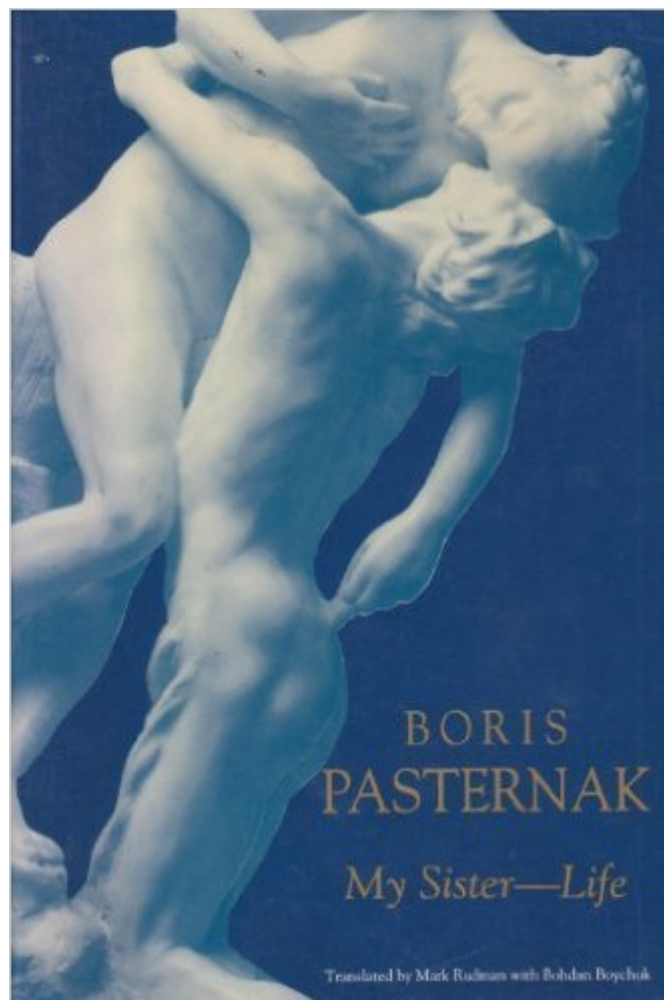


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My Sister-Life



Synopsis

In Russian poetry, Boris Pasternak's *My Sister-Life* is the equivalent of *The Waste Land*, *Spring*, and *Harmonium*. Written in 1917, the cycle of poems in *My Sister-Life* concentrates on personal journeys and loves, but is permeated by the tension and promise of the impending October revolution. Pasternak is an uncompromisingly complex poetic stylist, and his meticulous attention to structure, etymology, and phonetic qualities of words makes his poetry a formidable challenge for the translator. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Some of our strongest poets are those who energize the material things and concrete sensations of daily life in special ways. Objects set apart by poetic imagination and power become sacred and establish a bond between the reader as perceiver and the thing perceived. By extension the bond opens the reader to an entire universe of ensouled matter--a new way of looking at the world. Such is the poetry of Boris Pasternak in this 1917 book written at the height of The Great War and on the eve of the October Revolution. Pasternak's spirited materialism predates William Carlos Williams's concept "No ideas but in things." Pasternak sets many of these poems in concretely described locations where his magical materialism can go to work. In "The Flies of the Mochkap Teahouse," "The spirit sweats--the horizon's tobacco-tinged--like thought" Windmills image a fishing village Boats and weathered nets. This poet's world view of ensouled materiality provides a unique perspective on the new century just beginning. Each reader must decide for him or herself just how prescient or prophetic Pasternak's "The Definition of Soul" was to become. It falls like a ripe pear into

the storm with a single clinging leaf How faithful--it quits its branch--reckless--it chokes in the heat. We learn much about Pasternak from his later novel and the film (Dr. Zhivago) it spawned--but we don't experience his power as a poet. He was possibly the most poetically powerful of figures in what is known as the Silver Age of Russian Literature, including Marina Tsvetaeva

While Pasternak is known in the United States mainly for his novel "Dr. Zhivago" - or, more to the point, the film based on "Dr. Zhivago" - he was quite an accomplished poet. A better poet, I think, than he was a novelist. Although I've never read Mr. Rudman's translation - or, for that matter, any translation at all - "Sister of Mine-Life" keeps to its bosom a host of beautiful poems. Rather than try to explain Pasternak's incredible gift for metaphor and detail, his absolute love of words - he was a decent translator of Shakespeare and others - I'll roughly approximate my favorite poem, from its original Russian. It is untitled. *** My friend, you ask, who ordered That the holy idiot's speech should blaze? *** Let us trickle words As the garden drips amber and lemon Absently and generous, Gently, gently, gently. And there's no need to explain Why there is such ceremony Of madder and of lemon Scattering on leaves. Who made pine needles rush On a long stick, like music Through the locks of Venetian blinds, To the bookcase. Who reddened the rug of mountain ash Rippling beyond the door, Written through with beautiful, Quivering cursives. You ask, who orders That August be great To whom nothing is small Who lives in the finishing Of maple leaves; Who, since the days of the Ecclesiastes, Hasn't left his post And is hewing alabaster?

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