

Title: Pasternak's Faithfully Free Translation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 7

Author: Maxwell Parlin, Princeton University

Abstract:

This paper addresses Pasternak's translation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, which I claim to be faithfully free. Judged by Gumilev's "nine commandments" of verse translation, which insist upon strict formal and semantic adherence to original, Pasternak's translation is far from perfect, especially when compared with closer translations, particularly that of Leonid Sitnik. While both translators preserve the form of the Shakespearean sonnet, Sitnik incorporates many more words of the original and preserves their positions, while Pasternak, when he does include the original words, usually changes their positions. Some lines bear so little resemblance to the original that they are hardly recognizable. If, as Gumilev claims, the translator "should forget his own individuality, thinking only of the individuality of the author" and "ideally translations should not be signed," then Pasternak's translation is not ideal. Nevertheless, I argue that the peculiar nature and context of Sonnet 73 in certain ways challenge Gumilev's nine commandments and validate Pasternak's translation, which is paradoxically faithful despite, indeed because of, its freedom.