

ANNA GŁĄB

WRONGDOING AND FORGIVENESS
IN BORIS PASTERNAK'S *DOCTOR ZHIVAGO**

Literature is a complicated record of laborious human experience and complicated fates. Those of the characters of Pasternak's titular novel could be analysed through the prism of a variety of research hypotheses and tools.¹ Among them is history with its iron laws, building at the beginning of the 20th century a whole new world on the ruins of the old. The characters' lives could be studied in the context of the notion of fate with its indefeasible decrees. In both cases a sort of incapacitation occurs. In the end one can see people's subjection to the determinism of history, or fate, while retaining the freedom to make conscious choices; for all their shortcomings, these people defend the values the world has forgotten and remind it of the need for

Dr. habil. ANNA GŁĄB, Associate Professor at KUL — The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of the History of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy; correspondence address Al. Raławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin; e-mail: aniaglab@kul.pl; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7980-3778>.

* The project is funded by the Minister of Science and Higher Education under the program "Regional Initiative of Excellence" 2019–2022; project no. 028/RID/2018/19; the amount of funding: 11,742,500 PLN.

¹ According to D. K. Danow *Doctor Zhivago* deals primarily with the poet and how poetry comes to life, as evidenced by the short chapters painting meticulous artistic pictures. As in poetry: "the individual chapters are thus composed of a cluster of related images making for a complex network designed to achieve a singular effect" (DANOW 1981, 889). Mark Pettus adds that the theme of the novel is an attempt to reconcile the ethical with the aesthetic. In his opinion Pasternak: "is striving to merge these aesthetic and ethical moments into an authentic creative act. *Doctor Zhivago* — its prose and poetry acting in tandem — embodies such a reconciliation" (PETTUS 2013, 563). As Irene Masing-Delic notes in turn, Pasternak's work, though an artistic novel (*Künstlerroman*), is also a great national epic of historical events altering Russia's fate (MASING-DELIC 2009, 180). In her opinion the two aspects are heavily intertwined: "In Pasternak's novel this theme becomes woven into a grand, national myth, in which the Artist who imitates Christ is the only one to withstand the demonic temptations of this kind of sorcery, wherefore he is able to redeem his Muse and his Land (some time) through his prophetic art" (MASING-DELIC 2009, 196).

purification and a life not built on lies. The study of the relationship between Doctor Zhivago and Lara Antipova through such moral categories as wrongdoing and forgiveness presupposes a belief in freedom. This analytical method, known as ethical literary criticism, does not pretend to judge relationships and actions but rather aims to understand them in the light of ethical categories. Pasternak's novel could be interpreted as—to borrow Martha Nussbaum's expression—a “paradigm of moral activity” (NUSSBAUM 1990b, 148) posing its own questions and problems. In this method we interpret a literary work through ethical categories, therein seeking inspiration for philosophical or ethical theories understood as exemplifying ethical reflection. For Nussbaum, this: “requires the cultivation of perception and responsiveness: the ability to read a situation, singling out what is relevant for thought and action. This active task is not a technique; one learns it by guidance rather than by a formula” (NUSSBAUM 1990a, 44). Literature thus becomes the material for the study of human conduct in the aspect of morality, opening before the reader a space for the asking of difficult questions.

What is the question this article seeks to answer? I believe that in analysing the events in the novel the reader could experience a degree of confusion. Pasternak offers a lofty poetic description of Zhivago and Larissa's love as the highest form that could happen to a man and a woman. He contrasts the good of it, as an incalculable ideal phenomenon, with the evil of the revolution, making the novel one of the most beautiful tales of how the history of love is inscribed in human fate. The reader, however, cannot but notice how that love grows on a wrong done to the main character's wife and his family. After parting ways with Lara, Zhivago is torn by despair and guilt, acutely aware of his own failure. How can we explain this dramatic turn? Can everything be subjected to the mechanisms of history? How was Yura's wife wronged and what was his guilt? Did he forgive himself? Can the betrayal be justified or rationalized and how? After briefly outlining the most important facts in the lives of both characters, I will move on to in-depth analysis.

FLAWED PEOPLE

As a child, Larissa Fyodorovna grew up without her father; her mother, Amalia Karlovna, received support from Mr Komarovsky—a lawyer and her lover—whom Lara refused to accept. Nonetheless, in her sixteenth year she became his lover. Yura Zhivago had neither a mother nor a father. Ever

a sensitive person, when he met Tonya Gromeko in college the two were connected by their literary tastes and a fixation on virtue.

Lara and Yura's first meeting happens when she is still Komarovsky's lover, afraid of being discovered by her mother. She considers herself a "fallen woman" (PASTERNAK 1958, 2:12). When the mother attempts suicide upon hearing the news, Yura accidentally enters the house. Amid the chaos, he finds Lara asleep on the table. A mysterious scene plays out: "as if [Komarovsky] were a puppeteer and she a puppet, obedient to the movements of his hand" (2:21). The image is both frightening and alluring: "and here was that force before Yura's eyes, thoroughly tangible and dim and dreamlike, pitilessly destructive and pitiful and calling for help, and where was their childish philosophy, and what was Yura to do now?" (2:21).

Meanwhile, Lara begins a relationship with Pasha Antipov. She wants to start a new life with him, asking the lawyer for a loan, determined to kill him if he humiliates her further. She herself proposes to Pasha. Yura, in turn, and Tonya grow closer, connected by shared habits and sense of humour. He becomes: "filled with that burning compassion and timid amazement before her which is the beginning of passion" (3:10). Yura and Lara's paths cross and interlace again—they find themselves at the same party, with Lara shooting at Komarovsky but injuring someone else. Yura is astonished to meet her again, in such extraordinary circumstances. Lara successfully avoids responsibility, for Komarovsky handles the cases in court. Lara and Pasha are wed. When Lara confesses her affair with the lawyer to her husband, Pasha falls from the heights of bliss to the bottoms of despair and no longer finds happiness with her. He believes Lara loves not him but her obligation to be with him. Moved by the zeal of the revolution, he desires to plunge himself into the maelstrom. She joins the war effort as a sister of mercy, searching for her husband. He becomes a revolutionary leader—moved by contempt for his enemies and merciless.

Yuri Andreevich also marries Tonya, and they have their first child. When the war breaks out, he fights at the frontlines and is taken to the hospital in which Antipova is employed. After regaining his health, so is he. This facilitates their meetings; he shares his enthusiasm for them with his wife. Tonya writes back, imploring him vehemently to: "not return to Moscow, but go straight on to the Urals after that wonderful nurse, who journeys through life accompanied by such portents and coincidences, with which her, Tonya's, modest path in life could not be compared" (5:2). Zhivago finds his wife's suspicions unfounded but realizes that if he has made his wife feel

that way, he must also have acted ambiguously toward Lara, which he attempts to hush up. Still, he gives her to understand that she is an important figure in his life. Larissa conjectures that Zhivago feels something more for her, and she departs for the Urals. On his way to Moscow, Zhivago resolves not to love Lara. Tonya introduces him to a son he does not know. Yura reaches down to greet the boy, and the little Sashenka slaps him angrily. The doctor leaves with misgivings. He reassures Tonya, imploring her not to take the incident for a bad omen. Later, the Zhivagos leave Moscow for the Urals to make a new life for themselves. Antipova works as a teacher nearby, but Zhivago avoids contact with her. He only watches her from distance at the library. He is fascinated with how Lara, so enchantingly beautiful, has no desire to be perceived as such. She disappears from the library; Zhivago decides to find her. Although Tonya is pregnant with his child, Lara and Yura become close. He spends the night, deceiving Tonya and: “concealing ever more grave and inadmissible things from her. This was unheard-of” (9:16). Zhivago is aware of what he is doing:

He loved Tonya to the point of adoration. The peace of her soul, her tranquillity were dearer to him than anything in the world. He stood staunchly for her honour, more than her own father or than she herself. In defence of her wounded pride he would have torn the offender to pieces with his own hands. And here that offender was he himself. At home, in his family circle, he felt like an unexposed criminal. The ignorance of the household, their habitual affability, killed him. In the midst of a general conversation, he would suddenly remember his guilt, freeze and no longer hear or understand anything around him. If this happened at the table, the swallowed bite stuck in his throat, he set his spoon aside, pushed the plate away. Tears choked him. [...] Had he betrayed Tonya, had he preferred someone else to her? No, he had not chosen anyone, had not compared. Ideas of “free love”, words like “the rights and demands of feeling”, were foreign to him. To talk and think of such things seemed vulgar to him. In his life he had never gathered any “flowers of pleasure”, had not counted himself among the demigods or supermen [...]. He was breaking down under the burden of an unclean conscience. (9:16).

Yura decides to part ways with Lara and confess everything to Tonya. He tells Lara as much, though not in strong enough terms, as he feels. She hears him out calmly and, in tears, replies: “Do what’s better for you, don’t think about me. I’ll get over it all” (9:16). On his way home, Zhivago is arrested by guerrillas and conscripted as a medic. This cuts him off from both Lara and his family, of which he forgets neither. After a successful escape, he heads to Lara’s house and there he finds a letter telling him to look for her in

the countryside. The letter makes no mention of Tonya and her childbirth. Zhivago is anxious to know what is going on with his family: "What's wrong with me, Tonya? [...] Oh Light that never sets, why hast Thou rejected me from Thy presence? Why are you borne away from me all my life? Why are we always apart? But we'll soon be united, we'll come together, right? I'll reach you on foot, if it can't be otherwise" (13:7). From that delirium Lara wakes him, and they are reunited. She recounts her relationship with Komarovsky. "I'm broken, I have a crack in me for all my life" (13:12). Zhivago loves her all the more—for having something to complain about and something to regret. "I don't like the righteous ones, who never fell, never stumbled. Their virtue is dead and of little value. The beauty of life has not been revealed to them" (13:12). The revolution interrupts their lives again. They refuse to accept its consequences; hence, they can expect to be arrested any day. They go to the countryside, to live out their last days before the inevitable. Komarovsky finds them, lying that Antipov is dead and Lara is about to be arrested; he persuades Zhivago to let her go with him to safety. Zhivago remains in Varykino, where Antipov surfaces as Strelnikov and shoots himself to death. Zhivago goes back to Moscow and is forced to learn to live without Lara and without Tonya.

OBJECTIVE WRONGDOING OR SUBJECTIVE HURT?

A wrong is an evil done by one person to another, in contrast with accidental harm or a mischief caused by nature. At the essence of wrongdoing lies the victim-offender relationship. The wrongdoing consists in the wrong itself, discernible in objective terms (PILAT 2003, 16).² Does this discernment require the offender to experience a sense of guilt, have had the intention of doing harm and be aware of the harmful consequences? Doubtless, Doctor Zhivago does struggle with his conscience. The dream he experiences after his escape from captivity with the guerrillas reflects this—he dreams of himself in a locked room, with his son, Sasha, behind the door, crying to be let in. A mad torrent of cold, dark water appears to be flooding the adjoining room with Sasha trapped in it. The boy cries out to his father for rescue.

² My interpretation of Pasternak's novel in this article I will employ R. Pilat's terminology. Note, however, that Pilat himself did not analyse the novel.

Yuri Andreevich's heart was breaking. He wished with all his being to seize the boy in his arms, press him to his breast, and run off with him [...]. But, flooding himself with tears, he pulled the handle of the locked door towards him, not letting the boy in, sacrificing him to falsely understood feelings of honour and duty before another woman, who was not the boy's mother [...]. (13:8).

Firstly, is a subjective sense of guilt any credible evidence of wrongdoing? This sense is often based on incomplete information about the consequences, as processed by the wrongdoer. Sometimes, specific information can upset the conscience and inspire a sense of responsibility for a wrong done. Sometimes, however, it turns out that no wrong has been done at all. Sometimes, we only imagine the wrongdoing, or no one comes forward with an accusation (PIŁAT 2003, 17). Here, Zhivago doubtless has a sense of guilt, one based in fact. Secondly, did Yura have the intention to do wrong by his wife, Tonya? Certainly, that was not his goal. Nonetheless, his actions were unacceptable; for knowing that she was pregnant, he still had an affair with Larissa. Albeit not intentionally, he still unconsciously thinks less of his wife. However, if Tonya knows nothing of it and a wrong is done in a relationship between two people, can one speak of a wrong being done here? Zhivago has no intention of wronging his wife (and has only the best intentions for her), but his conduct eventually surpasses his capacity for anticipation, which results in at least unintentional wrongdoing. Something yet else can decide that a wrong is done. A wrong has been done when one sees oneself in the light of a certain moral norm while experiencing a divergence between *what is* and *what ought to be*, thus discerning the wrong (PIŁAT 2003, 60). A "norm" implies not duty or a sense of justice but a state of things that triggers the obligation to act in a certain way (there is no sharp divide between the fact and the norm here). Robert Piłat recalls the phenomenon of the Face, which E. Levinas predicated human dignity upon, and which here means Tonya expecting their child, with the result of Zhivago's having the obligation to take a specific moral stance in response. Thirdly, Yura is conscious of the culpability and consequences of his actions, including the wrong being done to his wife and their children. He knows he has sacrificed his reputation, the values he has followed faithfully over years and the love of his wife for another woman—one he loved more than life itself. For her he denied the value of anything else. While this wrong cannot be said to have been unconscious, even an unintentional wrong remains a wrong. The wrongdoer cannot rely on his own subjective sense alone; he has to acknowledge a number of objective circumstances surrounding his

conduct, including the victim's own perception: "Somewhat frequently the fact alone that the wrongdoer does not have sufficient premises to qualify the action as a wrong is a morally aggravating circumstance (we have a duty to seek knowledge about the consequences of our actions) and an element of the wrongdoing itself" (PIŁAT 2003, 18).

How does Tonya see this? Her letter attests to the harm she has suffered:

The whole trouble is that I love you and you do not love me. I try to find the meaning of this condemnation, to interpret it, to justify it, I rummage, I delve into myself, going through our whole life and everything I know about myself, and I cannot see the beginning and cannot recall what I did and how I brought this misfortune upon myself. You look at me somehow wrongly, with unkind eyes, you see me twistedly, as in a distorting mirror. [...] Shura has grown, he's not so handsome, but he has grown into a big, strong boy and always cries bitterly, inconsolably, at the mention of you. I can't go on. My heart is bursting with tears. So, farewell. Let me make the cross over you for this whole unending separation, the trials, the uncertainty, for the whole of your long, obscure path. I do not blame you for anything, I do not have a single reproach; shape your life as you want it to be, so long as it is good for you. Before leaving the dreadful and, for us, so fateful Urals, I came to know Larissa Fyodorovna quite closely. [...] [S]he [...] helped me during the delivery. I must tell you frankly that she is a good person, but I do not want to play the hypocrite — she is the complete opposite of me. I was born into this world to simplify life and seek the right way through it, and she in order to complicate and confuse it. (13:18).

Tonya feels wronged. Without knowing the truth from Yura, which could confirm his guilt, she can have her own suspicions, not purely subjective or delusional but based on objective grounds because her intuition is correct. She does perceive the wrong suffered and discerns it correctly. Or does she? One can have the impression that she is conjecturing and blaming the husband³ for having wronged her intentionally by not loving her. Tonya cannot lay a legitimate claim to any certainty of her knowledge, while his own thoughts tend to demonstrate the contrary point. This stage in the formation of Tonya's experience of harm appears problematic — to what extent is she holding her husband culpable on the basis of true belief, and to what extent is she relying on uncertain, cognitively unreliable subjective premises? It is possible that Tonya's own allegations that her husband does not love her are the actual source of her subjective experience of harm. It appears that,

³As Thomas M. Scanlon asserts: "To blame a person for an action, in my view, is to take that action to indicate something about the person that impairs one's relationship with him or her, and to understand that relationship in a way that reflects this impairment" (SCANLON 2008, 122-123).

lacking broader insight into the reasons and circumstances of Zhivago's conduct, she ought to suspend any conclusions (cf. SCANLON 2008, 124).

Though feeling wronged, Tonya does not want the sting to persist in her and cause the destruction of her interior, the sphere in which she is alone with herself to form judgements and opinions (see PILAT 2003, 67). She writes that she is not accusing her husband but rather is unable to cope with her own emotions — being as they are intentional states and part of cognitive processes — suggesting the contrary to her (her condemnation of Larissa expresses Tonya's subjective attitude rather than objective reality). Still, she attempts to overcome those emotions. Seeing the wrong done between them, the violation of the moral order in the norms they as a married couple had attempted to follow, she does not identify an objective moral duty culpably violated by him. Instead, her axiological appeal is one that: "identifies the possibility of understanding and living a certain value that appears to lie outside of the now-existing moral horizon" (PILAT 2003, 107). In not blaming him she sees a value of a higher order than the personal welfare violated by him. She accordingly resolves to embrace a heroic ethic rather than a merely moral stance.

Was, therefore, Tonya wrong? To help answer this question I suggest the following counterfactual hypothetical: Let us imagine Tonya never learns of her husband's affair. Accordingly, due to her unawareness, can we hold that no wrong has been done to her? Through the lens of a hedonistic ethic equating harm with discomfort, one could claim that if Tonya had been unaware of her husband's cheating, she would have felt no discomfort and accordingly she would not have been wronged. A deontological perspective, however, would prompt a different and in my opinion appropriate conclusion — even if Tonya had been unaware, she would have been wronged. The wrong (or harm) would have been done to her in an objective sense (in the same sense that someone is wronged by defamation, even though one may be unaware of it). Accordingly, one can be wronged even without ever becoming aware of it. Tonya, however, was suspecting the existence of Yura's affair with Lara and was thus not only wronged but also harmed, or hurt, in a subjective sense, regardless whether that was his intention (it is, after all, possible to wrong someone without intending to). It is difficult to imagine what she had to go through in response to the promptings of heroic ethics in order to overcome her anger and forgive him. The contents of her letter show that she had no wish to blame him, hence she was able to forgive him, which should provide the basis for him to forgive himself also. A wrong cannot be

undone, a harm suffered or the experience of being hurt can neither. What can be done is that the relationship can be repaired. This is what forgiveness should lead to, and thus Tonya, despite the wrong and harm, does not cut contact with her husband but reaches out to him in writing, seeking reconciliation on the foundation of forgiveness.

FATE AND TRAGEDY

Tonya professes to love him still while struggling to find the cause of her condemnation by him. She cannot understand what she may have done to deserve the lack of affection from her husband and separation from him (to her the two are interconnected). After escaping the guerrillas, a delirious Doctor Zhivago raves about meeting his family and bemoans the fate, that stray wind blowing in different directions, having separated them. Antipova similarly appears to put the blame with fate—history and the revolution—for splitting her family, though that was the consequence of Pasha's deliberate decision. She says:

And suddenly this leap from serene, innocent measuredness into blood and screaming, mass insanity, and the savagery of daily and hourly, lawful and extolled murder. [...] Then untruth came to the Russian land. The main trouble, the root of the future evil, was loss of faith in the value of one's own opinion. People imagined that the time when they followed the urgings of their moral sense was gone, that now they had to sing to the general tune and live by foreign notions imposed on everyone. [...] This social delusion was all-enveloping, contagious. Everything fell under its influence. Our home couldn't stand against this bane either. Something in it was shaken. (13:14).

Blaming fate for their own misfortune helps them understand what has happened, as a form of rationalization. After all: "for ill fate no one is responsible. Hence, feelings of ill fate rarely go hand in hand with demands for redress. One who feels wronged by fate sees in one's life a certain logic or chain of causation that leads to suffering" (PIŁAT 2003, 73). The lens of fate having placed them in each other's paths at different times in their lives makes the events easier for them to understand. It also becomes easier to say that life simply enters on a fatal path precluding any other course of action. However, that very path is not the proper or sole available path for its traveller; "it is not simply a sequence of impersonal events "written down in the Great Book" (as in the case of the most famous literary protagonist of the

cause, Jacques, from Diderot's *Jacques the Fatalist and his Master*). The sense of fate is, on the one hand, an incapacitation of oneself, and on other hand a specific affirmation of one's own person" (PIŁAT 2003, 73). This happens when one is aware of one's own will acting as the motor of life, and on the other hand of the limitations of that will in prompting similar choices or classes of events. "The will finds itself here as though in a trap of human individuality; whatever it does, it cannot emancipate itself from a logic imposed by the relevant personality framework. Hence, from a psychological point of view, the sense of fate is a sense of one's own individuality taken to the extreme" (PIŁAT 2003, 74). This appears to be less applicable to Tonya than to Lara, the latter blaming herself for her affair with Komarovskiy. The one she subsequently has with Zhivago repeats a class of prior event describable as a sort of forbidden love.⁴ Though the events are bereft of logical sharpness and precision, with all classifications being of experiential nature and substantially unclear expression, the sense of ill fate rooted in a human person is unfalsifiable. To a human person, though, the occurrence of such events carries the sure weight of mathematical demonstration, for it is simply confirmed by experience.

If the fate is to blame, can Lara and Zhivago also be culpable? Despite all, Tonya's answer is ambiguous. Even if their infidelity could be interpreted as a matter of fate, could their moral culpability as wrongdoers be avoided? Given the role played by fate in the lives of Pasternak's characters, could the fateful and the moral aspects of their actions be held separate from each other? As Piłat notes: "the classical, Greek formulation of the problem denied such a possibility. There, the implacable causality of fate automatically transformed itself into (tragic) responsibility" (PIŁAT 2003, 74–75). Despite the manipulation of causality by the gods, the characters in Greek tragedies were responsible for their actions. Even with Pasternak's novel's grounding in fatalism, i.e. belief in the cause-effect chain pre-empting moral responsibility, the characters' struggle with guilt over wrongdoing can hardly escape notice. Even without presupposing causal determinism, they still retain responsibility for their choices and actions if they have a sense of fate as a model of life, with certain events, such as Yura's encounters with Larissa, arising not from their choices but from fate's decrees.

⁴ Lara is a symbol enabling Pasternak: "to show individual fate as part of a larger reality, 'moving entirety'" (B. PASTERNAK, "Three Letters," *Encounter* 1960, 5), quoted after CLOWES 1990, 322). See also DE MALLAC 1981, 197.

Tragedy is a different matter.⁵ In his phenomenological description, Max Scheler believes that tragedy attaches to situations in the world as its qualitative feature, with a conflict of values as one of the conditions. A tragic event occurs in a world of values and interactions among them; it even occurs through values. A tragic action is aimed at the destruction of a certain positive value, where the destructive factor is also a value: "the same action may in some places produce a high value and in others — quite differently — destroy this value" (SCHELER 1992, 115). The tragic conflict consists in how one value can be pursued at the expense of another. Yura and Lara are conscious of this when speaking about their love. Lara asserts that if Antipov were to come to her while she was with Yura, she would be unable to resist him, despite knowing that she would thus have to hurt Yura:

I would not resist the call of the past, the call of faithfulness. I would sacrifice everything. Even what's most dear. You. And my intimacy with you, so easy, so unforced, so self-implied. Oh, forgive me. I'm not saying the right thing. It's not true. [...] But it's the same voice of duty that drives you to Tonya. Lord, how miserable we are! What will become of us? What are we to do? (13:14).

The situation is tragic, for tragedy is inscribed in the nature of human ponderings and choices; not even tragedy, however, absolves human persons of responsibility for their actions. I do not consider the problem of tragic fate in Pasternak's novel to be an exhausted topic. For it is conspicuous that we never know in what degree our actions are forced by the harsh conditions of life, the cynicism of those around us, the fanaticism of our friends, inter-necine struggle and weakness of will as a result of constantly facing pressure and danger.

FORGIVENESS AND SHAME

According to Paul M. Hughes, forgiveness usually involves overcoming moral anger toward another human being (HUGHES 2000, 457; also see HUGHES and WARMKE). Nancy E. Snow maintains that self-forgiveness is a process of purifying oneself of guilt over an error, driven by the purpose of rebuilding moral agency and self-value (SNOW 2000, 470; also see SNOW 1992, 57–65.). But first one has to acknowledge the error. Does Zhivago's

⁵ I believe the tragic angle in Pasternak's novel is interesting but deserves separate study.

conduct show that he does? It would appear so in his relationship with Lara and her daughter, Katya.

The closer this woman and girl were to him, the less he dared to see them as family, the stricter was the prohibition imposed upon his way of thinking by his duty to his family and his pain at being unfaithful to them. In this limitation there was nothing offensive for Lara and Katenka. On the contrary, this non-family way of feeling contained a whole world of respect, excluding casualness and excessive familiarity. But this split was always tormenting and wounding, and Yuri Andreevich got used to it as one gets used to an unhealed, often reopening wound. (13:15).

Does the acceptance of the unhealed wound imply that he has forgotten his part in the wrongdoing? Certainly, forgetting is not a precondition of self-forgiveness; it merely inflicts additional suffering, for a wound unhealed reopens frequently. Forgetting would also imply foregoing reparation, accepting the impossibility of it. On the other hand, the truth of the wrong done and self-sincerity are preconditions of forgiveness. Especially in the above fragment, Zhivago appears to be honest with himself, though his confrontation with the truth is more complicated than that. He knows that he has betrayed and wronged his wife, but the love he and Lara share appears to lend a rationalization for their conduct. Lara explains this persuasively:

Is it for me, a weak woman, to explain to you, who are so intelligent, what is now happening with life in general, with human life in Russia, and why families fall apart, yours and mine among them? Ah, as if it's a matter of people, of similarities and dissimilarities of character, of loving and not loving. All that's productive, settled, all that's connected with habitual life, with the human nest and its order, all of it went to rack and ruin along with the upheaval of the whole of society and its reorganisation. [...] What remained was the un-everyday, unapplied force of the naked soul, stripped of the last shred, for which nothing has changed, because in all times it was cold and trembling and drawing towards the one nearest to it, which is just as naked and lonely. You and I are like Adam and Eve, the first human beings, who had nothing to cover themselves with when the world began, and we are now just as unclothed and homeless at its end. And you and I are the last reminder of all those countless great things that have been done in the world in the many thousands of years between them and us, and in memory of those vanished wonders, we breathe and love, and weep, and hold each other, and cling to each other. (13:13).

That is a beautiful explanation of the miracle of love, but the moral consequences of their actions cannot be blurred or diluted. The sphere of interpersonal norms (marital vows) has been violated. Hence, Yura, who

bases his self-worth on morality, is crushed by the weight of his own conduct. He sees the values he used to follow as now being mocked by himself. His conscience troubles him not as much over what he has done as who he is. This internal conflict can be described as an experience of shame. Shame is a type of inconsistency between the fact and the ideal state; it arises from the understanding that one has acted differently to one's prior intention and failed to follow certain values (PIŁAT 2003, 126). The effect is sadness and distaste. Shame causes Zhivago's previous self-definition or even self-identity to cease to be the driving force of his life; instead, it becomes a reminder of what he used to be, associated with the realization of failure. The resulting paralysis of will puts his human existence on hold.

The later turns of his life—breaking with Lara, returning to Moscow, abandoning the practice of medicine and spiralling into poverty—prove this. He forms a relationship with Marina, and they have two children. Marina forgives him for his: “strange quirks, which had already formed by then, the whims of a man gone to seed and aware of his fall,” and the: “dirt and disorder that he spread around him” (PASTERNAK 1958, 15:6). Zhivago receives letters from Tonya, who is apparently aware of his relationship with Marina (the contents of those letters are never quoted, so we never know exactly what Tonya writes or how she puts it). He decides to leave Marina and the children to live alone on his own. This decision is influenced by Yura's friends, who—when visiting the house he lives in with Marina—are convinced of the dishonesty of his conduct both toward Tonya and Marina. The friends advise him that he should finally change something in his life and clear up his relations with both Tonya and Marina, who are not disembodied ideas jumbling in his head but are living beings who love and suffer.

SILENCE

Zhivago's collapse and awareness of his own failure prompt his choice of seclusion: “He told them that with the aim of the speediest and fullest remaking of his life, he wanted to be left alone for a time, in order to go about his affairs in a concentrated way” (PASTERNAK 1958, 15:8). To what end? Several hypotheses could be advanced. Perhaps he wants silence to rid him of his burdensome memories; that sort of silence, however, leads not to self-forgiveness but rather to dramatic attempts to blur one's guilt through the drowning out of memory and passage of time. Perhaps he wants, in that

silence, to preserve his innocence or whatever remains of it, primarily the suprarational phenomenon of his love of Lara, which would entail an attempt at purification, perhaps even shedding responsibility through the restorative force of love itself. Perhaps he expects a miracle, an intervention by God Himself acquitting him (cf. PİLĄT 2013b, 61); however, Zhivago's references to God rarely imply a sense of abandonment. These hypotheses strike a negative tone, showing Zhivago's potential aspirations in silence as not inspiring him to affirm any values, outside of Yura and Lara, love itself. Should we not also seek a positive tone in his silence? What could Zhivago affirm through it?

Certainly, his attitude is not one of self-absolution but rather of somehow confronting the truth, thereby preserving the integrity of his own self, or rather restoring and maintaining a consistent self-image (MILLS 2000, 4). The process of forgiveness, therefore, follows in two steps. Firstly, as Snow asserts, self-forgiveness is the process of coping with the awareness of having wronged, offended or failed another (SNOW 2000, 471). Hence, if Zhivago attempts to forgive himself and lift himself from his fall, his intention cannot be to overlook his own moral error. Acknowledgement and contrition are preconditions of self-forgiveness. Usually, as Snow writes, this entails the acknowledgement of one's own weakness connected with a personality defect, which here could be the weakness of character he owned in asking: "why should Lara prefer his spinelessness and the obscure, unreal language of his adoration?" (PASTERNAK 1958, 13:7). Secondly, having committed a moral offence, Zhivago must rebuild in himself the moral agency that is understood as an ingredient of the conscious presentation of a moral person (MILLS 2000, 484). As noted before, here he encounters a problem—he cannot cope with how he, being who he had been and none other, has committed adultery. Zhivago must rebuild his moral self-presentation. This will happen when he gives reparation to those he has wronged.

Can Zhivago, therefore, forgive himself? In my opinion he can and should. This is because Tonya bears him no grudge (or at least she claims as much) and does not withhold forgiveness from him. Granted, however, that he notes the milder tone of her later letters, which implies that the initial ones after his return from Moscow were not as mild. Does the magnitude of the harm, however, not exceed the capacity for sufficient reparation? (cf. SNOW 2000, 474). This may well be his impression, as is implied by the existential paralysis manifested in not resuming medical practice but instead living from one day to the next. Subsequent events put the reader back on the right track, safe from speculative interpretation. Yura is assisted by his

brother, Evgraf, who promises to tend to the family's affairs in Paris, so that either Yura could go there or the family to him. Death, however, interrupts him. Exiting a tramway, the doctor suffers from a heart attack.

Once again, therefore: could Zhivago forgive himself and should he? In my opinion, yes, for he ought to have accepted Tonya's forgiveness, whereby, in contacting him, she was trying to repair their relations. That forgiveness, being the fruit of great labour on Tonya's part, gives Yura the right to forgive himself. However, the moral disorder in the doctor's life shows that—even despite the attempts made near the end of his life and hopes for a meeting with his wife—he is unable to forgive himself. The conclusion can only be that he is psychologically incapable of accepting forgiveness from her. Pangs of conscience afflict him like a nightmare visiting itself on one who has been through traumatic experience. Thus, psychological obstacles pose bar to Zhivago forgiving himself, which prompts the conclusion that this forgiveness can only be achieved in the supernatural sphere. This appears to be the opinion of Pasternak himself, who ultimately decides against allowing a meeting between Tonya and her husband, whereby he appears to relegate the possibility of forgiveness to a different sphere.

LOVE

I often emphasized the weight and sense of the love between Yura and Larissa. It is worth asking whether the narrator does not recognize its value as tipping the scale to justify the moral consequences of adultery. After all, at the end the narrator gives the voice to Larissa's thoughts:

Oh, what love this was, free, unprecedented, unlike anything else! They thought the way other people sing. They loved each other not out of necessity, not "scorched by passion," as it is falsely described. They loved each other because everything around them wanted it so: the earth beneath them, the sky over their heads, the clouds and trees. Everything around them was perhaps more pleased by their love than they were themselves. [...] Ah, it was this, this was the chief thing that united them and made them akin! Never, never, even in moments of the most gratuitous, self-forgetful happiness, did that most lofty and thrilling thing abandon them: delight in the general mould of the world, the feeling of their relation to the whole picture, the sense of belonging to the beauty of the whole spectacle, to the whole universe. They breathed only by that oneness. (15:15).

Lara appears to suggest that their love with Yura was exceptional, even Platonically divine. The resulting impression is that she believes their love

justifies them. In the context of Pasternak's novel, which depicts human fate through the prism of a complicated history of love, it could appear her opinion should stand. In abstract terms, however, could even divinized love justify betrayal? May one break the norms on its account and create new worlds with new rules of conduct? It would not appear that one may do so. Despite its Platonic dimension and significance to themselves, theirs is not a love such as to justify infidelity. It appears that even if their love had in fact been flawless and beyond reproach, it still would have failed to justify them. For human love, in whatever form, is not an absolute value capable of justifying wrongs and suffering. Even if Lara and Yura had claimed love as their motive, their tone in saying that should be taken into consideration. It appears that one would have been able to sense in it that something wrong has been done, which now needs to be justified with the argument that the love whose call they heeded was something they had had no control over. Love understood in such a way would have turned the lovers into martyrs having their own laws, their own religion and their own god (LEWIS 1960, 156). This is what C. S. Lewis has to say about such situations:

It seems to sanction all sorts of actions they would not otherwise have dared. I do not mean solely, or chiefly, acts that violate chastity. They are just as likely to be acts of injustice or uncharity against the outer world. They will seem like proofs of piety and zeal towards Eros. The pair can say to one another in an almost sacrificial spirit, "It is for love's sake that I have neglected my parents—left my children—cheated my partner—failed my friend at his greatest need." These reasons in love's law have passed for good. The votaries may even come to feel a particular merit in such sacrifices; what costlier offering can be laid on love's altar than one's conscience? (LEWIS 1960, 157).

He spices these words with irony, but the irony also reveals something of a truth of the love between Lara and Yura. For their love, were they not ready to sacrifice everything, including conscience? Ultimately they could not silence the latter; especially Yura, whose outbursts of guilt remained with him until the end of his life.

Yura and Lara's love is not capable of justifying and exonerating their conduct also due to one fact, which Lara cannot admit even at Yura's coffin. It surfaces near the end of the novel, perhaps to allow the reader to judge their love more fairly: Lara has given up a child she has had with Yura. She now wants to find the child and repair the error that is casting a shadow over that love. She too must undergo a process of self-forgiveness. At Yura's coffin she judges herself, realizing the violation of norms. She claims to be

a criminal such as Yura could hardly imagine, though not one to blame. She says: "Since then there's been no life for me, Yura. There's no peace for my soul from pity and torment" (PASTERNAK 1958, 15:16). Larissa is unable to determine how things truly were.

From the account of their adult daughter, Tanya Bezocheredeva (meaning "out-of-turn", without her own place), we learn that, having fled the Urals, Lara married Komarovsky. Out of fear for her child, with the Bolsheviks approaching their abode, she gave the child into the care of Marfa, the signalman's wife, but—as Tanya notes—only for a couple of days. Through a misunderstanding—according to Tanya—the care became permanent: "My mama couldn't have given away her own child like that" (PASTERNAK 1958, 16:4). Tanya—a child of, in Alexander Blok's works, "Russia's terrible years"—could not come to terms with the separation; she suffered and went as far as a suicide attempt, attesting to the enormity of the harm she had experienced. Years later, Tanya does not accuse her mother; instead, she appears to forgive her on the basis of the justification she has created for her. Although, in our role as readers, we are limited to interpretative hypotheses, Tanya calls our attention to something else that helps the reader arrive at the conclusion that Lara's love for Yura was not as perfect as he saw it. We learn that Komarovsky was not fond of children and that he knew nothing of Tanya's birth. One can conjecture that Lara, as his wife, was afraid of her husband's reaction to her giving birth to Yuri Andreevich's child, so she gave her up. This version would be consistent with what Lara's realization of herself—I am a criminal, but I am not culpable. A criminal for having abandoned her child to a life of misery and ill fate, but not at fault, having acted under duress and out of fear. The objective wrong, however, is not repaired (unless later, by the doctor's brother). One day Larissa Fyodorovna does not return home. She is probably arrested, later to die: "forgotten under some nameless number on subsequently lost lists, in one of the countless general or women's concentration camps in the north" (PASTERNAK 1958, 15:17).

*

The subtlety and refinement of literature largely consists in how ethical questions are integral to literary analyses. Pasternak's aporetic novel tears at the reader's soul with unresolved existential riddles, showing that, for all attempts at justification, a wrong done remains an objective state of things that not even the most rational interpretation can possibly circumnavigate. Even reparation cannot restore the structure of potentialities existing before the harm occurred (see PILAT 2013a, 68).

Thus, if the question is was Tonya wronged, the answer has to be in the affirmative. Tonya was wronged and hurt, even though she managed to overcome it and embark on the path of forgiveness, attempting to repair her relationship with her husband. If the question is whether Doctor Zhivago forgave himself, the answer must be that, judging by his life thereafter, he did not and could not forgive himself for what he did to his wife, and his love of Lara was unable to bring him justification, for no love can ethically justify a wrong and suffering. The moral chaos in which she lived after separation from Lara (the relationship with Marina and subsequent abandonment of her) shows that he was not even able to accept the ethical consequences of his wife's forgiveness. This suggests that there are some responses in life we do not have full control over, such as outbursts of conscience that cannot be overcome. This, in turn, prompts the conclusion that even despite the lack of ethical obstacles (Tonya forgave her husband), psychological obstacles cannot be fully controlled; in a way, they lead to the paralysis of moral capacity and action. The ending of the novel is significant: Pasternak does not allow a meeting between Tonya and Yura or Lara and her daughter, one which would bring them the respite of tangible reconciliation. The suggestion from here is that complete forgiveness—especially Doctor Zhivago's forgiveness of himself—may be achieved only in the transcendental perspective; one that transcends the ontological fragility of the human condition and leaves no obstacles, not even psychological, to the human person's moral rebirth.

REFERENCES

- CLOWES, Edith W. 1990. "Characterization in *Doktor Živago*: Lara and Tonja." *The Slavic and East European Journal* 34: 322–331.
- DANOV, D. K. 1981. "Epiphany in *Doctor Zhivago*." *The Modern Language Review* 76: 889–903.
- HUGHES, Paul M. 2000. "Na czym polega wybaczenie?" In *Filozofia moralności. Wina, kara, wybaczenie*, edited by Jacek Hołówka, 457–268. Fragmenty filozofii analitycznej. T. VII. Warszawa: Aletheia.
- HUGHES, Paul M., and WARMKE, Brandon. 2007. "Forgiveness". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/forgiveness/>.
- LEWIS, Clive Staples. 1960. *The Four Loves*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- MALLAC, Guy de. 1981. *Boris Pasternak: His Life and Art*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- MASING-DELIC, Irene. 2009. "Larissa — Lolita, or Catharsis and Dolor, in the Artist-Novels *Doktor Zhivago* and *Lolita*." In Irene MASING-DELIC. *Exotic Moscow Under Western Eyes*, 179–202. Boston: Academic Studies Press.

- MILLS, Jon K. 2000. "Wybaczenie sobie i przedstawienia własnego 'ja' moralnego (moral self-representation)." In *Filozofia moralności. Wina, kara, wybaczenie*, edited by Jacek Hołówka. Fragmenty filozofii analitycznej. T. VII. Warszawa: Aletheia: 483–485.
- NUSSBAUM, Martha. 1990a. "'Finely Aware and Richly Responsible': Literature and the Moral Imagination." In Martha NUSSBAUM. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, 148–167. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- NUSSBAUM, Martha. 1990b. "Introduction: Form and Content, Philosophy and Literature". In Martha NUSSBAUM. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, 3–53. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- PASTERNAK, Boris. 1958. *Doctor Zhivago*. Translated from the Russian by Max Hayward and Manya Harari. New York: Pantheon Books.
- PETTUS, Mark. 2013. "Staging *Hamlet*: The Ethical and Aesthetic Dimensions of Space in Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*." *The Slavic and East European Journal* 57: 561–580.
- PIŁAT, Robert. 2003. *Krzywda i zadośćuczynienie*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN.
- PIŁAT, Robert. 2013a. "Ontologia pojednania". In *Powinność i samowiedza. Studia z filozofii praktycznej*, edited by Robert Piłat, 63–74. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.
- PIŁAT, Robert. 2013b. "Wartość milczenia". In *Powinność i samowiedza. Studia z filozofii praktycznej*, edited by Robert Piłat, 47–62. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.
- SCANLON, Thomas M. 2008. *Moral Dimensions. Permissibility, Meaning, Blame*. Cambridge, MA/London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- SCHELER, Max. 1992. "On the Tragic". In *The Question of Tragedy: A Selection of Essays on Tragedy and the Tragic*. Translated by Bernard Stambler, edited by Arthur B. Coffin, 105–126. San Francisco: Edwin Mellen.
- SNOW, Nancy E. 2000. "Wybaczenie samemu sobie". In *Filozofia moralności. Wina, kara, wybaczenie*, edited by Jacek Hołówka, 469–475. Fragmenty filozofii analitycznej. T. VII. Warszawa: Aletheia.
- SNOW, Nancy E. 1992. "Self-Forgiveness." *Journal of Value Inquiry* 27: 57–65.

WRONGDOING AND FORGIVENESS
IN BORIS PASTERNAK'S *DOCTOR ZHIVAGO*

Summary

Could even the most ideal love justify betrayal? The author invites the reader to examine Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* through the lens of wrongdoing and forgiveness. She ponders whether Lara Antipova and Yura Zhivago can justify their actions with the beauty and the force of their love. In the light of the moral consequences of their actions, she finds such justification to be impossible. In her view the novel, culminating in the main characters' deaths, opens itself to a transcendental sphere in which wounded people are laid bare in their humanity before themselves, free of the baggage of guilt and harm, ready for conciliation.

Keywords: Pasternak; Zhivago; guilt; wrongdoing; self-forgiveness; fate; silence.

KRZYWDA I PRZEBACZENIE
W *DOKTORZE ŻYWAGO* BORYSA PASTERNAKA

Streszczenie

Czy miłość może usprawiedliwić zdradę? Autorka tekstu zaprasza do spojrzenia na powieść Borysa Pasternaka *Doktor Żywago* przez pryzmat krzywdy i przebaczenia. Bohaterów powieści przedstawia jako ludzi ze skazą, naznaczonych winą i cierpieniem. Zastanawia się, czy Lara Antipowa i Jura Żywago mogą usprawiedliwić swoje czyny pięknem i siłą swojej miłości, bo wydaje się, że w tym kierunku podąża narracja Pasternaka. Wskazując na skutki moralne ich czynów, Autorka uważa, że nie sposób ich usprawiedliwić najbardziej racjonalną interpretacją. Jej zdaniem powieść, kończąc się śmiercią głównych bohaterów, otwiera się na sferę transcendentalną, w której poranieni ludzie, udręczeni cierpieniem, stoją wobec siebie nadzy w swoim człowieczeństwie, uwolnieni od bagażu winy i krzywdy.

Słowa kluczowe: Pasternak; Żywago; wina; krzywda; przebaczenie samemu sobie; los, milczenie.

Informacje o Autorze: Dr hab. ANNA GŁĄB, prof. KUL — Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, Wydział Filozofii, Katedra Historii Filozofii Nowożytnej i Współczesnej; adres do korespondencji: Al. Raławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin; e-mail: aniaglab@kul.pl; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7980-3778>.