

**Title:** Converted Avant-Garde: The Poetic Development of Boris Pasternak and T.S. Eliot  
**Author:** Nataliya Gavrilova, CUNY Graduate Center

At the beginning of the twentieth century art faced the problem of secular existence and tested its possibilities. The idea of the necessity to create new art embodying the condition of contemporary culture, both in form and content, resulted in the blossoming of multiple avant-garde movements in Western and Russian poetry breaking with the previous literary traditions and unconditional belief. However, at least in two cases, in the poetry of T.S. Eliot and Boris Pasternak, modernist poetics was softened and almost cancelled by the authors themselves, who proclaimed simplicity as their new poetic orientation in the late stages of their careers. The paper discusses the reasons of these dramatic changes in T.S. Eliot's and Pasternak's works testifying of a common trajectory in the development of European poetry. The connections between the departure from radical modernist poetics and poetic agenda and religious conversion in their poems are explored. The typological similarities of their early poetics (the use of precise imagery and "unexpected" metaphors and comparisons, the intended departure from the poetics of expressivity) and attitude to poetic language are shown through the analysis of their poems and essays, as well as Boris Pasternak's letter to Eliot. The later poetic shift to "simplicity," found in Pasternak's late poems and Eliot's Four Quartets, is connected with the disappointment in the power of poetic word and the necessity of returning to the safety of religious and poetic rituals. In the late poetry of Eliot and Pasternak, between the secular poetic language and the divine word occurs a break. Interest in an "unexpected" metaphor is lost, while the Christian discourse dominates.

[gavrnata@gmail.com](mailto:gavrnata@gmail.com)