowra’s translation of his work as an act of fate, which would have affected his writing in the past, had he been able to foresee it; in the same way, he may well have regarded it as a fated encounter that could determine the future course of his work. If so, then this future direction would appear to be connected with Bowra’s interest in Blok, highlighted by Pasternak in his letter.

We know that Pasternak began his essay on Blok (“K kharakteristike Bloka”) in the summer of 1946 to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the poet’s death, at the same time as he was working on the first drafts of *Doctor Zhivago*. Not surprisingly, many elements of this essay and other references to Blok found their way into his novel.⁴⁷ Evidence suggests that his reading of Bowra’s chapter on Blok in *The Heritage of Symbolism* influenced his presentation of the poet in his essay and in his novel, both directly and obliquely. There are several areas of significant overlap. Most generally, Pasternak shared with Bowra the main premise of *The Heritage of Symbolism*: a strong conviction of the central and continuing relevance of the legacy of the symbolists to the next generation of writers. Like Bowra, Pasternak believed that this legacy had determined the present state of poetry and stated so unequivocally in an essay of December 1946: «Поэтическая литература наших дней в любой стране мира, в том числе и в России и в Грузии, представляет естественное следствие символизма и всех вышедших из него, а также и всех враждовавших с ним школ».⁴⁸ Bowra’s investigation of the various ways in which different writers had assimilated the heritage of symbolism, overcoming its weak points and developing it in new directions, was highly relevant to Pasternak’s desire to extend this legacy into the world of prose. His novel, envisaged by him in January 1946 as “prose about the whole of our life

from Blok up to the present war",⁴⁹ not only traced the legacy of Blok to the post-war period through its plot, but also incorporated into its form and style Blok's combination of visionary symbolism and modern, urban realism, a distinctive feature of his work highlighted by Bowra in *The Heritage of Symbolism*.⁵⁰

More specifically, there are some links between Bowra's characterisation of Blok and Pasternak's portrayal of Iury Zhivago's response to the Revolution. When Bowra published his translation of "The Twelve" in *Horizon* during the last years of the war, he introduced it as a work that expresses "the supernatural excitement which resulted from the Russian Revolution and the hopes for a regeneration of humanity which he found in it".⁵¹ Iury Zhivago reacts in a similar way to the Revolution, while the novel's epilogue (set in 1943 and four to five years later) extends this message of hope for renewal to the post-war generation through the words of his disciples.

Last but by no means least, the emphasis that Bowra places in his book on Blok's status as a national prophet may well have reinforced Pasternak's sense of his own role as Blok's successor with a prophetic message for Russia.⁵² Pasternak's conviction of the prophetic import of his novel for Russia is clearly reflected in many of his letters of the time. In his memoirs of his meetings with Pasternak Isaiah Berlin comments that when Pasternak gave him the typescript of *Doctor Zhivago* in 1956, he described it as his "last word" or "testament" and expressed the wish that it should "travel over the entire world, to 'lay waste with fire' 'the hearts of men'," quoting from Pushkin's famous poem "The Prophet".⁵³

In this connection it is worth noting that Pasternak was no doubt pleased to find that two of the four poems from his work chosen by Bowra for translation in 1945 dealt with the poet's prophetic calling. "Stars raced headlong. Seaward headlands lathered..." ("Mchalis' zvezdy. V more mylis' mysy...", 1923) captures the cosmic reverberations of the moment when the draft of "The Prophet" was completed, while "We're few, perhaps not more than three..." ("Nas malo. Nas, mozhet byt', troe...", 1921) presents Pasternak and the poets of his generation in the light of their historical destiny.

Pasternak continued to hold *The Heritage of Symbolism* in very high regard until the end of his life; as late as May 1958 he returned to it once more and re-read its conclusion in order to collect his thoughts for a re-

sponse to an enquiry. As before, he was impressed by Bowra's depth of understanding and felicity of expression, and praised the book in a letter to his sisters: «Я <...> снова пришел в восторг. Как глубоко он все это знает, как живо и сжато пишет обо всем!»⁵⁴

Although several areas of overlap between the ideas expressed in Bowra's book and Pasternak's novel can be identified, in the final analysis it is not possible to "prove" conclusively the influence of the first work on the second; it may well be that Pasternak was simply gratified to find in Bowra's book confirmation of ideas about Blok that he already held, and that this is more an instance of congruity of minds than one of direct influence. Nevertheless, evidence exists which suggests that Pasternak not only perceived an underlying connection between Bowra's writing on Blok and Rilke in *The Heritage of Symbolism* and the genesis of his novel, but also wanted to make Bowra aware of this link. On 10 April 1948 he sent Bowra a hand-sewn booklet of ten poems from his novel, prefaced with the following inscription: "as sign of my deepest acknowledgment with my warmest thanks for his rare and profound articles on Blok, Rilke and on myself".⁵⁵ These words make it clear that Pasternak is presenting the poems from his novel in progress as an act of acknowledgment and gratitude to Bowra for his writing on Blok and Rilke in *The Heritage of Symbolism* and on his own work – once more using Bowra's writings to position himself as Blok's successor.

This sense of an inner bond between the novel and Bowra's critical essays on Rilke, Blok, and Pasternak may also explain why Pasternak was particularly anxious for Bowra to receive a copy of his work and wanted to hear his opinion of it. On the two occasions when he managed to send a typescript copy of the current version of his novel to his sisters in Oxford, he added special instructions to ensure that Bowra received it. In December 1948 he asked for copies to be given to a "narrow circle of interested people, starting with Bowra;" in August 1956 he requested once more for a copy to be given "without fail to Bowra".⁵⁶ A couple of years later, on 6 September 1958, he enquired of his sisters in Oxford what the two "University B's" (Berlin and Bowra) thought of his book: «Вероятно, по банальности и растянутости считают страшным падением?»⁵⁷ By a strange coincidence, Bowra's enthusiastic review of the novel in *Time and Tide* was published on the very same day as Pasternak wrote this letter. In her reply Josephine reassured him that "Mavrikii" (her Russian

code name for Maurice) had expressed feelings of delight over *Doctor Zhivago*.⁵⁸ Unlike many critics Bowra was able to appreciate the organic connection between Pasternak's novel and his skills as a poet. As he later wrote to Josephine on 13 October 1964, responding to her recent memoir of the poet: "I sympathise with what you say about the critics on 'Dr Zhivago'. It is *not* what they said it is, but something quite different and much better".⁵⁹

If Pasternak's first letter to Bowra emphasises the critic's interest in Blok, his second letter, written six months later on 26 June 1946, takes up a different author, related to Bowra through common language and native country: Shakespeare. Here Pasternak was responding to Bowra's joint review of his version of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and collection of poems *Earthly Expanse*. This piece of writing united two aspects of his creative work, which were often seen as unrelated rather than complementary. The connection was significant for Pasternak, as his immersion in translating Shakespeare's tragedies facilitated the transition that he wished to make from writing subjective lyrical verse to a more objective form of historical, epic narrative. Shakespeare also enabled him to link the figures of Blok and Hamlet, an association that informed the portrayal of his sacrificial hero Doctor Zhivago. His desire to dedicate his notes on Shakespeare to Bowra appears to reflect his association of Bowra with the spirit of "a free historical personality" that Pasternak identified as the source of Shakespeare's unique rhythm and sought to capture in his novel.⁶⁰ If this intention had materialized, it would have been the first time that Pasternak dedicated a work of his to a foreigner.

In the light of the materials discussed above, it is clear that the opening question about the ways in which Bowra's "overestimation" of Pasternak might have played a role in the genesis of *Doctor Zhivago* can be answered on two levels. The first level is relatively straightforward. In general terms, Bowra clearly not only contributed to the establishment of Pasternak's reputation through his translations and criticism of his work, but also provided him with a vital "little corner" of recognition, a mirror reflection in the West to counter distorted representations of his work in the Soviet Union. This sense of an echo from afar, existing outside the ordinary confines of space and time, undoubtedly helped Pasternak to

define his self-image and strengthened his resolve to swim against the tide and complete his novel.

This first and fundamental aspect of Bowra's contribution to Pasternak's creative life is confirmed by a telling episode, recounted by Emma Gershtein in her memoirs. In April 1947, after attending a private reading of the novel in progress, she wrote a long letter to Pasternak, expressing her enthusiastic response. On her way to deliver the letter to his Moscow home, she happened to meet him, handed over the letter, and fell into conversation. In her account of their talk she notes the tremendous significance that he attached at the time to any sympathetic response to his work, whether originating in Russia (as in her case) or in the West (as in the case of Bowra, amusingly characterised by Pasternak as a sort of English Veselovsky):

Говоря свои тихие слова, Борис Леонидович время от времени ощущал счастливым жестом внутренний карман пиджака, куда было положено мое еще не читанное им письмо, похлопывал себя по левой стороне груди. Вот каким событием был для него в эти дни каждый сочувственный отклик на его работу. Окружающую его глухоту он сравнивал с живейшим интересом к его творчеству на Западе: «А какие отзывы я читаю о себе «там», целые разборы!»— он назвал неизвестное мне имя английского литературоведа. «Это их Веселовский»,— пояснил он.⁶¹

The same connection between Pasternak's progress on his novel and his reaction to Bowra's opinion of his work is reflected in his letter to Ol'ga Freidenberg of 7 August 1949. In an account of his recent work and plans for the future, immediately after describing his determination to finish writing the second book of his novel despite the impossibility of the task and the inadequacy of his resources, he mentions having seen an Oxford bilingual anthology of Russian poetry, Bowra's *Second Book of Russian Verse* and *The Creative Experiment* (Pasternak received a copy of the 1949 edition of this work, inscribed "With warmest admiration from C.M. Bowra"). With a mixture of pride and embarrassment he notes that most of the space in the Western anthologies is allocated to Pushkin, Blok and himself, and that he is recognized not just as the best or "first" Soviet poet, but as Boris Pasternak in his own right. His high standing in the West, however, has only made him feel more despairing about the low regard in which he is currently held in Russia.⁶² The juxtaposition of these two passages suggests a deep-seated link between his determination to finish

his novel and the positive image of his work that he found reflected in the anthologies and critical writings of Bowra.

The second level on which this question can be addressed is somewhat more complex. Several examples suggest that Pasternak found in Bowra's writings, particularly in *The Heritage of Symbolism*, certain ideas that resonated with his own understanding of how he could develop the symbolist legacy of Blok in his novel. In addition, various points made by Bowra about the strengths and direction of Pasternak's creative work may well have encouraged his work on the novel. For example, Bowra's comment in his 1945 review of *Earthly Expanse* about the link between Pasternak's poems on war and his faith in the advent of a new and better life could be applied to the development of Pasternak's novel through to its epilogue:

But behind these contemporary topics we can still discern his old dynamic

view of life, his trust in the Russian mission and in the advent of a new, vigorous life, and the book rightly closes with some noble verses in which, with the coming of spring, he sees life returning to a half-dead world and foretells a future full of beauty and romance.

Bowra concluded his review by tackling the controversial issue of Pasternak's relevance to contemporary Russian society in terms that could also be applied to his novel. Although, in his view, Pasternak's poetry may not have "so immediate a 'social use' as that of many of his contemporaries", he is "none the less a powerful poet of the Russian world and has done more than anyone to interpret the deep trust in life and nature and humanity which inspires its prodigious achievements".⁶³ This understanding of the far-reaching nature of Pasternak's influence was of vital significance at a time when the poet was under constant attack by Soviet critics for being apolitical and detached from contemporary events.⁶⁴ His second letter to Bowra, responding to the juxtaposition of his name with Ehrenburg in this review, reflects his pressing desire to make his position in the contemporary Soviet cultural landscape unambiguously clear to his foreign audience.⁶⁵

In his concluding summary of Pasternak's achievement in *The Creative Experiment*, Bowra emphasised the poet's ability to view politics and history from a deeper perspective:

Pasternak responds to the special character of his calling by a special sense of the responsibilities which it puts upon him. <...> In a revolutionary age Pasternak has seen beyond the disturbed surface of things to the powers behind it and found there an explanation of what really matters in the world. Through his unerring sense of poetry he has reached to wide issues and shown that the creative calling, with its efforts and its frustrations and its unanticipated triumphs, is, after all, something profoundly natural and closely related to the sources of life.⁶⁶

Pasternak clearly welcomed Bowra's assessment of his work for it reflected his own aspirations and validated them. As he commented in his last letter to him, written on 5 November 1956 to accompany some recent poems: "I know your point of view in 'Creative experiment,' preserve it". The remarkable connection between Pasternak's development as a writer and Bowra's evaluation of his work was noted by an astute contemporary reader. In his introduction to the English publication of Pasternak's autobiographical essay in 1959, Edward Crankshaw quoted the same closing passage cited above as evidence of the "prophetic insight" displayed in Bowra's essay; he observed that the critic's words, although based on Pasternak's early poetry, "could serve well as a comment on *Doctor Zhivago*" and (in a clever adaptation of Bowra's own phrase) demonstrate the close affinity between the "critical calling" and the "sources of art".⁶⁷

Bowra was not the only Western critic to build up Pasternak's reputation and thereby contribute to his sense of creative direction – in England George Reavey, J.M.Cohen, Stefan Schimanski, C.L.Wrenn, and Isaiah Berlin also wrote about his work and in some cases translated it as well.⁶⁸ Bowra's statements on Pasternak, along with the writings of the personalists, were intimately connected with the poet's reflections on himself and his place in contemporary life. In addition, in Bowra's translations and criticism of his work, Pasternak was able to find particular support for his view of himself as a successor to Blok and prophetic writer in the same tradition.⁶⁹ This important dimension, together with the special circumstances of his friendship with Isaiah Berlin and Pasternak's sisters, explains the particular energy and enthusiasm of his epistolary addresses to the critic.

As a coda to this investigation of the creative relationship between Pasternak and Bowra, we offer a brief comment on the significance of the items that they both liked to keep in close proximity to their places of

work. In December 1945 Pasternak asked Schimanski to tell Bowra that he kept the latter's books as close to his desk as the window, and found them equally inspiring.⁷⁰ Bowra's writings clearly opened up a "window" for Pasternak onto a different perspective on his work, more congenial to the creative path that he wished to take than the prevalent Soviet approach to his work. Bowra, for his part, kept a portrait of Pasternak hanging in his library in his rooms at Wadham College, where he could see it as he worked. This portrait, drawn in 1918 by the poet's father, Leonid Pasternak, was a treasured possession, given to him in 1958 by the Pasternak sisters. In his letter to them he expressed his pleasure:

May 23rd

My dear Pasternaks,

How can I thank you properly for this most generous and enchanting gift?

I am indeed more delighted than I can say to have it, and as a gift from you, and it hangs proudly in my library where I see it as I work. I cannot think of anything that I could like more, or that could be a more living memory of the exhibition of your father's paintings, or a more kindly reminder of you yourselves. It is in itself so fine a work of art that even if it were not a picture of a great poet, it would still be an unending source of delight. Thank you very much indeed.

Yours gratefully

Maurice Bowra.⁷¹

Towards the end of his life, the indomitable Bowra was finally taken ill and retired to his bed. When his friend Larisa Haskell and her husband, the art historian Francis Haskell, visited him not long before his death, she noticed that the portrait of Pasternak now hung above his bed.⁷² Thus, the window that Bowra had opened up for Pasternak closed for him in contemplation of the portrait of a poet whose work he had admired and celebrated for over a quarter of a century. Pasternak's understanding of translation as "the fruit of the original and its historical consequence," exhibiting the same relationship as that between a trunk and a cutting, aptly characterises his relationship with Bowra, the fruitful offshoot of one such act of inter-cultural translation and reception.⁷³

Notes

¹ See Pamela Davidson. *Vyacheslav Ivanov and C.M.Bowra: A Correspondence from Two Corners on Humanism (Birmingham Slavonic Monographs, no. 36)* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2006).

² Letter from Pasternak to Bowra of 1 September 1956. All quotations from Pasternak's letters to Bowra are taken from the companion article in this volume, Pamela Davidson, ed., "Pasternak's Letters to C.M.Bowra (1945–1956)".

³ Cyril Connolly, "Hedonist and Stoic", in *Maurice Bowra: A Celebration*, ed. by Hugh Lloyd-Jones (London: Duckworth, 1974), pp. 45–46.

⁴ "ὄπορήτης" — "a priest who declaims an oracle".

⁵ Letter from V.I.Ivanov to C.M.Bowra of 20 December 1947, cited in Davidson. *Vyacheslav Ivanov and C.M.Bowra*, p. 102.

⁶ Archive of Wadham College, Oxford. Bowra Papers. The first manuscript book (undated), bound in black leather with gold edges, contains a wide range of poems in different languages (Greek, Latin, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian), written out by Bowra in black ink. The second type-script book (undated), bound in a Bramptons Instantaneous Binder, contains a similar range of poems in different languages (Russian poets include Annenskii, Bal'mont, Gumilev, Esenin, Ivanov, Kazin, Lermontov, Mandel'shtam, Maiakovskii, Pasternak, Pushkin, A.K.Tolstoi, and Khlebnikov).

⁷ Isaiah Berlin, "Memorial Address in St Mary's", in *Maurice Bowra: A Celebration*, p. 19; see also John Sparrow, "Bowra, Sir (Cecil) Maurice", in *The Dictionary of National Biography. 1971–1980*, ed. by Lord Blake and C.S.Nicholls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 76; Davidson. *Vyacheslav Ivanov and C.M.Bowra*, pp. 24–26.

⁸ The Bowra Papers in the Archive of Wadham College, Oxford contain his passport with various visas and stamps relating to this visit: "Travelling to Peking, China via Norway, Sweden and Russia and the Trans-Siberian Railway, Foreign Office, 7 Mar. 1916;" a visa issued by the Russian Consul dated 15/28 April 1916; a stamp fixing the date of Bowra's first arrival in Russia on 1 May 1916; a stamp indicating that he presented his passport for registration (as a student) in Petrograd on 8 September 1916. For a vivid account of his visit to Petrograd, see C.M.Bowra. *Memories: 1898–1939* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), pp. 60–69.

⁹ See Chukovskii's evocative account of his visit to Bowra at Wadham College in his diary entry of 26 May 1962 (following the conferral upon him of an honorary D.Litt. from Oxford University): «Вчера два визита: заехал за нами сэр Морис Баура – автор "Песен диких народов" – и повез нас в свою гениальную холостяцкую квартиру, ту самую, где когда-то в тысяча шестьсот... которм-то

году жил сэр Кристофер Рен. Таких музыкальных пропорций, такой абсолютной гармонии, такого сочетания простоты и роскоши я никогда не видал. Быть в такой комнате значит испытывать художественную радость. А комната у него много – и столько книг в идеальном порядке, итальянские, греческие, французские, русские, английские – наверху зимний сад с кактусами. Завтрак в такой столовой, что хочется кричать от восторга. Sir Maurice холостяк. Бесшумный лакей – chicken, chocolate pudding, говорили о Роберте Броунинге, о Суинберне, Уотт Dunton'e, сэр Морис декламировал Фета, Гомера, Сафо». — Kornei Chukovskii. *Sobranie sochinenii v piatnadsati tomakh*. Vol. 13. *Dnevnik. 1936–1969* (Moscow: Terra – Knizhnyi klub, 2007), p. 331.

¹⁰ “In the breeze, on a bough that is asking...” — *A Book of Russian Verse*, tr. into English by various hands and ed. by C.M. Bowra (London: Macmillan, 1943), p. 120.

¹¹ “In the Wood”, “So they begin. With two years gone...”, “We’re few, perhaps not more than three...”, “Stars raced headlong. Seaward headlands lathered...” (*Horizon*, vol. 12, no. 69, September 1945, pp. 153–155).

¹² “Swung down from the fragrant branches”, “Don’t touch. Fresh paint’, the notice said...”, “Sparrow Hills”, “Summer”, “In the Wood”, “The air is whipped by the frequent rain-drops...”, “Spring”, “Spasskoye”, “Stars raced headlong. Seaward headlands lathered...”, “January 1919”, “May it be” (“Dawn shakes the candle, shoots a flame...”), “So they begin. With two years gone...”, “We’re few, perhaps not more than three...”, “Love is for some a heavy cross...”, “If I had known what would come later...”, “Summer Day” (“In spring before the dawn we see...”), “Spring 1944” — *A Second Book of Russian Verse*, tr. into English by various hands and ed. by C.M. Bowra (London: Macmillan, 1948), pp. 114–125.

¹³ Thirteen of Bowra’s translations also appeared alongside translations by Babette Deutsch in Boris Pasternak. *Safe Conduct: An Autobiography and Other Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1958), pp. 260–272.

¹⁴ “My own versions would be worse than they are but for kind help from Mr. I. Berlin and Dr. S. Rachmilevitch”. — Bowra. *A Second Book of Russian Verse*, p. V.

¹⁵ While Berlin was in Moscow, Bowra wrote to him about the Pasternak sisters: “Mrs Past. the sister, has gone off her rocker, which is sad, but Mrs Slater continues boldly in her desertion by Slater” (Letter of 7 <December 1945>; copy deposited with the Bowra Papers in the Archive of Wadham College, Oxford; although Bowra dated his letter 7 November, this is clearly a mistake for 7 December, since the envelope addressed to I. Berlin, British Embassy, Moscow, c/o Foreign Office, London, “for inclusion in bag please,” is postmarked 8 December 1945). Josephine Pasternak’s second neurosis followed the death of her

father in May 1945 and lasted for several years — see the chronology in Josephine Pasternak. *Tightrope Walking: A Memoir*, ed. by Helen Pasternak Ramsay and Rimgaila Salys (Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2005), p. vii. For further evidence of Bowra's links with the Pasternak sisters, see his letters to them (mainly to Josephine), written between 1944 and 1969 (The Pasternak Family Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California, Box 14, Folder 19).

¹⁶ When Isaiah Berlin arrived in Moscow on 8 September 1945, he attended a dinner hosted by the British Embassy in celebration of the third anniversary of *Britanskii soiuznik*; the guest of honour was J.B. Priestley, others present included Lina Prokof'ev, Aleksandr Tairov, Sergei Eisenstein, and Kornei Chukovskii. See Isaiah Berlin, "Meetings with Russian Writers in 1945 and 1956," in his *Personal Impressions*, ed. by Henry Hardy, with an introduction by Noel Annan (London: The Hogarth Press, 1980), pp. 163–166, and Michael Ignatieff. *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (London: Vintage, 2000), pp. 135–136.

¹⁷ C.M. Bowra, Letter to I. Berlin of 25 October <1945>; copy deposited with the Bowra Papers in the Archive of Wadham College, Oxford. The "versions from Blok" probably included Bowra's translation of *The Twelve*, first published in *Horizon* in July 1944. B.H. Sumner was the Warden of All Souls from 1947 to 1948. Although nothing came of Bowra's plan to find Chukovskii a position at All Souls, he and Berlin were both involved in the award to Chukovskii of honorary degrees from Oxford University in 1957 and 1962.

¹⁸ It seems most likely that the "24 pieces" collected by Bowra refer to his translations of poems by Pasternak. It could also refer to a mixture of verse and prose works by Pasternak, translated by other authors. No evidence has been traced of any such publication initiated by Bowra, nor of any involvement on his part in the publication of Boris Pasternak. *Selected Poems*, tr. by J.M. Cohen (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1946).

¹⁹ C.M. Bowra, Letter to I. Berlin of 5 November <1945>; copy deposited with the Bowra Papers in the Archive of Wadham College, Oxford.

²⁰ In a review of *Sbornik stikhov*, ed. by V. Kazin and V. Pertsov (Moscow, 1943), Bowra describes Pasternak as "one of the greatest poets now writing in Europe" with "an extraordinary sensibility and wonderful visual gift" (C.M. Bowra, "An Anthology of Soviet Verse", *Horizon*, vol. 10, no. 58, October 1944, p. 289). In a later article on post-war trends in poetry, he refers to Pasternak as "the most gifted and original of living Russian poets" and relates his poems about the Revolution, war and nature to the verse of other contemporary European poets (C.M. Bowra, "The Next Stage in Poetry", *Horizon*, vol. 14, no. 79, July 1946, pp. 10–18).

²¹ C.M. Bowra, "Two Soviet Poets", *Horizon*, vol. 12, no. 68, August 1945, pp. 141–144. Bowra compared "Pines" ("Sosny") to the earlier "In the Wood" ("V

lesu"), and "False Alarm" ("Lozhnaia trevoga") to the earlier "Spasskoe" (both earlier poems were also translated by him).

²² S.M.Boura <C.M.Bowra>, "Stikhi Erenburga i Pasternaka", *Britanskii soiuznik*, no. 5, 3 February 1946, p. 11.

²³ C.M.Bowra, "Boris Pasternak, 1917–1923", *The Creative Experiment* (London: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 128–158.

²⁴ Pasternak was nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature seven times: in five consecutive years from 1946 to 1950, in 1957, and again in 1958, this time with a successful outcome. On the history of his award, see Evgenii Pasternak, "Nobelevskaia premiia Borisa Pasternaka", *Novyi mir*, 1990, no. 2, pp. 191–194; *Nobelpriset i litteratur. Nomineringar och utlåtanden 1901–1950*, ed. by Bo Svensén (Stockholm: Svenska Akademien, 2001), 2, pp. 362, 376, 388–389, 401, 418; A.M.Blokh. *Sovetskii Soiuz v inter'ere nobelevskikh premii. Fakty. Dokumenty. Razmyshleniia. Kommentarii*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Fizmatlit, 2005), pp. 589–668 and passim; Tat'iana Marchenko. *Russkie pisateli i Nobelevskaia premiia (1901–1955)* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2007), pp. 580–581.

²⁵ Archive of the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy, Stockholm, Sweden. Typescript, one sheet; air letter postmarked 9 January 1946. The letter is registered as having been received on 12 January 1946, and was subsequently transferred to the file of nominations for 1947. I am most grateful to Carola Hermelin, Assistant to the Secretary of the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy, for kindly providing me with copies of Bowra's two letters of nomination and answering my related queries.

²⁶ No copy of the Nobel Committee's letter to Bowra has been preserved in the Archive of the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy, nor among the Bowra Papers in the Archive of Wadham College, Oxford.

²⁷ Marchenko. *Russkie pisateli i Nobelevskaia premiia*, p. 58.

²⁸ Although Maksim Gorky had previously been nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature on several occasions between 1918 and 1928, he was living abroad at the time and was therefore not perceived in the West as a "Soviet" writer in the same way as writers living in the USSR.

²⁹ Svensén, ed. *Nobelpriset i litteratur*, 2, p. 362 (Pasternak is no. 4 in the list of nominations for 1946). In 1946 the prize was awarded to Hermann Hesse.

³⁰ Anton Karlgen's report in Swedish (49 pages), dated 1 June 1947, is in the Archive of the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy. For a brief account of its contents, see Marchenko. *Russkie pisateli i Nobelevskaia premiia*, 580. I am grateful to Tat'iana Marchenko for sending me her unpublished paper of 2007 on the Nobel Committee's discussions surrounding the award of the Nobel Prize to Pasternak, based on archival materials, including Karlgen's report; Karlgen cited Bowra's translations of poems by Pasternak in his report, discussed the political

content of his verse, but stopped short of making any final recommendation for the award.

³¹ Svensén, ed. *Nobelpriset i litteratur*, 2, p. 376 (Pasternak is no. 35 in the list of nominations for 1947). In Marchenko. *Russkie pisateli i Nobelevskaia premiia*, p. 580, the report of the Nobel Committee for 1947 is incorrectly attributed to 1946. In 1947 the prize was awarded to André Gide.

³² Svensén, ed. *Nobelpriset i litteratur*, 2, p. 388–389 (Pasternak is no. 14 in the list of nominations for 1948).

³³ Archive of the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy, Stockholm, Sweden. Typescript, one sheet; no envelope. The letter has no date stamp indicating when it was received; it has been placed in the file for 1949 as no. 27 in the nomination list.

³⁴ Svensén, ed. *Nobelpriset i litteratur*, 2, p. 401 (Pasternak is no. 27 in the list of nominations for 1949); Marchenko. *Russkie pisateli i Nobelevskaia premiia*, pp. 580–581. In 1949 the prize was awarded to William Faulkner.

³⁵ Svensén, ed. *Nobelpriset i litteratur*, 2, p. 418 (Pasternak is no. 52 in the list of nominations for 1950); Marchenko. *Russkie pisateli i Nobelevskaia premiia*, p. 581. In 1950 the prize was awarded to Bertrand Russell.

³⁶ http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1958/press.html, accessed 21 September 2007.

³⁷ C.M.Bowra, “A Truly Great Work of Art”, *Time and Tide*, 6 September 1958, pp. 1084–1085.

³⁸ See the telegram from London, received on 30 October 1958, in “*A za mnoiu shum pogoni...*”: *Boris Pasternak i vlast'. Dokumenty. 1956-1972*, ed. by V.Iu. Afiani and N.G.Tomilina (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001), p. 170. Other signatories included Kenneth Clarke, T.S.Eliot, E.M.Forster, Graham Greene, Aldous and Julian Huxley, Somerset Maugham, J.B.Priestley, John Herbert Read, Bertrand Russell, C.P.Snow, Stephen Spender, and Rebecca West.

³⁹ C.M.Bowra, “After Zhivago” (review of Boris Pasternak, *Poems 1955–1959*, tr. by Michael Harari, London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1960). Unidentified newspaper clipping, dated by hand 20 November 1960. Hoover Institution Archives. Gleb Struve Papers, Box 114, Folder 3.

⁴⁰ Boris Pasternak. *In the Interlude. Poems. 1945–1960*, tr. by Henry Kamen, with a foreword by Sir Maurice Bowra and notes by George Katkov (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. vii–viii. Pasternak had previously sent Bowra verses from this collection: ten poems from *Doctor Zhivago* in April 1948 and a dozen from *Kogda razguliaetsia* in November 1956.

⁴¹ C.M.Bowra. *Poetry and Politics, 1900–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 83–87 (85).

⁴² Evgenii Borisovich Pasternak and Elena Vladimirovna Pasternak were in agreement with me on this question when we discussed it in Oxford in November 2007. Pasternak makes no reference to the possible award of the Nobel Prize in his correspondence until November 1954, when he exchanged news with his cousin Ol'ga Freidenberg about some rumours concerning his nomination that he thought were circulating in Europe. — *Perepiska Borisa Pasternaka*, ed. by E.B.Pasternak and E.V.Pasternak (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), pp. 324–326.

⁴³ Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, p. 422.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9, p. 430.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9, p. 429.

⁴⁷ Christopher Barnes. *Boris Pasternak: A Literary Biography*. Vol. 2. 1928–1960 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 227. On Pasternak's affinity with Blok, including the links between the poem "Rozhdestvenskaia zvezda" from *Doctor Zhivago* and "The Twelve", see Henry Gifford. *Pasternak: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 210–211, 240–241.

⁴⁸ "Neskol'ko slov o novoi gruzinskoi poezii (Zamechaniia perevodchika)", in Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5, p. 70.

⁴⁹ Letter to N.Mandel'shtam of 26 January 1946, *ibid.*, 9, p. 441.

⁵⁰ C.M.Bowra. *The Heritage of Symbolism* (London: Macmillan, 1943), pp. 148–149, 156. See Henry Gifford, "Pasternak and the 'Realism' of Blok", *Oxford Slavonic Papers* 13 (1967), pp. 96–106.

⁵¹ Alexander Blok, "The Twelve", tr. by C.M.Bowra, *Horizon*, vol. 10, no. 55, July 1944, p. 5.

⁵² On Blok's stature as a prophet and the fulfilment of his prophecies, see Bowra. *The Heritage of Symbolism*, pp. 159–160, 166–167, 178–79, 220.

⁵³ Isaiah Berlin. *Personal Impressions*, pp. 185–186.

⁵⁴ Letter to his sisters of 29 May 1958, in Boris Pasternak. *Pis'ma k roditeliam i sestram*, ed. by E.B.Pasternak and E.V.Pasternak (*Stanford Slavic Studies*. Vol. 19) (Stanford, 1998). Part 2, p. 286.

⁵⁵ Hoover Institution Archives. Collection of Irwin Holtzman, Box 22, Folder 14.

⁵⁶ Letters to his sisters of 12 December 1948 and 14 August 1956, in Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, p. 555, 10, p. 160.

⁵⁷ Letter to Lydia Pasternak of 6 September 1958, in Pasternak. *Pis'ma k roditeliam i sestram*, 2, pp. 295–296.

⁵⁸ Editorial note, in *ibid.*, p. 296. It seems likely that Pasternak received a copy of Bowra's review of his novel, since several foreign Slavists and writers with connections to his sisters in Oxford visited him at Peredelkino in September 1958 and brought him materials connected with the novel.

⁵⁹ Hoover Institution Archives. Pasternak Family Papers, Box 14, Folder 19. Typescript, one sheet; no envelope. Bowra is responding to J. Pasternak, "Patior", *The London Magazine*, September 1964, vol. 4, no. 6, pp. 42–57.

⁶⁰ In the original 1946 version of the section of his notes on translating Shakespeare entitled "Ritm Shekspira", Pasternak defines Shakespeare's rhythm, the foundation of his work, as follows: «это ритм свободной исторической личности, не творящей себе, по второй заповеди, кумира и, благодаря этому, прямодушной и немногословной» (Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5, p. 476). In a letter to O.M. Freidenberg of 5 October 1946, immediately after explaining the content of his notes on Shakespeare, he described the novel he longed to write as "the free expression of my own real thoughts" (*ibid.*, 9, p. 470).

⁶¹ Emma Gershtein, "O Pasternake i ob Akhmatovoi", in *Vospominaniia o Borise Pasternake*, ed. by E.B. Pasternak and M.I. Feinberg (Moscow: Slovo, 1993), p. 403. Gershtein's letter to Pasternak was written on 6–8 April 1947.

⁶² Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, pp. 574–575.

⁶³ Bowra, "Two Soviet Poets," p. 144.

⁶⁴ In this respect Bowra was developing a point first made by Stefan Schimanski in 1943. In the course of refuting charges that contemporary English writers were defeatists, pacifists, or escapists, Schimanski presented the example of Pasternak, evacuated during the war and cut off from the outer world while immersed in translating Shakespeare, as proof of the "isolated" artist's ability to influence society: "Pasternak's work in uniting culturally two great nations, is international, further-reaching and longer lasting". — Stefan Schimanski, "The Duty of the Younger Writer", *Life and Letters Today*, vol. 36, no. 66, February 1943, p. 95. See Lazar Fleishman. *Boris Pasternak: The Poet and His Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 233–235, 244–246.

⁶⁵ Although Bowra's review of a recent anthology of Soviet poetry (*Horizon*, vol. 10, no. 58, October 1944) was cited in *Novyi mir* in 1945 as a model of a positive Western response to recent developments in Soviet poetry, which should dispel the myth of Pasternak as an apolitical poet (A. Leites, "Malen'kie nedorazumeniia v ser'eznom razgovore", *Novyi mir*, 1945, no. 10, p. 165), by the end of 1946, in a changed political atmosphere, Bowra's view that the arts would be destroyed or reduced to "a dull mediocrity" if made to serve a social or political purpose was cited in *Soviet Literature* as an example of annoying foreign prejudice (Igor Sats, "A Controversy on Literature with Our Foreign Friends", *Soviet Literature*, no. 12, December 1946, p. 40).

⁶⁶ Bowra. *The Creative Experiment*, p. 158.

⁶⁷ Edward Crankshaw, "Introduction", in Boris Pasternak. *An Essay in Autobiography*, tr. by Manya Harari (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1959), pp. 15–17.

⁶⁸ On Pasternak's contacts with George Reavey, see L.Fleishman, "Unknown Autographs of Pasternak in the I.T.Holtzman Collection", in *Boris Pasternak and His Times*, ed. by Lazar Fleishman (Berkeley: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1989), pp. 418–423. On his links with the personalists, see Lazar' Fleishman, "Boris Pasternak i gruppa Transformation", in *Literature, Culture, and Society in the Modern Age. In Honor of Joseph Frank. Part II* (Stanford, 1992) (*Stanford Slavic Studies*, vol. 4:2), pp. 328–347.

⁶⁹ J.M.Cohen took a quite different view of Pasternak's work. He detected self-irony in "The stars rushed headlong by...", described by him as an ambitious poem by "the romantic poet of 'The Prophet', Pasternak's other self"; he expressed doubt as to whether Pasternak had much more lyrical poetry to write after *Second Birth* and suggested that he may have turned to translation to save himself from the fate of repeating his early work; he argued that Pasternak had little connection with the symbolists and Blok, contrasting the poet of "The Twelve" with the verse of an "aesthete" who "fails to establish a stable sense of values". See J.M.Cohen, "The Poetry of Boris Pasternak", *Horizon*, vol. 10, no. 55, July 1944, pp. 27, 33–34 (published in the same issue as Bowra's translation of "The Twelve").

⁷⁰ Letter to Herbert Read and Stefan Schimanski of 25 December 1945, in Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, p. 435.

⁷¹ Hoover Institution Archives. Pasternak Family Papers, Box 14, Folder 19. Typescript, one sheet; no envelope. Given the reference in the letter to the exhibition of Leonid Pasternak's works, it seems likely that it was written in May 1958, the year of Pasternak's first memorial exhibition, held at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford in April 1958, particularly since Bowra wrote the introduction to the catalogue of this exhibition (*Memorial Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Leonid Pasternak. 1862–1945. April 1958*, Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1958).

⁷² Oral communication to the author from Larisa Haskell, Oxford, 14 November 2007. After Bowra's death in 1971, the new Warden of the College returned the drawing to Pasternak's sisters, who in turn gave it to Larisa Haskell.

⁷³ "Zametki perevodchika" (1943), in Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5, p. 52.