

## Pasternak's Letters to C.M. Bowra (1945–1956)

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Between 1945 and 1956 Boris Pasternak wrote four letters to his translator and critic, Cecil Maurice Bowra (1898–1971), the classical scholar, literary critic, and Warden of Wadham College, Oxford. The first two letters were written soon after the end of the war on 25 December 1945 and 21 June 1946, while the last two were composed some ten years later on 1 September and 5 November 1956. The correspondence was recently discovered among Bowra's papers in the Archive of Wadham College.

In April 1948 Pasternak also inscribed and sent to Bowra a hand-sewn booklet, containing the typewritten text of ten poems from *Doctor Zhivago*. This booklet is now located in the collection of Irwin Holtzman at the Hoover Institution Archives.

With kind permission of the Pasternak Trust, the letters and the text of the inscription on the booklet of poems are published for the first time below, followed by detailed explanatory notes. The accompanying essay explores Bowra's contribution to Pasternak's literary reputation and its significance for the genesis of *Doctor Zhivago*.<sup>1</sup>

P.D.

### 1.

#### Letter from Pasternak to Bowra 25 December 1945<sup>2</sup>

Dear, dear Mr Bowra,

I lack words and knowledge even for an ordinary english letter. How should I find means to represent my admiration and gratitude to you? When I read in your beautiful "Heritage of Symbolism" your admirable lines about Rilke and Blok,<sup>3</sup> when afterwards I saw your deep, exact and melodious translation of the Twelve,<sup>4</sup> 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!!<sup>5</sup>

If once I knew that the fate will give me such sort of response,<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

I wish you more hours of peace, productivity and concentration and years of that lively and ever unexpected felicity, that makes the experience of an artist and a thinker.

Yours affectionately

B Pasternak

25.XII.1945

Moscow 17

Lavroushensky per. 17/19 lodg. 72

У Вас восхитительная русская антология.<sup>8</sup> Я поражаюсь, как у Вас хватает времени на такой необъятный круг интересов и работ. Я намеренно Вам написал по-английски, для того чтобы трудности и незнание языка положили границу моему порыву: а то я писал бы Вам без конца. Простите за доставленные Вам попутно страдания. Еще раз от души всего Вам наилучшего.

Ваш Б Пастернак

2.

**Letter from Pasternak to Bowra**

**26 June 1946<sup>9</sup>**

Дорогой мой Боура!

Хотите, я Вам посвящу свои заметки о Шекспире? Вы не представляете себе, как Вы меня всегда трогаете и как растет моя к Вам признательность!

Эти заметки написаны в качестве предисловия к собранию нескольких его трагедий (и одной хроники), выпускаемому издательством «Искусство».<sup>10</sup> У ВОКСа есть эта статья.<sup>11</sup> Разумеется, многое в ней не может быть интересно для англ<ийского> читателя, как

слишком ему известное. Но кое-что, мож<ет> быть, будет любопытно, как мнение человека, в течение трех лет очень сжившегося с некоторыми силами Шекспировского мира и законами их действия.<sup>12</sup> Как Вы думаете?

Я был страшно польщен и захвачен (он очень талантливо написан) Вашим отзывом о «Земном просторе» в «Horizon». <sup>13</sup> Эренбург очень умный и благородный человек с гораздо более широкой сферой деятельности, чем моя, а мож<ет> быть и хороший поэт и писатель. <sup>14</sup> Но ему как и покойному Ал<ексею> Толстому <sup>15</sup> и Горькому <sup>16</sup> и теперь Леонову <sup>17</sup> я не могу простить их робости и покорности. Это небольшие люди, неуважавшие себя. С них начался тот сервиллизм и то тупоумие, которые утверждали потом в виде тона, обязательного для всех. Я никого их ни в грош не ставлю и мне бывает больно стоять рядом с ними. Но, к счастью, никому и не придет в голову сблизать нас: это слишком великая «честь» для меня. <sup>18</sup>

Я был очень скромным человеком и хорошим товарищем. А теперь я их всех презираю. <sup>19</sup> Надо было найти в себе достаточно смелости и догадливости жить немного потруднее и незаметнее. <sup>20</sup> Тогда бы мы не дошли до такого одичания.

Мне также очень нравятся все Ваши стихотворные переводы. <sup>21</sup> Как чудесно они Вам удаются!!

Неужели я когда<->нибудь увижу Вас и Оксфорд? <sup>22</sup>

Крепко жму Вашу руку. Еще раз спасибо Вам за все.

Преданный Вам

Б Пастернак

26.VI.1946.

3.

**Inscription from Pasternak to Bowra  
on booklet of ten poems from *Doctor Zhivago*  
10 April 1948<sup>23</sup>**

To dear C.M. Bowra

as sign of my deepest ackno<w>ledgment with my warmest thanks for his rare and profound articles on Blok, Rilke and on myself – <sup>24</sup>

whole heartedly

Б Пастернак

10 апр. 1948

Москва

Show it, please, to my sister and others.

4.

**Letter from Pasternak to Bowra  
1 September 1956<sup>25</sup>**

The 1st of Sept. 1956

My dear and more than dear, thrice dear Bowra,  
I dare write you in this non-existent mock-English of my own invention especially to make you laugh at it.

Handfuls, armfuls, heaps of thanks to you. My gratitude to you is enormous. I like your books about the symbolists, about the ancient and contemporary art.<sup>26</sup> *They are much read in our philological circles!*<sup>27</sup>

You have invented me and gave me a renown, you made my life difficult and responsible by your overestimation.<sup>28</sup>

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)<sup>29</sup> and that it seems 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.

Please transmit Mr Wrenn my warmest thanks and best regards. I am and remain his perpetual debtor also.<sup>30</sup>

Write me if you should be wishing in every language you wish on my Moscow post-address:

*Москва В-17*

Лаврушинский пер. д.17/19 кв. 72

Борису Леонидовичу Пастернаку.

Yours truly

and devotedly

В Pasternak

## 5.

**Letter from Pasternak to Bowra  
5 November 1956<sup>31</sup>**

5 XI 56

Dear Bowra! My present foreign-letter-language is French. As an exercise, in order to remember my forgotten or never known English I shall write you letters from time to time in this odd unintelligible wrong dialect of mine. In addition to the content (I shall write them on puzzling difficult topics) it will form a good comic-papers stuff.

Please hasten our common friends to accelerate their plans about my writings, if indeed those writings are welcome, as it was said in personal meeting, perhaps only for courtesy, and without real ground.<sup>32</sup>

My sister Лидия Леонидовна will hand you a dozen of my new verses of this autumn.<sup>33</sup> I know your point of view in “Creative experiment,” preserve it. Be absolutely free towards these sheets and dispose of them as you please.<sup>34</sup>

Countless heartily thanks and greetings!

Your

B Pasternak

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Cliff Davies, the archivist of Wadham College, Oxford, for granting me access to Bowra’s papers, and to the staff of the Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California, for their assistance. Evgenii Borisovich Pasternak and Elena Vladimirovna Pasternak kindly answered my queries about the correspondence in Oxford in November 2007. I would also like to thank Lazar Fleishman for inviting me to present these materials at the conference held at Stanford University in October 2007 to mark fifty years since the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* and for his helpful contributions to my research.

<sup>2</sup> Archive of Wadham College, Oxford. Bowra Papers. Manuscript, purple ink, one sheet; no envelope. Pasternak’s first letter to Bowra was sent through their mutual friend, Isaiah Berlin, who returned to England for the winter holidays during his period of employment at the British Embassy in Moscow (September 1945 to April 1946). In a letter of 11–24 December 1945 to his sisters Josephine and Lydia Pasternak, written just before this letter and also brought back to Oxford by Berlin, Pasternak commented on the significance for him of Bowra’s translations and books and noted that he would probably write to him (Boris Pasternak. *Polnoe*

*sobranie sochinenii s prilozheniiami*, 11 vols., ed. by E.B. Pasternak and E.V. Pasternak, Moscow: Slovo, 2004–2005, 9, pp. 429–430). In a letter to Herbert Reid and Stefan Schimanski, written in a mixture of English and Russian on the same date as his first letter to Bowra (25 December 1945), Pasternak asked Schimanski (in Russian) to pass his greetings to Bowra and to tell him, in case he did not have time to write to him directly, that his books were as close to his desk as the window and inspired him in a similar way, while the sound of Bowra's name played on his imagination like music (Pasternak, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, p. 435; original text first published in 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), 333–334; reprinted in Lazar' Fleishman. *Ot Pushkina k Pasternaku: Izbrannye raboty po poetike i istorii russkoi literatury* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2006), pp. 722–725.

<sup>3</sup> C.M. Bowra. *The Heritage of Symbolism* (London: Macmillan, 1943), explores the work of five poets: Paul Valéry (Chapter II), Rainer Maria Rilke (Chapter III), Stefan George (Chapter IV), Alexander Blok (Chapter V), and William Butler Yeats (Chapter VI). The chapter on Blok ends with a long discussion of "The Twelve", including several extracts from Bowra's translation of the poem (pp. 171–177). Pasternak evidently singled out the chapters on Rilke and Blok in his letter because of the particular affinity he felt for their work. Pasternak's copy of *The Heritage of Symbolism* still stood on the shelves of his library at Peredelkino in the early 1980s (written communication to the author from E.V. Pasternak, 21–22 December 2007).

<sup>4</sup> The full text of Bowra's translation of Blok's "The Twelve", prefaced by a short note on the poem, was first published in *Horizon*, vol. 10, no. 55, July 1944, pp. 5–13 (subsequently reprinted in *A Second Book of Russian Verse*, tr. into English by various hands and ed. by C.M. Bowra, London: Macmillan, 1948, pp. 76–87). On 25 October 1945 Bowra sent "some versions from Blok" to Isaiah Berlin in Moscow with a request to pass these on to Kornei Chukovskii with his "warmest regards." These versions may well have included his translation of "The Twelve" from *Horizon*, which Chukovskii would certainly have shown to Pasternak. At the end of a later letter of 5 November 1945 Bowra wrote to Berlin: "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." (Copies of Bowra's letters to Isaiah Berlin of 25 October <1945> and 5 November 1945, deposited with the Bowra Papers, Archive of Wadham College, Oxford.) It is likely that the two books referred to by Bowra in his letter to Berlin are the same ones mentioned by Pasternak in his first letter to Bowra, i.e. *The Heritage of Symbolism* (1943) and *A Book of Russian Verse* (1943).

<sup>5</sup> Pasternak is evidently referring to Bowra's translations of four of his poems from *Temy i var'iatsii* (1923), published four months earlier in *Horizon*, vol. 12, no. 69, September 1945, pp. 153–155: "In the Wood" ("V lesu," 1917, fourth poem in the cycle "Neskuchnyi sad"); "So they begin. With two years gone..." ("Tak nachinaiat. Goda v dva...", 1921, third poem in the cycle "Ia ikh mog pozabyt'"); "We're few, perhaps not more than three..." ("Nas malo. Nas, mozhnet byt', troe...", 1921, fourth poem in the cycle "Ia ikh mog pozabyt'"); "Stars raced headlong. Seaward headlands lathered..." ("Mchalis' zvezdy. V more mylis' mysy...", third variation in the cycle "Tema s var'iatsiiami"). Pasternak probably received a copy of this issue of *Horizon* from Bowra via Isaiah Berlin; on 25 October <1945> Bowra informed Isaiah Berlin that he had sent him "two numbers of *Horizon* with Pasternakiana" (C.M. Bowra, Letter to I. Berlin of 25 October <1945>; copy deposited with the Bowra Papers in the Archive of Wadham College, Oxford). Pasternak mentions *Horizon* approvingly in his letter of 11–24 December 1945 to his sisters (Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, p. 430). It is much less likely that he is referring to the translations published in Bowra's first *Book of Russian Verse*, as this anthology only included one poem by Pasternak and is discussed separately in the postscriptum to his letter.

<sup>6</sup> In his letter of 11–24 December 1945 to his sisters Pasternak also described his discovery of Bowra's translations and writings on poetry as an encounter with fate: «это <...> точки чудодейственного какого-то необъяснимого моего соприкосновенья с судьбою и временем, это мистерия или роман» (Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, p. 430).

<sup>7</sup> The four poems chosen by Bowra for translation are examples of Pasternak's early verse style, densely packed with impressionistic images and based on subjective associations, sometimes difficult for the reader to unravel. From the mid-1940s onwards Pasternak often criticised the "excesses" of his early verse and wrote poetry in a quite different manner, reflecting his conscious desire to achieve a greater simplicity of tone and transparency of meaning.

<sup>8</sup> *A Book of Russian Verse*, tr. into English by various hands and ed. by C.M. Bowra (London: Macmillan, 1943), p. 120, includes one poem by Pasternak in Bowra's translation: "In the breeze, on a bough that is asking..." ("Ty v vetre, vetkoi probuiushchem..."), the second poem of "Devochka" from *Sestra moia – zhizn'* (1922). This anthology was evidently one of the two books sent by Bowra to Isaiah Berlin for Chukovskii and Pasternak on 5 November 1945; see note 4 above.

<sup>9</sup> Archive of Wadham College, Oxford. Bowra Papers. Manuscript, purple ink, one sheet, folded in half to form two pages; no envelope. The letter was sent through Miss Anna Holdcroft, a friend of Isaiah Berlin, Raisa Lomonosova, and the Pasternak sisters, who worked in Moscow from November 1944 to 30 December

1948, first for the Ministry of Information, then for the Foreign Office. Brief outlines of her career appear under the name "Annie Holdcroft" in the "Statement of Services" section of *The Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Year Book* from 1950 to 1958. According to the information provided in these entries, she was born on 8 December 1894, employed in the War Office as a First Class Translator from April 1921, and appointed to the War Office from December 1933. In November 1944 she transferred to the Ministry of Information and was appointed to Moscow from 24 November. On 24 July 1945 she was granted the local diplomatic rank of Attaché. She transferred to the Foreign Office on 1 April 1946 whilst still serving at Moscow. On 30 December 1948 she returned to the United Kingdom and assimilated to Branch B of the Foreign Office as a Grade 4 officer. In October 1953 she went back to Moscow to serve as 2nd Secretary at the British Embassy, followed by her retirement in February 1957. In the annual staff lists for the British Embassy at Moscow given in *The Foreign Office List* for 1947, 1948 and 1949, her name appears as "Miss A. Holdcroft" (from 1949, followed by MBE), holding the post of "Attaché (Information)". In the issues for 1954 to 1957 her name reappears, now listed as 2nd Secretary. See *The Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Year Book*, ed. for Godfrey E.P. Hertslet by Members of the staff of the Foreign Office, London: Harrison and Sons (issues from 1946 to 1958). According to information provided in a personal letter of 6 March 2008 from the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood at St James's Palace, Miss Holdcroft was appointed a Member of the Civil Division of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) on 10 June 1948 in recognition of her services in the Information Department of the British Embassy in Moscow. She died on 30 January 1987, and an announcement of her death appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on 2 February 1987. Evidence of her interest in Russian literature can be found in her translation of Leonid Andreev's story "In the North", published in *The Slavonic Year-Book*, an issue of *Slavonic and East European Review*, 1939, vol.19, pp. 14–18. I am indebted to Richard D. Davies of the Leeds Russian Archive for his generous help in tracing all this information.

In the summer of 1946 Miss Holdcroft visited Pasternak, who mentions her very warmly (first as "Mrs. Halcroft", then as "Mrs Голкрофт") in his letters to Isaiah Berlin and his sister Lydia, both written on 26 June 1946, the same date as his second letter to Bowra (Pasternak, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, p. 461–462). In a report of 18 February 1959 the KGB noted Pasternak's meetings in 1947 with the British Embassy employee "Холдкрофт" and his plans to give her various literary materials to send abroad, including *Doctor Zhivago* ("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. 183). During her interrogation from 12 October 1949 to 5 July 1950 Ol'ga Ivinskaia was questioned about her

alleged contacts with Anna Ivanovna “Холдкрофт”, incorrectly identified in the transcript of the interrogation as Consul at the British Embassy (Irina Emel’ianova. *Legendy Potapovskogo pereulka. B. Pasternak. A. Efron. V. Shalamov. Vos-pominaniia i pis’ma*, Moscow: Ellis Lak, 1997, p. 47; reprinted in Irina Emel’ianova. *Pasternak i Ivinskaia*, Moscow: Vagrius, 2006, p. 121).

<sup>10</sup> Pasternak wrote the first version of his notes on translating Shakespeare in late May and June 1946 as a preface to the forthcoming edition of his translations of Shakespeare’s plays, planned by “Iskusstvo”. At this stage the notes covered the five plays that he had already finished translating, due for inclusion in the book: *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra, Othello*, and *Henry IV*, parts 1 and 2. Although the publishers had originally invited Pasternak to write the preface freely according to his own wishes, they changed their mind after receiving his notes in June (see Pasternak’s letter of 26 June 1946 to his sister Lydia, in Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, p. 464) and did not include his preface in the edition that came out four years later (*Vil’iam Shekspir v perevode Borisa Pasternaka*, ed. by M.M. Morozov, 2 vols., Moscow and Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1949–1950). A slightly abridged English translation of the notes appeared in 1946 (without the name of the translator) in the monthly journal *Soviet Literature*, published in Moscow for distribution abroad (Boris Pasternak, “Some Remarks by a Translator of Shakespeare”, *Soviet Literature*, no. 9, September 1946, pp. 51–57). A second English translation of just four sections from the notes (“Poeticheskii stil’ Shekspira”, “Ritm Shekspira”, “Gamlet”, “O nachale tragi-cheskogo i komicheskogo u Shekspira”) followed in 1949 in the first issue of the London literary magazine *Arena*, edited by John Davenport, Jack Lindsay, and Randall Swingler; other contributors to the same issue included Edith Sitwell, Paul Eluard, Andre Illes, Nikolai Tikhonov, and Albert Camus (Boris Pasternak, “Shakespeare’s Imagery and Rhythm”, tr. by Peter Meadows, *Arena*, 1949, no. 1, pp. 33–37).

The notes were not published in Russian until 1956, when a revised and expanded version with new sections on *King Lear* and *Macbeth* was included in the first issue of new literary miscellany (Boris Pasternak, “Zametki k perevodam shekspirovskikh tragedii”, in *Literaturnaia Moskva*, Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1956, pp. 794–809). A third English translation of the full Russian text appeared in September 1958, timed to coincide with the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* in English (Boris Pasternak, “Translating Shakespeare”, tr. by Manya Harari, *The Twentieth Century*, September 1958, vol. 164, no. 979, pp. 213–228). For the full Russian text, variants, and notes, see “Zamechaniia k perevodam iz Shekspira” (1946, 1956), in Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5, pp. 72–90, 475–479, 554–564.

On the same date as this letter was written (26 June 1946), Pasternak wrote to his sister Lydia in Oxford about the preface, outlining the story of its commission by "Iskusstvo" and the subsequent problems over its publication; he enclosed four copies of the essay, asking Lydia to pass three copies to Isaiah Berlin for distribution to Berlin, Bowra and Stefan Schimanski, and raised the possibility of its publication in English (*ibid.*, 9, pp. 464–65).

On 26 June 1946 Pasternak also wrote to Isaiah Berlin, asking him to pass copies of the essay to Bowra and Schimanski, discussing possible ways of adapting it for publication in England, and suggesting a neutral publication outlet such as the *TLS*, rather than *Horizon* (*ibid.*, 9, p. 461–462). On the same date he also asked Stefan Schimanski to consider the possibility of publishing the notes. In a postscriptum, he indicated that the essay had been deposited with VOKS and that its publication abroad would therefore not be illegal (*ibid.*, 9, pp. 466–67).

Bowra, Schimanski, and Berlin were evidently not able to implement Pasternak's suggestions straight away. Some five months later, in a telegram of 16 November 1946, Pasternak asked his sisters whether they had received his "summer Shakespeare article" and enquired about its "further fate" (Boris Pasternak. *Pis'ma k roditeliam i sestram*, ed. by E.B.Pasternak and E.V.Pasternak, *Stanford Slavic Studies*, 1998, 2, p. 245). In February 1947 he was still preoccupied with the question of its publication in England. In a letter of 19 February 1947 to Isaiah Berlin, a certain "Anna" (evidently Annie Holdcroft, who knew both Berlin and Pasternak; see note 9 above) reported on her recent meetings with Pasternak since her return to Moscow:

"You will of course be interested most in B.L. I have seen him twice since my return, the last time only two days ago. He is in wonderful spirits and lives exclusively in his work. He is writing now a long novel "not for publication at present". The first part will incorporate the 1914 war. He has promised to read sections of it to me. He is an amazing man, quite above existing conditions, which he tries to ignore and apparently succeeds in doing so. They are still in the same flat and he says he can exist until May. What will happen after that he does not know. He is wonderfully serene and quite calm. He has revised "Hamlet", which now pleases him more than the original version. He is very anxious to have the Preface published, if possible in the "Horizon". You will have noticed that it has been published in "Soviet Literature">, No 9 for 1946, so am sure it is quite safe to publish it now. When I saw him in December he was much more depressed than he is now. Then he was very miserable at being cut off from the world of thought in other countries and felt he must make his contribution whatever the cost. He said he would gladly give his life for the most insignificant contribution – he was then anxious to have the Preface published irrespective of whether it was published here or not. His wife of course was terrified, so, possibly wrongly, I

decided not to write to you then. I think the translation could be improved on the one appearing in Soviet Lit., but that you will decide.”

(Bodleian Library, Oxford. The Isaiah Berlin Papers. Box 115, fols.72–73. I am most grateful to Roman Timenchik for this citation, communicated to me by Lazar Fleishman).

It seems likely that the abridged translation by Peter Meadows of four sections from the notes, published in the first issue of *Arena* in 1949, resulted from the separate or combined efforts of Bowra, Schimanski, Berlin, and Holdcroft. No typescript copies of the essay have been located in the Archive of the Pasternak Trust at Oxford, or among the Bowra Papers held at Wadham College, Oxford.

For further comments by Pasternak on the writing of the notes and their significance as a statement of his views on poetry, see his letters to Ol'ga Freidenberg of 31 May and 5 October 1946 (Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, pp. 458, 470).

<sup>11</sup> VOKS, “Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnykh svyazei s zagranitse” (1925–1958), the organization responsible for cultural links between the Soviet Union and foreign countries. The copy of the notes deposited with VOKS evidently led to their publication in an English translation in *Soviet Literature* in 1946.

<sup>12</sup> It is not entirely clear why Pasternak refers to a period of three years, since by June 1946 he had already been involved in translating Shakespeare's plays for over seven years; he may have regarded the years from 1943 to 1946 as a particularly intense period of his immersion in Shakespeare's world. In 1939 he translated *Hamlet* (published in 1940), in 1941–1942 *Romeo and Juliet* (1943), in 1943 *Antony and Cleopatra* (1944), in 1944 *Othello* (1945), in 1945–1946 *Henry IV*, parts 1 and 2 (1948), and in 1946–1947 *King Lear* (1949). His translation of *Macbeth* was carried out later in 1950 and published in 1951.

Pasternak's remark on his close familiarity with the forces at work in Shakespeare's world can be understood both literally, as a comment on his inside knowledge of the dynamics of the plays, and metaphorically, as an allusion to his experience of some of these forces in his own life (as, for example, in the case of his own identification with Hamlet as a model of Christian self-sacrifice through the persona of Doctor Zhivago).

<sup>13</sup> Pasternak's collection *Zemnoi prostor. Stikhi* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1945) appeared early in the year. In August 1945 Bowra published a joint review of this book together with Il'ia Ehrenburg's *Stikhi o voine* (1943) and Pasternak's translation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1944) (C.M. Bowra, “Two Soviet Poets”, *Horizon*, vol.12, no. 68, August 1945, pp. 141–144). Pasternak probably received a copy of this issue of *Horizon* from Bowra via Isaiah Berlin; on 25 October <1945> Bowra informed Isaiah Berlin that he had sent him “two numbers of *Horizon* with Pasternakiana” (C.M. Bowra, Letter to I. Berlin of 25

October <1945>; copy deposited with the Bowra Papers in the Archive of Wadham College, Oxford). A Russian translation of the same article (with some cuts) was published five months later (S.M. Boura <C.M. Bowra>, "Stikhi Erenburga i Pasternaka", *Britanskii soiuznik*, no. 5, 3 February 1946, p. 11).

<sup>14</sup> Il'ia Ehrenburg, the prolific author of several collections of poems, short stories, novels, memoirs, journalism, and translations, spent many years working in France in the 1930s. Following his return to Moscow in 1941, he won the Stalin Prize for his novel *Padenie Parizha* (*The Fall of Paris*, 1941) in 1942. He was one of the organizers of the 1935 International Anti-Fascist Congress of Writers in France and was instrumental in bringing Pasternak (whose work he deeply admired) to the Congress. His fame as a journalist reached a pinnacle in Soviet Russia during the Second World War. From the late 1940s, as a well-known public figure, he often represented the Soviet Union abroad.

<sup>15</sup> Aleksei Tolstoi wrote short stories, historical novels, and science fiction. After a brief period of voluntary exile in Berlin and Paris following the Revolution, he returned to the Soviet Union in 1923. He was awarded the Stalin Prize three times: in 1941 for his novel *Petr Pervyi* (*Peter the Great*), in 1942 for his trilogy on the Revolution, *Khozhdenie po mukam* (*Road to Calvary*, 1922–1941), and in 1946, posthumously, for his pair of plays *Ivan Grozny* (*Ivan the Terrible*, 1943), which contributed to the official re-evaluation of this monarch during the late Stalinist period.

<sup>16</sup> Maksim Gorky wrote short stories, novels, plays, and an autobiography. After leaving Russia in 1921, he settled in Sorrento for health reasons and continued to cooperate with the Soviet régime. Following his triumphant return to Russia in 1931, he played a leading role at the first Writers' Union Congress of 1934 and presided over the institutionalisation of socialist realism.

<sup>17</sup> The novelist and playwright Leonid Leonov started his career in the 1920s as a writer of ornamentalist prose and then became increasingly involved in the organization of official literary life. His novel *Sot'* (*River*, 1930) on the construction of a paper factory was one of the earliest works to reflect the first Five-Year Plan of 1928, and *Doroga na okean* (*Road to the Ocean*, 1935) was the first novel to implement the principles of socialist realism.

<sup>18</sup> Pasternak may have been obliquely hinting that he did not entirely appreciate finding his work juxtaposed and compared with Ehrenburg's in Bowra's review. The title, "Two Soviet Poets", suggests two figures of equal standing. Bowra describes Ehrenburg and Pasternak as "eminent Soviet writers" with "reputations outside their own country": "Though both are of the same generation, their art is remarkably different, and a comparison between them is illuminating for any study of literature in the Soviets" (Bowra, "Two Soviet Poets", p. 141).

<sup>19</sup> Compare Pasternak's comment in his letter to Nadezhda Mandel'shtam of November 1945: «Не только никаких Тихоновых и большинства Союза нет для меня и я их отрицаю, но я не упускаю случая открыто и публично об этом заявлять». — Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, p. 421.

<sup>20</sup> Similar feelings were expressed by Pasternak in several poems of the period. “Drozdy” (“Thrushes,” 1941), for example, from *Zemnoi prostor*, ends with the following lines:

Таков притон дроздов тенистый.  
Они в неубранном бору  
Живут, как жить должны артисты.  
Я тоже с них пример беру.

Pasternak may have noticed that Bowra had singled out this stanza for quotation in his review of the collection published in *Horizon* (Bowra, “Two Soviet Poets”, p. 144):

Such is the shady den of thrushes,  
Who in the shady pine-wood live  
As artists ought to live. I also  
Take the example that they give.

(The section on this poem was cut from the Russian translation of the article.)

<sup>21</sup> Pasternak may be referring once more to all of Bowra's translations in *A Book of Russian Verse* (1943). He may also have in mind the translations included in Bowra's joint review of the poetry of Ehrenburg and Pasternak, or his versions of four poems by Pasternak, both published in *Horizon* in August and September 1945.

<sup>22</sup> In his correspondence with his sisters in Oxford Pasternak occasionally mentions the possibility of a visit to England. See, for example, his letter to his sisters of 11–24 December 1945 – Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, pp. 426, 432–433.

<sup>23</sup> Hoover Institution Archives. Collection of Irwin Holtzman, Box 22, Folder 14. Reproduced in: Lazar Fleishman. *Boris Pasternak: The Poet and His Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), between pp. 176–177. A booklet of twenty-two leaves (18 cm x 22 cm), tied together with a yellow and green silk cord, comprising the typewritten text of ten poems from *Doctor Zhivago*. The inscription to Bowra, written in brown ink in Pasternak's flowing hand and dated 10 April 1948, appears on the first leaf. The next leaf (unnumbered) is headed “Stikhi iz romana v proze”. The remaining leaves (numbered 1–20) contain the following poems: “Gamlet” (1), “Mart” (2), “Na Strastnoi” (3–5), “Ob'iasnenie” (6–7), “Bab'e leto” (8), “Zimniaia noch'” (9–10), “Rozhdestvenskaia zvezda” (11–14), “Rassvet” (15–16), “Chudo” (17–18), “Zemlia” (19–20). Three of these poems (“Mart”, “Bab'e leto”, “Zimniaia noch'”) were published,

without reference to the novel, in the same year in Pasternak's *Izbrannoe* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1948), pp. 151, 152, 154. In the twenty-five "Stikhotvoreniiia Iuriiia Zhivago" that make up the last chapter of the novel, the poems included in the booklet occur in the same order, numbered 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21. There are some minor differences of capitalisation, layout, and language between the typewritten poems in the booklet and the published text.

On 6 April 1948 Pasternak sent a similar typescript booklet containing exactly the same ten poems from the novel to M.P.Gromov (Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, pp. 515–516). Many such booklets of poems from the novel (possibly up to one hundred) were produced at Pasternak's request by Marina Kazimirovna Baranovich (1901–1975), the copy-typist of several versions of *Doktor Zhivago*, for distribution to friends (oral communication to the author from E.B.Pasternak and E.V.Pasternak, Oxford, 14 November 2007).

Pasternak evidently sent his booklet of poems to Bowra in April 1948 via Desmond Patrick <Paddy> Costello, a classicist and Russian scholar with a degree from Trinity College, Cambridge, employed as Third Secretary at the New Zealand Embassy in Moscow from 1945 to 1950 (oral communication to the author from E.B.Pasternak and E.V.Pasternak, Oxford, 14 November 2007). On Costello's left-wing sympathies and reputation as a spy, see the biography by James McNeish. *The Sixth Man* (Vintage New Zealand, 2007).

A few months later, on 12 December 1948, Pasternak wrote to his relations in Oxford (again via Costello), informing them that he would try to send them the "half" of *Doktor Zhivago* that was so far completed, and asking them to arrange for three copies to be typed «чтобы потом можно было дать почитать узкому кругу интересующихся, начиная с Боуры, Шиманского и других» (Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, p. 555).

Ten years later, in his review of *Doctor Zhivago*, Bowra commented on the quality of the poems "from what is known of the Russian originals" and emphasised their crucial importance in the novel (C.M.Bowra, "A Truly Great Work of Art", *Time and Tide*, 6 September 1958, pp. 1084–1085).

<sup>24</sup> This part of the inscription suggests an underlying connection in Pasternak's mind between Bowra's writing on Blok and Rilke in *The Heritage of Symbolism* (1943) and his criticism of Pasternak's work.

<sup>25</sup> Archive of Wadham College, Oxford. Bowra Papers. Manuscript, purple ink, one sheet; no envelope. This letter, although dated 1 September 1956, was evidently not sent until a month later. The courier on this occasion was the Oxford émigré historian G.M.Katkov, a friend of the Pasternak sisters, who visited Pasternak on 13 September 1956 and discussed with him plans for the publication of *Doktor Zhivago*. On 1 October 1956 Pasternak wrote to his sisters in Oxford: «я не знаю адреса Bowra и прилагаю несколько слов к нему на ужасном англий-

ском языке, над которым будете смеяться вы сами, он и ваши дети. Он давно раззвонил меня по всему свету, и я не знаю, какими словами мне бранить и благодарить его». – Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 10, p. 177.

<sup>26</sup> Pasternak is probably referring to *The Heritage of Symbolism* (London: Macmillan, 1943), *From Virgil to Milton* (London: Macmillan, 1945), *The Creative Experiment* (New York: Grove Press, 1948, and London: Macmillan, 1949). In a letter to his sisters of 11–24 December 1945 Pasternak mentions Bowra's translations, *The Heritage of Symbolism*, and *From Virgil to Milton*. In a letter of 12 November 1946 to Ol'ga Freidenberg he mentions the last two books again, as well as *A Book of Russian Verse* (1943); in a later letter to her of 7 August 1949 he also refers to *A Second Book of Russian Verse* (1948) and *The Creative Experiment* – Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, pp. 429–430, 476, 575.

In 1949 Pasternak received a copy of *The Creative Experiment* (London: Macmillan, 1949), inscribed by the author: “With warmest admiration from C.M.Bowra”. This copy survived among the books of Ol'ga Ivinskaia and was subsequently given to Evgenii Pasternak by Ivinskaia's daughter, Irina Emel'ianova, before she emigrated from the Soviet Union (oral communication to the author from E.B.Pasternak and E.V.Pasternak, Oxford, 14 November 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Pasternak knew that Bowra was well regarded by classical philologists from his correspondence with his cousin Ol'ga Freidenberg, a professor at the Department of Ancient Languages of Leningrad State University. In a letter of 3 November 1946 she asked Pasternak whether the Bowra who was his critic and translator (as she had recently heard from a friend) was the same Bowra as the author of *Greek Lyric Poetry: From Alcman to Simonides* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936). She added that there was much that was fresh in Bowra's book; he had presented material in his interpretation of Alcman that she had been cherishing for her own study of the origins of lyric poetry. On 12 November 1946 Pasternak responded to her question with a brief sketch of Bowra (evidently culled from his conversations with Isaiah Berlin), linking his study of Russian to his mastery of ancient Greek, comparing his translations of Akhmatova to his lectures on Sappho, and listing some of his works. — *Perepiska Borisa Pasternaka*, ed. by E.B.Pasternak and E.V.Pasternak (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), pp. 231–232.

Pasternak's statement about the popularity of Bowra's works in Russia remains true to the present day; see, for example, the recent translation of his classic study, *Heroic Poetry* (1952): *Geroicheskaia poeziia*, tr. with an introductory essay by N.P.Grintser and I.V.Ershova (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> Evidently a reference to Bowra's chapter on Pasternak's early verse in *The Creative Experiment* (“Boris Pasternak, 1917–1923”), mentioned explicitly in

Pasternak's next letter, as well as to Bowra's earlier translations of his verse and reviews of his work.

<sup>29</sup> Pasternak made the final corrections to the typescript of *Doktor Zhivago* in October and November 1955 before sending it off to the editors of *Novyi mir* in January 1956. In July 1956 he commented that it was unlikely that the editor of *Literaturnaia Moskva* would agree to publish extracts from his novel due to its "nepriemlemost'" (letter to K.G.Paustovskii of 12 July 1956, in Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 10, pp. 144–145). In mid-September 1956, two weeks after writing this letter, he received a letter of rejection from the editors of *Novyi mir*.

When Isaiah Berlin returned to Oxford from his visit to Moscow in the late summer of 1956, he brought with him the typescript of *Doktor Zhivago*. In a letter of 14 August 1956 Pasternak instructed his sisters to distribute copies of this typescript to various prominent Russians in Oxford (Katkov, Obolensky, Konovalov), «и, обязательно Вовр'е». — Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 10, p. 160. In his letter to Bowra Pasternak, clearly hoping that Bowra would by now have received a copy of this typescript from Berlin, presents his completed novel as the justification of Bowra's earlier "exaggerations" about the value of his work.

<sup>30</sup> In June 1945 Charles Lesley Wrenn (1895–1969), then Professor at the Department of English Language and Literature of London University, published an article praising Pasternak's translations of Shakespeare in the weekly newspaper *Britanskii soiuznik*, a British Ministry of Information publication produced in Moscow at the British Embassy under the guidance of George Reavey (K.L.Renn, "Shekspir v perevodakh Pasternaka", *Britanskii soiuznik*, no. 22, 3 June 1945, p. 8). Pasternak received a copy of this article in June 1945; see his references to Wrenn's high regard for his translations in his letters to S.N.Durylin of 20 June 1945 and to M.B.Khrapchenko of 18 December 1945. — Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, pp. 389, 425.

Wrenn was also responsible for bolstering Pasternak's reputation in England. On 27 February 1951, now Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at the University of Oxford, he delivered an Ilchester lecture on Pasternak, subsequently published as an essay (C.L.Wrenn, "Boris Pasternak", *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, vol. 2, 1951, pp. 82–97). Pasternak may have seen this essay, or heard about it from his sisters, who would almost certainly have been present at the lecture. On 8 November 1949, when Bowra delivered an Ilchester lecture on Pushkin (published in the first issue of *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, vol. 1, 1950), Josephine Pasternak was in the audience. Bowra wrote to her on 12 November <1949> to thank her for her "charming letter": "I was very frightened when I saw you in the audience! And I fear you must have been appalled by my extremely English pronunciation of Russian" (Hoover Institution Archives, Pasternak Family Papers, Box 14, Folder 19).

<sup>31</sup> Archive of Wadham College, Oxford. Bowra Papers. Manuscript, purple ink, one sheet; no envelope.

<sup>32</sup> The “common friends” and “personal meeting” refer to Pasternak’s meetings with Isaiah Berlin, who spent a few weeks in Moscow in the late summer of 1956, and George Katkov, who visited him at Peredelkino on 13 September 1956. In asking Bowra to get these friends to accelerate their plans for his “writings”, Pasternak probably had in mind two different works: most obviously, *Doktor Zhivago*, but also his autobiographical essay, completed in the summer of 1956. In August and September 1956 Pasternak discussed with Isaiah Berlin and George Katkov plans for the publication and translation of these two works, which were both brought back to England by Berlin in the late summer of 1956. Pasternak later arranged for Katkov to receive a further copy of his novel from the French Slavist Hélène Peltier. See Pasternak’s letters to his sisters of 14 August, 1 October, 10 October, 21–25 October, 4 November, and 23 November 1956, in Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 10, pp. 160, 176, 179–180, 183–184, 190–191, 189–190.

The general doubts that Pasternak expresses in his letter to Bowra about the level of interest in his writings are echoed in his letters to his sisters in relation to the autobiographical essay. In his letter of 4 November 1956 to Lydia (sent together with his letter to Bowra of 5 November), he enquired about the fate of the essay: «От вас бывали тут делегации. У некоторых являлась мысль, что очерк подошел бы для какого-нибудь журнала вроде Encounter или какого-нибудь французского его подобия. Отчего это не осуществлено? Материал отвергнут как недостаточно любопытный?» (*ibid.*, 10, p. 190-191). On 23 November 1956 he continued in the same vein: «Но, может быть, у Б<ерлина> или его друзей нет времени, или пропало желание, или они встретили какое-нибудь другое препятствие» (*ibid.*, 10, pp. 189–190).

Pasternak’s fears were unfounded: his autobiographical essay was published in an English translation in 1959, soon after the English version of *Doctor Zhivago* appeared in 1958 (Boris Pasternak. *An Essay in Autobiography*, with an introduction by Edward Crankshaw, tr. by Manya Harari, London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1959).

<sup>33</sup> By the end of 1956 Pasternak had written twenty-one new poems, later included in his last collection *Kogda razguliaetsia. 1956–1959*. Nine of these poems were published in September and October 1956, not long before this letter was written (eight in *Znamia*, 1956, no. 9, and one in *Novyi mir*, 1956, no. 10). Some of the poems of this period on autumnal themes were originally grouped in a cycle entitled “Osennie stikhotvoreniia” (“Zamorozki”, “Nochnoi veter”, “Zolotaia osen”). E.B.Pasternak notes that M.K.Baranovich typed up copies of a cycle of poems written by Pasternak in the autumn of 1956 and prepared hand-sewn

booklets for distribution to his friends (*Sushchestvovan'ia tkan'skvoznaia: Boris Pasternak. Perepiska s Evgeniei Pasternak*, Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1998, p. 525). The first such collection, made in the autumn of 1956 and headed "Chetyrnadsat' stikhotvoreniĭ", may have been similar to the "dozen of my new verses of this autumn" that Pasternak mentions in his letter to Bowra. For further details on the poems of this period, their dates of composition and publication, see the notes in Pasternak. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 2, pp. 429–441.

In a letter dated 4 November 1956 (evidently finished on 5 November), Pasternak wrote to his sister Lydia, enclosing some recent poems and his letter to Bowra, with instructions to pass these to Bowra: «Прилагаю к письму несколько новых своих стихотворений, главным образом для Bowra, может быть, они ему понадобятся или будут как-нибудь интересны. <...> Если прилагаемая тарабарщина к Бауре заставит тебя краснеть по ее фантастической безграмотности (ведь, годами не пользуешься иностранными языками и все забывается, да и без практики не усваивалось никогда), уничтожь письмо и передай только стихотворения» (Pasternak. *Pis'ma k roditeliam i sestram*, 2, pp. 259–260).

No set of a dozen new verses from autumn 1956 corresponding to the description in this letter has been located in the Archive of the Pasternak Trust at Oxford, or among the Bowra Papers at Wadham College, Oxford.

<sup>34</sup> Pasternak was evidently hoping that Bowra would publish, translate, or review his latest verse. Although this did not happen immediately, in 1960 Bowra wrote a very favourable review of Boris Pasternak. *Poems 1955–1959*, tr. by Michael Harari, London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1960 (C.M. Bowra, "After Zhivago." Unidentified newspaper clipping, dated by hand 20 November 1960. Hoover Institution Archives, Gleb Struve Papers, Box 114, Folder 3). In 1962 he wrote the foreword to a new bilingual edition of the poems from *Doktor Zhivago* and *Kogda razguliaetsia* (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). (When Pasternak received a parcel from Oxford containing Kamen's translations in 1959, he was highly critical; see his letter to Josephine of 22 January 1959, in Pasternak. *Pis'ma k roditeliam i sestram*, 2, p. 306.) Bowra also referred to *Kogda razguliaetsia* and discussed poems from the collection such as "My Soul" ("Dusha"), "The Change" ("Peremena"), "Round the Corner" ("Za povorotom"), "The Nobel Prize" ("Nobelevskaia premiia") in one of his last works, based on lectures delivered at the Queen's University, Belfast in May 1965 (C.M. Bowra. *Poetry and Politics. 1900–1960*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966, pp. 84–87).