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Harmony of Sounds in Boris Pasternak's Poetry

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The paper studies questions of sound palette in Pasternak's poetry, abundance of the world of sounds, that were heard in nature, music, everyday life and contribute to disclosure of a character, image and external characteristics of an object or a phenomenon. The synthesis of "what was heard" and "what was seen" (B. Asafiev) is one of the important features of Boris Pasternak's poetics. It gives uniqueness and individuality to creative style of the master, who perceived and revealed the world around in his poetry with special sensibility and intensity.

Keywords: poetry, sounds, nature, poetic vision and hearing, confluence, character.

Literary critics have always considered and still consider Boris Pasternak as a "visual" poet. This fact was repeatedly emphasized in various papers and studies of his work. Y.M. Lotman in his deep analysis of Pasternak's early poems focuses on the fact that the world of poet is observed and perceived, "... Pasternak's general idea is observed idea" (Lotman, 1969: 228). He also makes reference to a line from M. Tsvetaeva's letter, who writes about the difference in their perception of the world: "In poems Pasternak sees, and I hear» (Lotman, 1969: 227).

And indeed, the first thing you pay attention to, even at cursory reading of Pasternak's poems is vivid "visuality" and clarity of everything that was described. Poetic images are so prominent and so clear that a lot of poems can be compared with an engraving of an artist, where fidelity of



images is achieved by a few clear and precise lines.

However, visual images are not the only ones in Pasternak's poetry. His poems are not only "observed" and "visible", but also "heard." In his poems auditory impressions are given not only an important but often the main role. Here Pasternak successfully uses his

increased sensitivity and power of observation in perception of the phenomena of life, as well as musical experiences of his early childhood that were so strong for the emotional character of the poet, that he remembered them even in his middle age, and study of music that lasted for many years.

Music plays very important role in Pasternak's works. It is connected with poetic images, principles of construction of some poems and the whole poetic cycles, similar to the principles of the construction of pieces of music and sound organization of a poem – the questions of rhyme and sound instrumentation.

The question of sound organization and musicality of Pasternak's poetry still requires deep and more complete analysis. But this is a literary task. Our goal is different – to study melodiousness in imagery and, on the example of the poems, illustrate how the world of music is implemented in Pasternak's poetry.

The poet often provides music titles both to the separate poems ("Improvisation", "Chorus", "Paganini Violin", etc.), and to the whole poetic cycle ("Themes and Variations"), uses professional musical terminology in poetic speech, refers to the names of musical instruments, pieces of music, the names of composers, describes his personal feelings and thoughts caused by music. Auditory experiences occupy a significant place in his poetry. These are sounds from everyday life and nature. The poet perceives any sound phenomenon very sensitively, and the world of sounds in his poems is amazingly rich and varied. It is closely connected with the general meaning and content, with the emotional "marking", as well as with dramaturgical features of the poems.

In the paper by Igor Glebov (B.V. Asafiev) "Vision of The World in the Spirit of Music (Poetry by A. Blok)" the distinguished scholar,

who wanted to write a book about interrelation of music and poetry (which, unfortunately, remained unfinished), studies the sound representation caused by poetry of Blok in detail, using such terms as "sounding and sound images" (Glebov, 1972). Sounding images are images that "imply a state of sounding (e.g., everything related to the idea of ringing), and sound images – names related to sounds, but not sounds themselves (e.g., music, names of the instruments)..." (Glebov, 1972:57).

We will use these terms by Asafiev, as they most closely correspond to the goal of this research – not only be limited by associations with professional music in the poems of Pasternak, but study "heard" and "sounding" in his poetry. This extends the range of studied phenomena, but allows to understand how Pasternak in his poems, even in those which were not devoted to music, "hears", and not just "sees".

For Pasternak, careful listening to the world around us was one of the ways of knowledge and runs through many of his poems:

Прислушайся к гулу раздолий неезженных,
Прислушайся к бешеной их перебежке.
("A Bad Dream", p. 76)¹

Я слышу мокрых кровель говорок,
Торцовых плит заглохшие эклоги.
("To Anna Akhmatova", p. 200)

The poet presents himself as a link, a mediator between the sounding world of nature and those to whom he reveals its secrets: "Я – уст безвестных разговоров ..." He is the spokesman and the singer of everything speechless – mighty as Biblical Goliath "стоглавый бор", helpless because of his inability to speak and the deliverer from the captivity of silence «певческой влаги трав».

Но мхи пугливо попирая,
Разгадываю тайну чар:
Я – речь безгласного их края,
Я – их лесного слова дар.

О прослезивший туч раскаты,
Отважный отроческий ствол!
Ты – перед вечностью ходатай,
Блуждающий – я твой глагол.

О, чернолесье – Голиаф,
Уединенный воин в поле!
О певческая влага трав,
Немотствующая неволя!

Лишенный слов – стоглавый бор
То – хор, то – одинокий некто ...
Я – уст безвестных разговоров,
Я – стон дремучих диалектов.
(Forest, p. 494)

Vision and hearing are equally complementary and often interpenetrating phenomena in Pasternak's poetry. In one of the poems the poet does, as it would seem at first, a paradoxical comparison, calling vision "the

deafest organ" that is comparing it with the exact opposite of hearing – deafness. But still it is endowed with the ability to hear:

Закрой глаза. В наиглушайшем органе
На тридцать верст забывшихся пространств
Стоят в парах и каплют храп и хорканье,
Смех, лепет, плач, беспамятство и транс.
(p. 189)

Everything visible to a man is transformed into a sound line and the world is perceived through a sound line and sounds.

In the poems of Pasternak any phenomenon or any object has a gift of sounding. This concerns even those objects and phenomena that, according to the ordinary human ideas are "dumb" and "silent", as the poet often animates everything visible and feels efficient vitality in everything.

In one of the poems from the book "The Second Birth" ore, hiding in the Terek River gorge, has human emotions. It sounds, and these intense sharp sounds provide dramatic effect to the poem, changing its peaceful narration. And echo here is not just a repetition of what was heard. The poet's imagination reincarnates him



in a highway master who indifferently cleans everything that lies on the road:

На дне той клетки едим натром
Травится Терек, и руда
Орет пред всем амфитеатром
От боли, страха и стыда.

Он шел породой, бьющей настежь
Из преисподней на простор,
А эхо, как шоссейный мастер,
Сгребало в пропасть этот сор.
(p. 348)

Contradiction between a cry of despair and calm and callous "attitude" towards it is truly tragic.

Visual and sounding images in Pasternak's poetry complement each other, they often coexist. They cannot be separated:

Пекло, и берег был высок.
С подплывшей лодки цепь упала
Змеей гремучей – в песок,
Гремучей ржавчиной – в купаву.
("Imitators", p. 120)

The image of the chain that slips and falls down evokes association with a snake, and its clanging brings to mind a new comparison – a snake turns out to be a rattlesnake, i.e. not only external features and characteristics of the object, but also its "voice" are compared. It is the "voice" that makes an object unique, giving it specific features.

Sometimes the "visible" and "seen" in Pasternak's poetry arises from the "heard", like in the following poem:

Уж замка тень росла из крика
Обретших слово...
(p. 384)

In this case separate and independent existence of the "heard" and "visible" is impossible – one image complements the other. Thus, we can speak of complementarity of the sounding and visual in Pasternak's poetry.

An example of the interpenetration of visual and auditory impressions is the poem "Afterword", where creative imagination of the poet gives light the ability of sound. The poem has only one "sounding" image – it is a reflection of the setting sun, shining like a jewel in a woman's hair, and buzzing, in the author's imagination, like a flying bumblebee:

Это – запад, карбункулом вам в волосы
Залетев и гудя, угасал в полчаса...
(pp. 153-154)

Extremely acute, and therefore seeming very original, sound and visual representations of the poet, merging into an indissoluble whole, interpenetrating into each other, create a unique "Pasternak's" poetic image.

Another good example of interpenetration of the "sounding" and "visible" are the final verses of the poem "Lieutenant Schmidt". As in the previous poem, here the light "sounds" – a bright spotlight, piercing the darkness of the hatch with the people doomed to death. This light takes the form of a terrible and ruthless monster that, with a hiss, creeps up to its victim:

Вдруг по тьме мурашками пробежал
прожектор.
«Прут» зевнул, втянул тысячеперстые лап.
Свет повел ноздрями, пробираясь к жертвам.
Заскрипели петли. Упал железный трап.

Это канонерка пристала к люку угольному.
Свет всадил с шипеньем внутрь свою иглу.
Клетку ослепило. Отпрянули испуганно.
Путаясь костями в цепях, забились вглубь.

In the last verse of the poem the “sounding” – “heard” (screams and sobs of the convicts) and the visible (spotlight) are presented in a complex synthesis. The sound here is “getting more condensed” and becomes so dense and real, that the light is “dipped” into the screams as in water, and it “stews” in the sounds of sobs:

Счет пошел на миги. Крик: «Прощай, товарищи!» –
Породил содом. Прожектор побежал,
Окунаясь в вопли, по люкам, лбам и на-
ручням,
И пропал, потушенный рыданием катор-
жан.
(p. 303)

According to the poet's ideas not only objects and phenomena, surrounding a person, sound. Space, open space and the whole universe sound. But these principles were formed in Pasternak's poetry gradually, and it is possible to follow their evolution on the example of his early poems and the later periods of his creativity. For example, in the book “My Sister – Life”, dated 1917, the poet writes about the stars that are available only to human vision:

Блещут, дышат радостью,
Обдают сиянием,
На таком-то градусе
И меридиане.
 (“Stars in summer”, p. 125)

But they can listen to “... Все, что им нашаркали, все, что наиграли” remaining mysteriously “dumb ” in the silent universe:

... Этим звездам к лицу б хохотать,
Ан вселенная – место глухое.
 (“Definition of Poetry”, p. 127)

In the later period of his creative work (in the 50s) the motif of listening to the sound of space and the puzzles of the universe appears:

Из глубин сокровенных природы
Разольется поток голосов.
Я услышу летящий под своды
Гул и плеск дискантов и басов.
 (“Flash of Light”, p. 611)
Откуда это? Что за притча,
Что пепел рухнувших планет
Родит скрипичное капричьо?..

The poet doesn't just “hear” what is happening around, but perceives sounds so keenly that sometimes they turn into something material, become not only audible and visible, but even tangible and smell. Thus, the poet writes in his unique metaphorical language about the singing of a nightingale, comparing the sound with a clot of burning matter that, using all its powers, breaks loose from a trap:

Разрывая кусты на себе, как силок,
Маргаритиных стиснутых губ лиловей,
Горячей, чем глазной Маргаритин белок,
Бился, щелкал, парил и сиял соловей.

Он как запах от трав исходил. Он как ртуть
Очумелых дождей меж черемух висел.
Он кору одурял. Задыхаясь, ко рту
Подступал. Оставался висеть на косе.
 (“Margarita”, p. 158)

In this poem the sound is endowed with such qualities and characteristics as color (“губ лиловей”), temperature (“горячей”) and smell (“Он как запах от трав исходил”).

In all these comparisons of the sound with the material world, its material qualities act as a set of the unique means of expression, aimed at creation of a certain emotional state.

In the poem, every detail conveys a strong emotional tension: not “губ лиловей”, but “стиснутых губ лиловей”, and not “горячий”, but in the superlative degree – “горячей, чем...” The sound like a heady smell of herbs fills the entire space, it “stupefies”, makes it difficult to breathe (“задыхаясь ко рту подступал”). With each such an exaggeration and grotesque of images, with each new line, concern creeps in and deepens in the mind. And that's clear – after all, the poem “Margarita”, along with the poem “Mephisto”, is a part of “Faust Cycle” and its emotional subtext is clear from Goethe.

These are few patches of poetry where “voices” – the sounds of nature are exteriorized:

И птичьи крики мнет ручей,
Как лепят пальцами пельмени.
(p. 361)

Лес стянут по горлу петлею пернатых
Гортаней, как буйвол арканом...
 (“Spring”, p. 88)

The poet describes the noise of Kivach waterfall as mighty, great and strong, thus, animating it:

...Террасу оглушает гомон,
Сырой картон кортомных³ чаш,
Как лапой, грохотом проломан.
 (“А поем”, p. 542)

And here is description of another waterfall, not as magnificent as Kivach waterfall:

От говора ключей,
Сочащихся из скважин,
Тускнеет блеск свечей, –
Так этот воздух влажен.

Они висят во мгле
Сученой ниткой книзу,
Их шум прибит к скале,
Как канделябр к карнизу.
(p. 393)

The last two lines are unusual in terms of common logic: the noise of the waterfall is material, remarkable, and, as a common household item, it is nailed to the eaves. It is a single whole with the cliff. Visual and auditory impressions merge together and form a specific image².

In the poet's perception not only sounds of nature, but also sounds of everyday life are material. They convey a deliberately prosaic setting of the railway station and inn turmoil in “Spektorsky” novel:

На станции дежурил крупный храп,
Как пласт, лежавший на листе железа.
(p. 235)

Их четвертует трескотня вертушек,
Кроит на части звон и лязг дверей.
(p. 308)

In the first example, the sound is like a dense mass, oppressive and pressing with its weight. The second example emphasizes its deafening-harsh character.

Pasternak in his poems is not afraid of images that sound shrilling. Whistle, one of the most frequent sounds is also materialized and “objectified”:

Свисток во всю длину ущелья
Растягивается в струну.
 (“While We Are Mountaineering in Caucasus ...”, p. 607)

It is about a locomotive whistle. And that is how figuratively the poet describes police whistles:

...плотвой
Свисток расплескавшийся выловлен.
Милицционером зажат
В кулак, как он дергает жабрами,
И горлом, и глазом, назад,
По-рыбы, наискось задранным!
Трепещущего серебра
Пронзительная горошина,
Как утро, бодрящее мокра,
Звездой за забор переброшена.
("Police Whistles", p. 124)

Pasternak compares whistle with a fish – a glittering fish. It is trembling and gasping in the air, struggling in hands.

In each of these examples, the materiality of sounding images acts as powerful means of expression that reveals the author's intention. The emotional marking of the poem is in direct relation to how and what qualities of a subject the poet gives to the sounds.

"Sounding" and "sound" images in Pasternak's poetry have two functions: descriptive and expressive-emotional. It is notably, that the first one is not so important. Sound imitation, as such, is not the goal of the poet. Imitation of any particular sounding phenomena and their representation is extremely rare, being in direct dependence on the meaning of a poem, and resulting from it⁴:

Заря, как выстрел в темноту.
Бабах! – и тухнет на лету
Пожар ружейного пыжа.
(p. 184)

И возникающий в форточной раме
Дух сквозняка, задувший пламя,
Свечка за свечкой явственно вслух:
Фук. Фук. Фук. Фук.
("Waltzing with devilry", p. 402-403)

Пеной по отмели шорх-шорх
Черное море.
("In Lower Reach", p. 422)

Sounds can complement everyday life, they can also become good characteristics of people. For example, in "Spektorsky" the poet gives a satirical portrait of a family – seemingly arrogant, but ignorant and downtrodden in fact. Apparent importance and pomposity of the owners of the house where the main character gives lessons, disappears as a mask at the first sound of their voices. It happens because the poet emphasizes the whining and plaintive tones of an offended man, exposing hypocrisy of "self-confident kholops" and "chameleons":

Кобылкины старались корчить злюк,
Но даже голосов свирепый холод
Всегда сбивался на плаксивый звук,
Как если кто задет или уколот.

Особенно заметно у самой
Страдальчества растравленная рана
Изобличалась музыкой прямой
Богатого гаремного сопрано.

And characteristics that become obvious in these lines through the auditory impression of the sound of voice further become more detailed in humiliating phrases that cause both mockery and pity:

Но в целом мире не было людей
Забитее при всей наружной спеси
И участи забытей и лютей,
Чем в этой цитадели мракобесья.

Урчали краны порчею аорт,
Ругалась, фартук подвернув, кухарка,
И весь в рассрочку созданный комфорт
Грозил сумой и кровью харкал.
("Spektorsky", p. 323)

Sounds give the poem certain emotional tones. For example, in the poem "The Mine", dark and infused with the fear of death, in which a deep and dark cave is compared with a crypt – the "kingdom of a corpse", where each sound is especially distinguishable in the eerie darkness and silence, each sound has a special meaning:

Как на разведке чуден звук
Любой. Ночами звуки редки.
И дико вскрикивает крюк
На промелькнувшей вагонетке.

Human life here depends on correct understands of the underground sounds, because any accident can lead to the fatal outcome:

Слепая вещая рука
Впотьмах выщупывает стенку,
Здорово дышит ли штрека,
И нет ли хриплого оттенка.

And potential catastrophe is further described by the sounds of the funeral bells:

Ведь так легко пропасть, застряв.
Когда, лизнув пистон патрона
Прольется, грянувши, затрав
По недрам гулко, похоронно.
("The Mine", p. 222)

The pessimistic poem "False alarm", in which the author considers the approach of winter as the coming of death, is also full of sounds. And these sounds – distant sad cries of widows – make the poet think about frailty of life:

А днем простор осенний
Пронизывает вой
Тоскою голошенья
С погоста за рекой.

Когда рыданье вдовье
Относит за бугор,
Я с нею всею кровью
И вижу смерть в упор.

Я вижу из передней
В окно, как всякий год,
Своей поры осенней
Отсроченный приход.
("False Alarm", p. 398)

In Pasternak's poems absence of any sounds is associated with something unvital – often with death. It is not the silence the poet "listens attentively" and clearly identifies all its tones ("Тишина, ты – лучшее из всего, что слышал"), but "dumbness", total absence of sounds, "deafness", i.e. absence of the signs of life. As in the poetry of Blok, for Pasternak "empty and silent world, the world without sounds is terrible ..." (Glebov, 1972: 50). For example, in the novel "Spektorsky" the poet describes a bleak urban image of a modern city – feverish city with its dusty pavements, with trains that graze the buildings and trees surrounded by rails. Here you can only see the huddle and feel the heat and stuffiness, because it has no sounds, there is nothing alive but only mechanical and dead things are thriving:

Все это постигаешь у застав,
Где с фонарями в выкаченном чреве
За зданья задевают поезда
И рельсами беременны деревья;

Где нет мотивов и перипетий,
Но аппетитно выпятив цилиндры,
Паровичок на стрелке кипятит
Туман лугов, как молоко с селитрой.

...
Затянутый все в тот же желтый жар
Горячей кожи, надушенной амброй,
Пылил и плыл заштатный тротуар,

Раздувши ставни, парные, как жабры.
(p. 320)

The city comes to life only when the sounds are heard. But the “animal” life of the city is so unattractive! Even fortune, barely holding a cry of pain, is forced to remain silent – its mouth is filled with the sand of crimes and injustices:

Голодный город вышел из берлоги,
Мотнул хвостом, зевнул и раскатил
Тележный гул семи холмов отлогих.

Тоска убийств, насилий и бессудств
Ударил песком по рту фортуны
И сжала крик, теснившийся из уст
Красноречивой некогда вертуни.

Silence of a woman who uses it like an inexpugnable wall to isolate herself from a “hero” is cold and scary. It is a “deliberately made obstacle” that makes it difficult to understand each other; it becomes an insurmountable obstacle:

Дик прием был, дик приход,
Еле ноги доволот.
Как воды надрала в рот,
Взор уперла в потолок.
Ты молчала. Ни за кем
Не рвался с такой тугой.
Если губы на замке,
Вещай с улицы другой.
(p. 139)

“Absence of sounds” and “dumbness” are the worst: “Ужасен, как немой толмач ...”
(p. 289). It is death:

Немые индивиды,
И небо, как в степи:

Не кайся, не завидуй, –
Покойся с миром, спи.
(«Безвременно умершему», с. 385)

“Deafness” is also personification of death:

Я в мысль глухую о себе
Ложусь, как в гипсовую маску
И это – смерть: застыть в судьбе,
В судьбе – формовщика повязке.
(p. 491)

Full-blooded and bright life bursts into the silence of “deafness” and destroys it:

...Мы в ту пору б оглохли, но
Откупорили б, как бутылку,
Заплесневелое окно,
И гам ворвался б...
(p. 360)

“Sounding” images give the breath of life. In the colorful, variegated genre painting “The Wedding”, which as if came off from the canvas by Kustodiev, diversity and abundance of sounds vividly recreates the sounds of high spirits of the festive folk festival. Only the word “noise” is repeated 4 times in the poem, but these repetitions seem unnoticeable, as the sounds vary. The poet pays attention to every detail included in the musical “description” of the folk festival. These include accordion playing, as well as playful chastushka and round dance:

А зарею, в самый сон,
Только спать и спать бы,
Вновь запел аккордеон,
Уходя со свадьбы.

И рассыпал гармонист
Снова на баяне

Плеск ладоней, блеск монист,
Шум и гам гулянья.

И опять, опять, опять
Говорок частушки
Прямо к спящим на кровать
Ворвался с пирушки.

А одна, как снег бела,
В шуме, свисте, гаме
Снова павой поплыла,
Поводя боками.

Помавая головой
И рукою правой,
В плясовой по мостовой,
Павой, павой, павой.

Вдруг задор и шум игры
Топот хоровода,
Провалясь в тартарары,
Канули, как в воду.

Only at the end of the poem, when the poet thinks about the shortness of a human

life, which vanishes like a dream, the song pauses, all the “sounding” and “sound” images disappear and a note of sadness emerges:

Жизнь ведь тоже только миг,
Только растворенье
Нас самих во всех других
Как бы им в даренье.

Только свадьба, вглубь окон
Рвущаяся снизу,
Только песня, только сон.
Только голубь сизый.
(«The Wedding», p. 434-435)

Thus, it can be stated that Pasternak's poems are not only “seen”, but also “heard”. Of course, in order to understand the boundless wealth of “sounding” and “sound” images, to perceive the meaning of sound dynamics in the poet's poetry it is necessary “... not only to read them, but to hear them with the inner ear as musicians hear when they look at music scores” (Glebov, 1972: 48).

¹ In this paper references to Pasternak's poems are provided according to the following edition: Boris Pasternak. Verses and Poems. – Moscow-Leningrad, 1965. Hereafter, all the references to this edition will be given indicating first the name of the poem, then the page.

² “Кортонный” – letttable.

³ Read more about the symbolic meanings of images of nature in Pasternak's works in the paper by V.Y. Balahnina [Balahnina, 2009]

⁴ Here we do not mean alliterations – very vivid and often used by Pasternak, – which may represent a lot of things. Alliteration, as a mean of sound instrumentation goes beyond the problems, featured in this paper. But we would like to give some examples of intentional poetic method: *Когда в тиши речной таможи, / В морозной тишине земли – / Сухой, опешившей, порожней – / Лишь слышалось, как сзади шли.* Abundance of sibilants represents scuffling, rustle in silence. Interchange of syllables «то-та-ту» represents tramp: *Стуча подковой об одном гвозде / То тут, то там, то в тот подъезд, то в этот.*

Multiple “и” adds easiness, and combination of sounds “ини” repeated several times provides delicacy and melodiousness to the following line: *Синие линии пиний. Ни звука.*

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Гармония звуков в поэзии Бориса Пастернака

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В статье раскрываются вопросы звуковой палитры поэзии Пастернака, богатства мира звуков, услышанных в природе, музыке, жизненных реалиях и способствующих раскрытию характера, образа, обрисовке внешнего облика предмета, явления. Происходящий синтез «услышанного» и «увиденного» (Б. Асафьев) представляет одну из важных особенностей поэтики Бориса Пастернака. Он придает неповторимость и индивидуальность творческому стилю мастера, который с особой чуткостью и глубиной воспринимает и раскрывает окружающий мир в своих стихах.

Ключевые слова: поэзия, звуки, природа, поэтическое зрение и слух, слияние, характер.
