

Anna Ljunggren. *Juvenilia B. Pasternaka: 6 fragmentov o Relikvimini*. Almqvist & Wiksell, Stockholm, 1984. 182 pages. No price (paper).

'It's good when a creator, like a child's balloon, is linked by a thread to his youth and childhood', Pasternak's cousin wrote to him in 1954. This book makes vivid that link, in Pasternak's own case, by offering six prose fragments preserved from his student years, 1911-13, with three chapters of commentary on them. 'Seeds' is a more usable image than balloon-string; these writings are strictly seminal. Here in concentrated form - in its origin! - is the poet's lifelong concern with art's origination in the 'animating' of the 'inanimate'. Pasternak was always to be fascinated by the moment of changing 'from cold axles to hot', of making the immobile start moving, and much in these Fragments is about this - in Fragment 6 most explicitly, when the 'veneer of this world' begins to dance. Here at its intensest is the characteristic Pasternakian 'metonymy': the behaviour of these fields, streets and rooms as the poet moves through them, absorbed and absorbing, will become that of the gardens and paths of *My Sister life* and of the wider landscapes of *Doctor Zhivago*. And here is the first 'effacement of character', which Pasternak said was his aim in that novel. Fragment 2, starting 'Vot idyot Relikvimini...' proceeds to say no more about him except that 'he goes into the forest' or 'sinks into the ice-holes of the thicket': instead it describes what comes to life by his seeing it - 'twigs, drunken, drowsed and hoarsened', thistles looking like landsurveyors. (These landsurveyors recur both in a poem a decade and a half later and in the novel four decades later.) Here too, in Fragment 4, where the ecstatic poet experiences the boundaries of objects as 'gods' and all surrounding phenomena as hymning their outlines - an idea which (we learn from Fragment 5) leads not to religion but to 'the thirst for enumerating all these separate objects' - we see the source of very much in Pasternak's later manner, though in the novel the idea is finally sobered and tamed into 'the happiness of possessing form'. It is uniquely exciting, reading these texts, to realise that the dynamic-metonymic world-conception was Pasternak's main concern when he first put his pen to paper, and that everything more universal or philosophical in his work would arise from this precise and passionate groundwork of energies.

Of the six texts, which range from one to sixteen pages, five are published for the first time. The sixth, 'Zakaz dramy', was one of three pieces published by Yelena Pasternak in *Pamyatniki kul'tury* in 1977 (it

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has also appeared in English in my *Pasternak on Art and Creativity*, (1985). A further selection from the 1911-13 archive was published by Yelena Pasternak in *Boris Pasternak, Essays*, edited by Nils Nilsson in 1976. This, then, is the third publication from it. Anna Ljunggren has produced an admirable edition from the partly illegible manuscripts. She has indicated all gaps and uncertainties, and - most important - has included all the writer's rejected variants: words, sentences, sometimes passages, which he crossed out, are rescued and numbered and printed in a wide margin over against the words that replaced them, so that we have a rare opportunity of watching Pasternak at work in the very period when, having just given up music for poetry, he was starting to elaborate his style. Chapter 3 discusses these variants and how to interpret them. With lucid classification and with reference to Pasternak's early poems, Ljunggren shows how, Tolstoy's opposite, he selected words not for their denotative value but for their phonetic and metaphoric resonances.

Chapters 1 and 2, although some seventy pages, contain Ljunggren's analysis of the Fragments themselves and their interconnections, her discussion of their relation to other writings of Pasternak's (particularly to two works of 1915-16, the poem *Marburg* and the story *Apellesova cherta*), and her examination of influences and parallels. She throws an interesting light, in Chapter 1, on Pasternak's conception of artistic creation as sacrifice. Like *Marburg*, *Apellesova cherta* is about a transition from one kind of existence to another, heralding the 'renunciation of the Romantic manner'. Ljunggren ingeniously relates this to the Fragments by demonstrating that, although the Romantic poet in the story - bearing the name Relikvimini for the last time (Pasternak often adopted this persona in his youth) is defeated in his contest with 'Heine', nonetheless in the story's texture there remains a 'whole kaleidoscope' of imagery, figures and turns of phrase lifted from the 'Fragments about Relikvimini'. The name *means* 'remain', and in this way 'his' imagery does remain, even while his person is ousted - a paradoxical sacrifice which prefigures the oxymoron in 'smert' Zhivago'. Elimination of the hero is discussed further in Chapter 2.

An important contribution the book makes is to the discussion of Pasternak's debt to Rilke. Starting with the two poets' treatment of rooms full of objects, Ljunggren argues (Chapter 2) a close parallel between Rilke's 'inner' and 'outer' space (she might have added his 'invisible' and 'visible') and Pasternak's 'odushevlyonnoye' and 'neodushevlyonnoye', which she translates into 'znakovoye' and 'neznakovoye' (interestingly dwelling on his describing a room through the metaphor of reading a text). In her discussion of other influences on Pasternak, particularly original is the suggestion of an affinity with the prose of Yelena Guro.

Anna Ljunggren confines her attention to comparisons with Pasternak's earliest published works and scarcely touches on the relation of the Fragments to his later writings. There is a great deal still to be said about the latter, especially (as I have suggested) about the light the Fragments throw on the novel. As a doctoral thesis, the book has not wholly avoided that genre's ponderous perfectionism, but, over all, the style is direct and persuasive; it should certainly be read by everyone interested in Pasternak's development as a writer.