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**A COAT OF MANY COLORS:  
OSIP MANDELSTAM  
AND HIS MYTHOLOGIES OF SELF-PRESENTATION**

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**Chapter VIII**

**HISTORY AND MYTH**

**(1930-1938)**

Ves' gorizont v ogne i blizko poiavlenn'e  
No strashno mne: izmenish' oblik ty. . . .  
A. Blok 1901

As a Russian or a Hellene understand it truth is directly related to every individual whereas for a Roman and a Jew it is mediated by the society.  
Father Pavel Florenskii *The Pillar and the Affirmation of Truth*  
(1914)

And now -- came the sudden end of that tragedy: motivated by the entire development the stage death turned out to be real. . . . And we are shocked-- like a spectator before whose eyes in the fifth act of a tragedy an actor is losing real blood. . . . The boundary between theatre and life has been demolished.

B. Eikhenbaum "Blok's Fate" (1922)

## ***Between the Wolfhound and the Wolf***

Ma poi ch'i' fui al pie` d'un colle giunto  
la` dove terminava quella valle  
che m'avea di paura il cor compunto  
guardai in alto e vidi le sue spalle  
vestite gia` de' raggi del pianeta  
che mena dritto altrui per ogni calle.  
*Inferno* Canto I.

Neither the production error nor the failure to contact the original translator nor the subsequent insinuations lawsuits and counterlawsuits not even the arbitration by the Federation of Soviet Writers -- could have added up to the nightmare that the Gornfel'd affair became for Mandelstam had it not coincided with the outset of the Stalin revolution. The pressures caused by this "great break" as the late 1920s came to be known were crushing and omnipresent. The entire society was on the move and in the frenzy of mass dislocation construction and terror of the First Five- Year Plan every event of note whether it merited it or not resonated to the beat of the political struggles. Little wonder then that literary controversies since 1917 involved invariably with power grew so uncompromising and sharp

Judged on merit Mandelstam's outrage with the translation industry should seem fully justified. But in the wake of the Shakhty trial (one of the first exemplary prosecutions of "bourgeois specialists") to describe the literary hacks as "wreckers" (or "pests" vrediteli) and to demand criminal prosecution for those whose only sin was an atrocious translation job amounted to more than an unimaginative use of invective. Understandably the party under attack was quick to respond to Mandelstam's accusations if not with heavy guns then at least with field artillery of poisonous innuendo suggesting that it was not the business of authors caught plagiarizing to promulgate publishing reforms.[3] The eventual result (see Appendix for details) was Mandelstam's effective alienation from the literary establishment. Another author qua author might not have survived the hardships associated with the position of an outsider but Mandelstam whose reputation had been recently buttressed by the simultaneous publication of three collections (one of poetry one of essays and one of prose--all appearing in 1928) managed to make do thanks in part to the patronage of the still powerful Nikolai Bukharin.[4]

More important the "affair" with its scale magnified by the rapid politicization of the entire society led Mandelstam to assume once again as in the years of Stone the proud and heroic stance of a Hippolytus. "The sick son of the century" wrote Nadezhda Mandelstam paraphrasing one of the poet's mythologies and suggesting an almost miraculous cure- conversion "suddenly realized that it was he who was in fact quite healthy." [5] Indeed some of Mandelstam's poems of the early

1930's indicate that he was abandoning albeit gradually the irony and self-parody of Parnok and his creator[6] in favor of his earlier master plots.

One of the more programmatic encounters with the restored poet occurs in "Lamarck." Although it may seem abstract now this 1932 poem bears the unmistakable marks of its time associated as it was with perhaps the most important symbolic project of the early 1930's -- the "heroic" as it was then described construction of the Moscow Metro. The prominent "moving ladder" a reference to the subway escalator binds the poem unequivocally to the industrialization under the First Five-Year Plan. Obviously Mandelstam who had proposed to steer the Egyptian funeral bark of the old culture into the future thought it significant that his compatriots were now measuring the progress of the new state by the speed with which the mining crews burrowed deep into the earth. After all they were moving back in time in the archeological biological and geological sense in order to construct the first Russian and socialist underground. This is why I propose to interpret "Lamarck" as a meditation on the place of Mandelstam's poet in the heroic labors of the First Five-Year Plan.

#### LAMARCK

There was an old man shy like a boy  
A clumsy timid patriarch.  
Who is the swordsman fighting for the honor of nature?  
But of course the fiery Lamarck.

If all that's alive is but a slip [poMARKA]  
Made in a short heir-less [vyMoRoCHnyi] day  
On the moving stair of Lamarck  
I shall take the very last rung.

I'll descend to the annelida and the arthropods  
Rustling by the lizards and the snakes  
Down the hanging bridges into the breaches  
I will shrink disappear like Proteus.

I shall put on a corneous mantle  
I shall give up my hot blood  
Grow suckers all over and into the froth  
Of the ocean shall bore like a curl.

We have passed the category of insects  
With filled shot-glasses for eyes.

He said: "Breaks are everywhere in nature

The sight's no more--what you've seen was your last."

He said: "Enough of sonority  
You have loved Mozart in vain  
Now begins the spiders' deafness  
Here comes a breach beyond our strength.

And nature stepped back away from us  
As if she needed us no more  
And she slid the oblong brain  
Like a sword into a dark sheath.

And she forgot the draw-bridge  
Missed the chance to lower it for those  
Whose grave is green  
Whose breath is red and laughter limber.[7]

Descending down the mine shaft of time the poet is guided by the scientist who in his patriarchal appearance bears some resemblance to the author himself. The journey itself is mapped according to the Lamarckian evolutionary scheme which in turn is traced over the subterranean cosmology of Dante. Particularly noteworthy Mandelstam superimposed the two schemes onto the third: the social ethical and kenotic tradition of the Russian intelligentsia the history of its identification with the people's cause. Hence the tour becomes also a movement down the ladder of social class evoking the intelligentsia's past commitment to the liberation of the humblest those who like the lower forms of life were deprived of the pure pleasures of music visual art and thinking. The poem's wordplay makes the journey even more specific. The humble Dostoevskian offspring of the Decembrist nobility the clumsy "mosquito prince" and the self-effacing Egyptian postage stamp MARKa while they remain outside the poem proper nevertheless serve as genealogical antecedents as the "inner form" of the shy and awkward LaMARK. They invest the name with an elaborate cumulative meaning including the convention of tracing the origins of the intelligentsia in the nobility's revolt of 1825 that motivates the particular presentation of the Swiss naturalist. A scientist an intelligent in the Russian sense he is a noble "swordsmen fighting for the honor of nature" down to its lowest forms.[8] The alternative route discarded by the poet would have meant supporting the "mutation" theory of history in which the present forms owe no loyalty to past memories and commitments dismissing them as poMARKi of the past slips mutations mistakes of youth.

This use of science for a discourse on the ethics of history begs a comparison with Albert Einstein's refusal to believe that God might be playing dice with the universe. But perhaps more apposite is Dostoevsky's famous wager on Christ. Like him Mandelstam declares in "Lamarck" a permanent loyalty to a world based on a form of imitatio Christi the kenotic tradition of the intelligentsia even if the idea of such a world has been refuted as false or closer to the sense of the poem as irrelevant.

Like many poems of Tristia "Lamarck" was also about a descent into the underworld but unlike them it involved neither an Oedipus wracked by guilt nor a member of a prematurely dead generation meekly assisting in his own internment. A Dantean pilgrimage this descent was undertaken by a hero of the old intelligentsia faith unwaivering in his principles. Even after he had found himself separated from the present by an unbridgeable breach of a historical death he was still alive: his gravesite was covered with verdure he could still laugh like a youth and his breathing or spirit was as red as ever -- in harmony with his past commitment and the present times.

Mandelstam's intelligentsia contemporaries who had lived through the "great break" (or was it a breach?) and witnessed the collectivization of agriculture the debates in the biological science as well as the construction the Moscow subway then the symbol of progress and urban modernity could no doubt see in the poem a meditation on Russia's recent history. Like them Mandelstam was groping for a solution to the riddle of the revolution trying to find a formulation for two contradictory theses: (1) the revolution was justified historically and ethically and therefore has to be accepted and (2) it was hard or impossible to countenance morally its cruelty and indifference toward individual human beings especially members of the outmoded intelligentsia. And while the breach in ideology caused by this contradiction could not be transcended by Mandelstam intellectually the poet Mandelstam succeeded in making it appear natural by merging it with the analogous phenomena in two authoritative texts: a scientific theory and the foremost masterpiece of Christian art. This was Mandelstam's contribution to the theory of evolution and as in the biological debates of those days when neo-Lamarckism was gaining an official sanction[9] the picture that emerged out of Mandelstam's otherwise loyal poem was paradoxical and complex.

It would thus be wrong to reduce Mandelstam's writings to a romantic notion of a poet as David continuously fighting his Goliath. His commitment to the "revolution" however naive his utopian expectations may appear to us now was long-standing and entirely serious. It may be worth recalling that Mandelstam sided with the Reds in the Civil War; relegated those who followed the Wrangel Army into exile to the Antechamber of the Inferno where the souls of the undistinguished or "neutral" fall like leaves from the Tree of Life;[10] praised Lenin as "the people's leader assuming in tears the fateful burden" of state power;[11] and finally ridiculed his own humanistic affinities in The Egyptian Stamp.[12] He lived in an ambiguous epoch and his attitudes were shaped by it accordingly. Even in The Fourth Prose (1930) we see Mandelstam appealing to some sort of revolutionary puritanism and asceticism. Visited by a lame girl a member of the "light cavalry" on an ideological search-and-destroy mission the narrator Mandelstam who was on the staff of this "cavalry's" newspaper Moskovskii komsomolets managed to recognize the devil's hoof[13] and began to behave accordingly in order to guard himself against this pathetic emissary of the Belzebug:

We mooch cigarettes from one another and continue our Chinese games  
encoding into the formulae of animal cowardice the great powerful

forbidden concept of class. Animal fear is banging on typewriters animal fear is doing copy editing on sheets of toilet paper rattles off denunciations hits those who are lying down demands execution for prisoners.[14]

A man who had given up on his former commitment to the revolution would hardly have appealed to the "great powerful forbidden concept of class" even if he despised as did Mandelstam the atmosphere of animal fear engendered by the "accelerated socialist construction." Nor would he have mocked the "trembling innocent bourgeois" and the party members reposing in their comfortable company.

I have always wondered where do the bourgeois get their fastidiousness the so-called decency. Decency is what establishes kinship between the bourgeois and the animal. Many party members rest in the company of the bourgeois for exactly the same reason that the adults require the company of pink-cheeked children.[15]

Even taking into account Mandelstam's distraught state following the episode with Gornfel'd (he consulted a psychiatrist in 1930)[16] and the contradictory (polyphonic?) nature of the text itself "The Fourth Prose" represented a savage satire--an "idealistic" indictment of Soviet society and the state reminiscent of Maiakovskii's "committed" attacks on the homo soveticus both in poetry and drama. The decision to conclude "The Fourth Prose" with a transparent allusion to the 1918 Mystery-Bouffe (an emblem of the Revolution's enthusiastic infancy) can be interpreted as a nostalgic invocation of the monastic simplicity and "incorruptibility" of the years of War Communism which contrasted sharply with the growing terror interlarded as it were with the "bourgeois vestiges" of NEP. "Who needs this soiled and pawed socialism anyway?" Mandelstam is reported to have written in one of the destroyed drafts of "The Fourth Prose." [17] Maiakovskii and Mandelstam were not alone in looking back to the puritanical aura of War Communism so different it seemed from the perceived putrefaction of Soviet society and state at the close of NEP and the beginning of the Stalin epoch. Such sentiments were not uncommon in the intelligentsia milieu and it is a sad historical irony that it happened to be Stalin and his allies not Maiakovskii or Mandelstam who put used these sentiments and the Civil War rhetoric that went with them as the foundation of a society very different from what the two poets could have imagined.[18] All of this is by way of suggesting that the "parting of the ways" between the state and the members of the intelligentsia elite like Mandelstam was not a given datum of Soviet history but took a few years to develop.

Indeed many of Mandelstam's poems of 1931-32 display an ambiguous attitude to the Stalin Revolution. While finding much of what he saw repulsive he was nevertheless unwilling to declare himself squarely against the changes which were then taking place. In poem after poem he projected the image of a man torn between his commitment to the cause of the "fourth estate"--

which he identified with the continuing revolution--and his growing amazement later on horror at its violent and distorted form:

Guard me! No begging no complaints shut up!  
No whimpering!  
Did the raznochintsy  
Stomp in their broken boots

for me now to betray them?  
We shall die like infantrymen  
But shall praise  
neither theft nor toil nor lies. . . .[19]

This poem "Midnight in Moscow.. ." which contained a sharp retort to Pasternak was published in Literaturnaia gazeta in November 1933. At that time when newspapers were full of affirmations of loyalty to the program of social transformation the poem could not be interpreted as a sign of dissent despite the complexity and ambiguity of much of its imagery. After all it began with midnight and ended on the 1930's optimistic note: Moscow's "Buddhist" ahistorical slumber coming to an end in the new Petrine Westernization (hence the Renaissance paintings) carried out by the latter-day Peter the Great Joseph Stalin:

I speak with the epoch but is  
Its soul cheap and has  
It been a shameful hanger-on among us  
Like the shrivelled little beast in the Tibetan  
temple--  
It'll scratch itself and then into the zinc bath--  
[We clap:] More mimicking for us please Mar' Ivanna!

Even if it's offensive you ought to understand:  
There is lust for labor and it's in our blood.

The sun's already rising. The green telegraph of  
parks is humming.  
Rembrandt has come to visit Raphael.  
Both he and Mozart are head over heels for Moscow--  
Because of her brown eye her sparrow drunkenness.

And as if they were the pneumatic mail  
Or the aspic of the Black Sea medusa  
rom flat to flat  
Drafts like a conveyer belt pass themselves on  
Like wayward students gone a-maying...

(May-June 1931)[20]

The May 1932 issue of *Novyi mir* contained a poem by Pasternak which expressed similar sentiments with the aid of a similar Petrine metaphor--if more bluntly (I am citing part of it):

But only now the time has come to say  
Marking the difference by stressing to-day's grandeur:  
The beginning of Peter's glorious days  
Passed under the pall of revolts and executions.

Hence forward without trembling  
And drawing on the parallel for solace  
While we [the intelligentsia] are still alive and not a relic  
By people pitied.[21]

The ideological frame of reference that Mandelstam had absorbed in the course of his life left him and many of his contemporaries with a limited choice: either to accept the "march of history" or to join those whom Mandelstam presented in a 1922 poem as "parasites trembling at the threshold of the new days." [22] His inability to reject this Procrustean dilemma altogether to substitute for it another more varied discourse helps to explain why he found it necessary in 1931 to reaffirm his pledge (indeed a spell--chur "Guard me!") of allegiance to the fourth estate to insist on his fundamental alienation from the Imperial world that had reared him his sentimental attachments notwithstanding and even to doubt--a rarity in Mandelstam--his own rectitude.

[Russian text no. 8-5 here]

With the Imperial world my connection is no more than childish.  
Fear of oysters and a furtive glance at the guardsmen  
Not a speck of my soul I owe it  
As much as I tortured myself to look like another. . . .

(January 1931)[23]

Holding a smoldering chip I walk into  
The hut of the six-fingered untruth:  
Let me take a look at you--  
For I shall be lying in a pine coffin!

.....



It's still and deep at her place lice and moss  
It's half-bedroom half-jail  
--It's alright you are good you are good!  
I myself am like this my cousin.  
(April 1931)[24]

His close friend B.S. Kuzin (it was his friendship that awakened" Mandelstam "like a shot" as he put in his poem "To the German Tongue") wrote about the poet's state of mind in the early 1930's:

In particular it seems he had a strong temptation to acquire faith in our official ideology to accept all the terrors for which it served as a screen and to join the ranks of the active fighters for the great ideas and for the beautiful socialist future [...] But whenever he would begin his loyal twitter--and I used to respond to it with tempestuous anger--he did not get hotly polemical did not ardently insist on his position but only begged me to agree with him: 'Tell me Boris Sergeevich tell me isn't this really good?' And in a day or two: 'Did I really say this? Nonesense! Canine twaddle!'"[25]

The famous "wolf" poem exemplifies perhaps better than any other poem of the period the state of mind Mandelstam wished to project in his poetry (and apparently projected in life too) at the beginning of the 1930s. It merits closer consideration.

[Russian text no. 8-7 here]

For the sake of the thundering glory of the coming ages  
For the sake of the lofty tribe of men  
I have been deprived of the cup at my forefathers' feast  
And my joy and my honor.

The age-wolfhound jumps on my shoulders  
But I am not a wolf by blood  
Better stuff me like a hat into the sleeve  
Of the hot furcoat of the Siberian steppes.

So as not to witness the quaking nor the slushy filth  
Nor the bloody bones in the wheel  
So as the blue lynxes shone all night  
In their primaeval beauty

Take me into the night where the Yenisey flows  
And the pine reaches out to the star

Because I am not a wolf by blood  
And only by an equal shall I be killed.  
(March 1931)[26]

The bill of particulars that the poem presents to the epoch uns approximately as follows: the revolution that has sacrificed the present for bombastic future glory has deprived the poet of "the cup at the feast of the fathers of merriment and honor" has wrongfully assaulted him ("The age-hound leaps on my shoulders") and finally has created such a world so violent filthy and scared that the sight of it has become unbearable for the poet. His only wish now is to be led away by some unnamed master of his fortune as far away as possible from this scene even to Siberia. The last stanza contains an invocation of the Lermontovian "magic tokens" a star and a pine tree[27] which are to assure poetry's eternal "prestation" a spell-like repetition in which the poet once again protests the attack by affirming that he is not "a wolf by his blood." This particular formulation it hardly needs to be pointed out had a powerful significance for a poet who had repeatedly inscribed himself in incest narratives (the Russian for incest is literally "polluting or literally mixing blood"). The poem terminated in a folkloric formula of conditional invincibility--a sort of Achilles's heel.

The curious phrase by which the poet expresses his preference for Siberia (better to be a hat stuffed into the sleeve of a coat) requires a pause and elaboration for it echoes Mandelstam's polemic with a recent poem by Pasternak where poetry happened to be compared with a ticket to a concert of "roots and wombs" and more important with the token (nomerok) one receives in the cloak room where one had to check in one's street- or work-clothes before proceeding into the concert hall proper. Apparently Pasternak--whether he was aware of it or not--looked at his earlier polemic with Mandelstam as unfinished business.[28]

[Russian text no. 8-8 Pasternak's "Krasavitsa" here]

And in the rhymes one's fate dies  
And the heteroglossia of worlds  
Enters as our little world as truth.

And the rhyme is not an echoing of lines  
But a cloakroom token  
A pass to a place at the columns  
Into the underworld of roots and wombs.

.....

And the rhyme is not an echoing of lines  
But an entry and a pass [admitting] beyond the threshold

Where you check in like a rain coat in exchange for a token  
The burdensome burden of the [love] sickness  
The fear of exposure and sin--  
In exchange for the loud token of verse. . . [29]

Mandelstam interpreted this therapeutic view of verbal art s a trivialization of the poet's sacred calling to bear witness to and identify with one's age. Checking in one's coat of

quotidien existence in order to gain admission to the symphony concert of life--to elaborate on Pasternak's central metaphor-- was not an acceptable narrative for the poet who fashioned himself a Joseph or Gogol's Akakii Akakievich. His kind of coat could not be checked in--for it itself was at once a thing and a token word and deed.

Mandelstam's masterful rejoinder to Pasternak's seemingly innocent and conventional variation on an ancient theme was composed in the form of snatches of conversation as if overheard in a crowd of spectators fighting for their coats after a performance. Those who followed Pasternak's concept of poetry-- "upperclass lies"--were to remain with the snorting and unrefined citizenry (burghers gorozhane i.e. meshchane). But those who followed Mandelstam would recall the heroism of War Communism the exemplars of tragic loyalty (Lermontov's Masquerade) and the historical suffering of the dispossessed who like Nekrasov's peasants dared not enter magnificent buildings. A poet Mandelstam is insisting should not forget what century he was living in--the century of the wolf-hound destined to rid the world of the wolf who had been preying on people since the beginning of the ages. Mikhail Zochshenko's 1927 story "Pleasantries of Culture" in which the cloakroom rule is identified with NEP and its absence with War Communism amply justifies such a reading.[30] Bearing the demeanor of kenotic resignation emblematic of the Russian peasant ("hat in hand") such a poet should remain outside and share his fate with the humble shoved unceremoniously like a hat into a coat's "sleeve" by a rude cloakroom attendant. For him then who chose a martyr's way prayer was the only hope.

[Russian text no. 8-9 here]

It's night outside. What upperclass lies!  
Apre`s moi le de'luge.  
But then what?--The snorting of citizens  
And pushing and shoving in the cloakroom.

A ball-masquerade. The wolfhound-age.  
You've got to remember this well:  
With hat in hand hat into the sleeve--  
And may God preserve you![31]

While this was a poem written in the militant key and animated by the poet's empathy with the humiliated and the wronged particularly the peasants victimized by the collectivization its

companion piece "For the sake of the thundering valor" displays a different and far more ambivalent set of accents. Indeed contrary to the traditional view[32] a closer more contextual scrutiny reveals a complex picture in which the poet's aversion to the brutality of the epoch is combined with a historical and moral justification of the very cause of his distress.

As a number of Mandelstam's poems this one is constructed round an allusion to Dante specifically Virgil's prophecy in Canto I of the Inferno which helps to identify the prototypes of the protagonists in Mandelstam's poem. Thus behind the "age- hound" of Mandelstam one discerns Dante's Veltro (the Hound) who according to Virgil will rid Italy of the covetous and corrupt lupa (the she-wolf). It was this she-wolf who terrified Dante's Pilgrim as he was trying to find his way out of the "selva oscura." Virgil's prophecy also helps explain Mandelstam's metaphor "I am not a wolf by blood" since Virgil predicted that before the Hound's appearance many creatures would have mated with the she-wolf (an appropriate allegory for Mandelstam's "incest" mythologies). Finally the Hound himself embodied the ideals of social justice which in Mandelstam's time were associated with the revolutionary "messianic" class which to use the prophetic words of Dante's Virgil "shall not feed on land or pelf but on wisdom and love and valor." Against this background the repulsive sights of Mandelstam's poem might constitute a good enough reason for the poet to withdraw indeed be exiled like Dante. Still however repulsive these "excesses"--as "cowardice slushy filth and the bloodied bones in the wheel" might have been qualified at the time--do not justify for the poet a wholesale rejection of the Revolution. So at least the allusion to Dante's righteous Veltro seems to suggest.[33]

### ***Hippolytus and Hephaestus***

There some one powerful is singing alone. . .  
Mandelstam (From a 1931 fragment)

By late 1932 alternative viewpoints begin to appear in Mandelstam's writings. First came the transparently cryptic lines about King Arshak in Journey to Armenia (1932) which was published in Zvezda in 1933. The passage had been excised by the censor but Tsezar' Vol'pe the editor of the magazine managed to "smuggle it through" even at the risk (shortly thereafter justified) of losing his position:[34]

1. Arshak's body is unwashed and his beard has gone ild.

2. The King's nails are broken and centipedes are rawling over his face.
3. His ears have grown stupid from silence but there as a time when they listened to Greek music.
4. His tongue has become wretched from the prison food ut there was a time when it pressed grapes to the palate and was sly like the tip of a floutist's tongue.
5. Arshak's seed has gone weak in his scrotum and his oice is thin like the bleeting of a sheep...
6. King Shapukh so thinks Arshak has vanquished me nd--worse than that--he has appropriated my air.
7. The Assyrian is holding my heart.
8. He is the chief over my hair and my nails. He grows y beard and swallows my saliva--so used he is to the thought that I am here--in the fortress. . . .[35]

The passage ostensibly dealt with an Armenian King from the Arshak dynasty (63-453 A.D.) but one hardly required a special imagination to see the features of the Stalin in the "Assyrian." In August 1933 Mandelstam received an ultimatum to remove Journey from the projected two-volume edition and to renounce it altogether.[36] He refused and soon (August 30) found his name denounced in Pravda together with some of the best names in Russian letters Viktor Shklovskii Konstantin Vaginov and Nikolai Zabolotskii.

But he did not heed the warning. The epigraph that he chose or his Conversation about Dante (1933) offers a concise definition of the poet's contemporary stand: "Cosi gradai con la faccia levata." The words are taken from a telling passage in Canto XVI of the Inferno (the dialogue with Farinata) where the Pilgrim delivers one of his invectives against his native city:

The new people and the sudden gains have begot in thee lorence arrogance  
and excess so that already thou weepst for it." This I cried with lifted  
face."

Anyone familiar with Mandelstam's iconography will recognize the poet in this pose and Mandelstam himself actually recorded it in one of his rare verbal self-portraits:

[Russian text no. 8-10 here]

## Self-Portrait

In the tilt of the head there is a winged  
Hint. But the coat's a bit baggy.  
In the closing of the eyes in the stillness of the hands  
An untapped treasure trove of movement. . . [37]

The poet it seems was prepared now to pit himself against the whole world very much in the manner of his Florentine mentor. Indeed the voice one hears in a series of poems composed in 1933 is neither muted nor twisted by doubt. One poem composed contemporaneously with the Conversation speaks with a supreme clarity not often encountered in Mandelstam about the devastation of the countryside in the terror of forced collectivization.

[Russian text no. 8-11 here]

Nature does not recognize its own face  
And the terrifying shadows--the Ukraine the Kuban'...  
So the hungry peasants in felt shoes  
Stand by the gate not daring to touch the handle.[38]

Another poem placed a curse on the flat that the Mandelstams received with the help of their patrons in high places in 1933. And it overflows with anger at what another Moscovite--in those days of catastrophic shortage--would have considered a stroke of the most incredible luck. There was however an undeniable logic to this anger. As a poet of "prestation" Mandelstam understood very well that such a gift coming from an all-too-powerful donor represented a sign of domination obligating him to reciprocity.[39] For a poet with the self-image of an outcast one who had long been nurturing the charisma of a Dostoevskian Dervish governmental largess represented a sign of his own unfreedom--a duty of the beneficiary to repay the authorities in poetic coin.

Against this "mythological" background Pasternak's perfectly innocent congratulations--"Well you've gotten yourself an apartment--now you can write"--had the sound of a steel trap going off.[40] Taking offence at Pasternak's remark Mandelstam went on to compose this poem a parodic pastiche of the famous "Ballad" by V. Khodasevich (poetry redeeming the misery of material existence) tuned to the Nekrasov key--a poetic idiom of civic invective a genre perfected by one of Dostoevskii's great contemporaries.[41] In one of his more remarkable "journalistic" poems "About the Weather" Nekrasov told about a clever trick that some owners of carriages devised to discourage street urchins from hitching a ride on the back of the carriage. The trick was to stud the

back with concealed sharp nails. Mandelstam endowed this socio-economic mythologie with a new socio- political elaboration:

[Russian text no. 8-12 here]

The flat is still like a sheet of paper--  
Empty. Amenities? None.  
One can hear the gurgling of water  
Inside the radiator pipes.

Possessions are in complete order  
The telephone froze like a frog  
Belongings that have been around  
Are pleading to get outside.

And the cursed walls are thin  
And there's no longer a place to run away to--  
And I like a buffoon playing the comb  
Am obliged to perform for some one...

More arrogant than a Komsomol cell  
More arrogant than a student song  
Are those who have perched on a school bench--  
The executioners whom I have to teach how to twitter.

I read rationed books  
I tune to sycophant speech  
I sing a terrible lullaby  
To the kulak baby-boy.

It must be some sort of a depictor  
A comber of the kolkhoz flax  
The incestuous mixer of ink and blood  
Who deserves to be so impaled.

It must be some sort of an honest traitor  
Boiled through and through in the purges like salt  
A keeper of his wife and his children  
Who will rattle off twaddle like this...

And so much tormenting viciousness  
Is concealed in every hint  
As though nails have been hammered

Here by Nekrasov's hammer.

So let us you and I--as if on an executioner's block  
Past seventy--begin again:  
It's time for you old man and slob  
To start shuffling with your boots.

And instead of the Hippocrene's stream  
A stream of old fear  
Shall burst into the slap-dash walls  
Of an evil Moscow dwelling.  
(November 1933 Moscow Furmanov Lane)[42]

Mandelstam was reasserting the combative persona of Hippolytus emphatically rejecting the incestuous advances of the now Soviet Russia-Phaedra. The time of acceptance of guilt of resignation to being buried alive had passed. Now he was fitting the mask of Oedipus on the young brood of Soviet poets whom in exchange for the "slap-dash Moscow dwelling" (recall "The Streams of Slap-Dash") the aging Hippolytus was obliged to coach in poetic twitter. They not Mandelstam's poet will be engaged in the incestuous "mixing of blood and ink" (cf. chernila i krovi smesitel' and krovosmesitel') while he a HIPPOlytus whose rightful place is at the "spring of the horse" HIPPOcrene will have to make do with the "stream of fear." [43]

Some time in November 1933 Mandelstam finally pointed the accusing finger at Stalin the demonic "other" of a true charismatic Russian poet producing a searing epigram[44]--to my knowledge the only contemporary document of its kind--that a few months later would result in his arrest with its profound psychological trauma and subsequent exile.

[Russian text no. 8-12 here]

We live sensing no country under our feet  
Our words can't be heard beyond ten paces

And where there is enough for half a chat--  
There the Kremlin mountaineer is mentioned.

His greasy fingers are like worms fat  
And his words are like heavy weights correct.

His cockroach giant mustachioes grin  
His jackboots shine around his shins.

Around him is the rabble of thin-necked leaders



He toys with the services of these half-people.

One whistles one miaows one whimpers  
He alone relaxes and orders.

Like horseshoes one after another he forges ukases--  
One gets it in the groin one in the head one in the brow one in the eye.

Each execution for him is raspberry sweet  
And the broad chest of an Ossete.  
(November 1933)[45]

What makes this poem a representation of the poet's "other" is one of the key metonyms of Mandelstam's narrative of self-presentation--the "horseshoe"--which enters into complex relationship with the central mythologies of his poetry: Hippolytus (incest poetry honor) and Joseph in Egypt (exile slander and injustice). The formulae are not cleanly delineated but their entire complex may be defined as a hypothetic set of associations: poetry--Pegasus-- Hippocrene-- Hippolytus-and-Phaedra--the Bronze Horseman--history (Maiakovskii's the "nag of history"[46])--the horseshoe-good-luck-charm (Verlaine's *bonne aventure*)--poetry. This approximation of the complex of motifs is colored by chastity ordeal virtue activity. The corresponding complex of "Oedipal" homologies is correspondingly colored by the sense of guilt and resignation an acceptance of the sentence of death pronounced by history. It was apparently the former set characteristic of Mandelstam's *Stone* and the early *Tristia* that reasserted itself in the early 1930's after Mandelstam's five years of poetic silence came to an end. Not surprisingly his poetry displays a wealth of equestrian and racing imagery which is essentially focused on the poet's Self:

[Russian text no. 8-13 here]

I'll bet with you that I haven't died yet  
And like a jockey I bet my head  
That I can still do pranks  
At a fast racing track.

led a double existence and no one could avoid that fate." For Mandelstam's "poet" however this was a double existence in yet another sense: he could not disentangle himself from a poetics in which the charisma of the author was predicated on the authority of a supreme ruler assigned the role of the poet's other. The "Ode to Stalin" shows how intimately intertwined these four aspects of the poet's existence actually were.

## ***The Story of the "Ode"***

If manuscripts do not burn as Mikhail Bulgakov once suggested they at least get hot sitting in the fire which is more or less what happened to the "Ode to Stalin" by Osip Mandelstam. The first indication that Mandelstam might have written something like the "Ode" came from Anna Akhmatova's recollections of Mandelstam and had the effect of a minor literary bombshell.[64] Two years later in 1967 the issue was taken up by Clarence Brown who had been working on Mandelstam for nearly a decade.[65] In order to determine whether Mandelstam had actually written the "Ode" Brown analyzed some twenty-four poems composed during the Voronezh exile (1935-37) relating them to what he had been able to find out about the poet's life at that time. The conclusion of this first thorough and by no means outdated study of the later Mandelstam was largely negative. Hard as he tried Mandelstam--it would seem--was unable to twist the arm of his muse even though he knew very well that a panegyric to Stalin might assure him of continued existence.

There was however evidence to the contrary including Akhmatova's authoritative statement and a number of powerful poems composed in Voronezh exile (1935-1937). One of the most remarkable among them is a poem that does as much justice to Mandelstam's poetics of anamnesis (it ranges from the Lay of Igor's Campaign to Rembrandt's "Night Watch" to Pushkin's "Monument" to Pasternak's cycle "Artist") as it does to the nightmares of anticipated imprisonment and the paranoid enthusiasm gripping the nation in 1937 in a double Stalinist embrace.

[Russian text no. 8-23 here]

Had our enemies captured me  
And had people stopped speaking to me;  
Had I been deprived of everything in the world--  
The right to breathe and to open doors  
5 And to assert that "being" means "shall be  
And that the people like the judge judges;  
Were I to be kept like a beast  
My food thrown onto the floor--  
I wouldn't be silent I wouldn't repress the pain  
10 But I shall draw pictures I wish to draw  
And rocking the bell of the naked walls  
And having awakened the corner of the enemy darkness  
I shall harness my voice to ten bullocks  
And cleave the dark with my hand like a plough  
15 And in the depth of the watchful night  
The eyes of the common laborer earth shall flash

And into the united legion of fraternal eyes  
I shall fall with the weight of the whole harvest  
With all the denseness of an oath tearing into  
distance--  
20 And the flock of the flaming years shall come flying  
Like a ripe thunder storm shall rustle past--Lenin  
And on the earth that shall avoid decay  
Reason and life shall be kept awake by Stalin.  
(February 1937)[66]

It was pieces like this one that kept the puzzle unresolved. And since they did not fit the otherwise satisfying picture of a poet incapable of violating the integrity of his talent Brown decided to defer his final judgement hoping that more conclusive evidence might eventually turn up.

The uncertainty was resolved by Nadezhda Mandelstam. In the first book of her memoirs published in 1970 the poet's widow acknowledged the fact of the composition of the "Ode" adding that she had preserved the complete text of it for fear it would otherwise have survived in the "wild versions circulating in 1937." [67] However it was not until 1975 that the poem itself albeit seven lines short of complete made its first appearance in print published in the *Slavic Review* by an anonymous contributor. [68] A few months later a fuller version was included in a brief essay by Bengt Jangfeldt. In one important respect Jangfeldt's account complemented if not contradicted the account of the poet's widow. Contrary to her assertion an unnamed friend of the Mandelstams whom Jangfeldt cites maintained that the poet "was not at all ashamed of the 'Stalin verses' ... and read them on several occasions after his return from the Voronezh exile." A complete version of the "Ode" coming one assumes from Nadezhda Mandelstam herself had to await the publication of the fourth volume of Mandelstam's *Collected Works* issued in Paris in 1980. [69]

What we know about the events surrounding the composition of the "Ode to Stalin" comes from the poet's correspondence and the memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam who alone among her husband's companions in Voronezh has chosen to make her recollections public. [70] A brief account based essentially on her story goes approximately as follows.

The poem was composed some time in January 1937 which places it in the middle of the Second Voronezh Notebook [71] the period when the term of Mandelstam's exile in Voronezh was coming to an end. Increasingly apprehensive--indeed desperate--about his future Mandelstam decided to buy his way out by paying Stalin in poetic kind that is by composing a paean in his honor. This was a realistic response to a situation that was growing grimmer by the day. Mandelstam's fellow-exiles whom he befriended in Voronezh were being re-arrested one by one. [72] The Voronezh Theatre that had previously offered Mandelstam an opportunity to earn a

meager income no longer wanted to have anything to do with him. Graver still the Voronezh Section of the Writer's Union supposed to supervise the poet's ideological re-education was beginning to accuse him in print of such literally mortal sins as Trotskyism.[73] But perhaps worst of all for Mandelstam the fear of dealing with a poet in disgrace was now threatening to sever the last links connecting him with the literary community on the "mainland." [74] Reading Mandelstam's correspondence of those months it is especially painful to realize that many of his pleas and not just for financial assistance or intercession but merely for an acknowledgement of his existence remained unanswered. This social isolation intense to begin with was made doubly unbearable by the state of Mandelstam's health which was deteriorating rapidly under the stress of continuous harrassment. The suddenness with which Mandelstam was reduced to these most minimal circumstances too must have caused considerable pain.

A letter to K. I. Chukovskii written early in 1937 after the "Ode" had been finished and while his wife was either in or on her way to Moscow testifies to Mandelstam's desperate state at the end of his term of exile:

Dear Kornei Ivanovich!

What is happening with me--cannot continue any longer. Neither my wife nor I are capable of enduring this horror any longer. Moreover we have come to a decision to terminate all of this by whatever means. This is not a "temporary residence in Voronezh" an "administrative exile" etc. Here is what it is: a man who has gone through a most acute psychosis (more precisely exhausting and grim madness)--right after this illness after an attempt at suicide physically crippled--this man took up work. I said--my judges are in the right. I have found all of this historically meaningful. Alright. I worked at breakneck speed. In return I got beatings. I was ostracized. I was morally tortured. Still I went on working. I thought it a miracle to have access to work. I gave up pride. I thought our entire life a miracle. A year and a half later I became an invalid. By that time without any guilt on my part everything had been taken away from me: the right to live to work to medical care. I have been reduced to the status of a dog a cur... I am a shadow. I do not exist. All I have is the right to die. My wife and I are being prompted "" to commit suicide. Turning to the Writers' Union is no use. They will wash their hands of it. There is only one man in the world who can and must be appealed to with this matter. People write to him only when they consider it their duty to do so. I cannot give guarantees for myself I cannot put a value on myself. I am not speaking about my own letter. If you want to save me from an unavoidable end--to save two people--help plead with others to write [on my behalf]. It is ridiculous to think that this may "hit back" those who would agree. There is no other way out. This is the only historical way out. But do understand: we refuse to delay our agony. Each time that I let my wife go away I become psychologically ill. It is dreadful to look at her--so sick she is. Just think:

WHY is she going [to Moscow]? What does our life hang on? I will not serve another term of exile. I can't.

O. Mandelstam

My illness. I cannot remain "alone" for a moment. Now my wife's mother an elderly woman has come to stay with me. If I am left alone--I'll be placed in a madhouse.[75]

Even after his arrest in May 1934 Mandelstam was still enjoying the stature of a major literary figure whose misfortune could encourage a number of prominent writers to express their "concern." It was ostensibly on their behalf that N. Bukharin though unaware of the exact nature of the accusation against Mandelstam undertook to petition Stalin. Stalin in turn grew sufficiently alarmed about the negative publicity in the writers' community to take it upon himself personally to counteract it by telephoning Boris Pasternak who it was rumored was being groomed for the position of "first Soviet poet." [76] The story of their conversation has been told before and more than once [77] but it is so characteristic of the special relationship between the state authority and literary authorship in modern Russia that it deserves more than a passing mention here.

Some time in 1934 the great leader whose cult was already in full bloom telephoned one of the top members of what Solzhenitsyn called Russia's "second government" who happened to be living in a communal apartment. After assuring Pasternak that he did not need to worry about Mandelstam that Mandelstam's case was under review and would be favorably settled Stalin it appears decided to stage a little provocation to force Pasternak to admit his friendship with Mandelstam and by implication his knowledge of the offending poem. "Why did you not appeal to me directly?" he is reported to have said "I would have been climbing walls if I'd known that my friend had been arrested. He is your friend isn't he?" Pasternak parried the question by suggesting that "poets like women feel jealous of each other." Without pausing for a transition Stalin went on to his next question: "But he is a master a master?" It would seem he was worried that the epigram might stick if Mandelstam was indeed a great poet. [78] "This is beside the point" Pasternak replied "And why are we talking about Mandelstam and only Mandelstam? I've wanted to meet with you for a long time and have a serious discussion." "What about?" "About life and death." Stalin hung up. His attempt at diffusing the concern of the literary community marked the beginning of Mandelstam's transformation from a poet of the first magnitude into a non-person--a forgotten author denied even the offensive effectiveness of his gift. By 1937 this process was very nearly complete.

Loss of face disease fear financial ruin--any one of these factors might serve as a good excuse for bowing to the authorities and in combination they no doubt justify an outward display of contrition and awe before an almighty tyrant. Yet the circumstances under which the "Ode" was composed appear to be more complex and Nadezhda Mandelstam went further to suggest that her husband for awhile (but how long?) assumed the mentality of the contemporary crowd.

In order to write such an "Ode" it is necessary to tune oneself like a musical instrument consciously yield to the common hypnosis to cast a spell over oneself with the words of the liturgy which in our day muffled all human voices.[79]

The "Ode's" tone of profound sincerity and the consummate skill that apparently went into its composition demonstrate that the poet's perfect pitch worked even in this instance without fail.

But perhaps the word "even" is inappropriate here for there is hardly anything unusual in a poet's or for that matter anybody's fascination with an omnipotent leader enjoying a litany of praise for almost a decade. Poetry of the Napoleonic era abounds in such examples. Nor is it unusual for a victim to identify with his tormentor especially if the tormentor happens to be exalted and the victim either physically or psychologically isolated. Bruno Bettelheim's analysis of the "Heil Hitler" salute and the effect of its adoption by anti-Nazi Germans is instructive in this regard[80] as are the pleas of Ovid the archetypal exile for poets and especially for Mandelstam. It may also be worth recalling that Dostoevskii's political conversion occurred under similar circumstances (or so it seems). The composition of the "Ode" then as that of any significant work of art appears overdetermined. Fear misery practical considerations and most important the tradition of projecting the attributes of an autocrat onto the "archetypal" poet (Pushkin and Alexander I and Nicholas I Lermontov and Nicholas I) must have combined as Mandelstam was "tuning himself" for the composition of this magnificent paean. There was even more to it than that.

For the "Ode" to come into being the emotional state that the poet was experiencing had to be objectified had to locate itself in that ideological space where contemporary consciousness overlapped with the "mythologiques" which the poet superimposed onto the world--that is his poetics his myths his beliefs in sum his ideology by means of which he made sense of the world.[81] Without such an objectification Mandelstam's expressive resources would have remained untapped and the "Ode" had it come into existence at all would not have risen above the Stalin doggerels of the kind that Akhmatova produced after the Second World War when the noose around her neck once again was beginning to tighten.[82] Was there anything in Mandelstam's frame of reference capable of accommodating such an enterprise?

## ***Two Josephs***

You are king. Live by yourself.  
Aleksandr Pushkin "For a Poet"

[Russian text no. 8-24 here]

1

Were I to take a charcoal for the sake of supreme  
praise--  
For the sake of the eternal joy of drawing--  
I would divide the air into clever angles  
Both carefully and with alarm.  
To make the present echo in his features  
(My art bordering on audacity)  
I would speak about him who has shifted the world's  
axis  
Honoring the customs of one hundred and forty peoples.  
I would lift a small corner of his brow  
And lift it again and redraw it differently:  
Oh it must be Prometheus blowing on his coal--  
Look Aeschylus how I weep as I am drawing. "

2

I would take a few thunderous lines  
His youthful millenium entire  
And would bind his courage with his smile  
And let it loose again illuminated softly.  
And in the friendship of his wise eyes I shall find  
for the twin  
(I won't say who he is) that expression drawing close to  
Which to him--you suddenly recognize the father  
And gasp sensing the proximity of the world [peace?].  
And I want to thank the hills  
That have shaped this bone and this hand:  
He was born in the mountains and knew the bitterness of  
jail.

I want to call him not Stalin--Dzhugashvili!

3

Artist cherish and guard the warrior:  
Surround him entire with a damp blue forest  
Of moist concern. Do not upset the father  
With an unwholesome image or an inferior thought.  
Artist help him who is with you completely  
Who is thinking feeling and building.

Not I no not another--his dear people--  
The Homer-people will offer him a triple praise.  
Artist cherish and guard the warrior:  
The forest of mankind growing ever denser is singing  
behind him  
The future itself is this wise man's retinue  
And it heeds him more often with ever greater daring.

4

He is bending over a podium as if over a mountain  
Into the hillocks of heads. A debtor stronger than  
the claim.  
His mighty eyes are decisively kind  
His thick eyebrow is glaring at somebody  
And I would like to mark with an arrow  
The firmness of his mouth--the father of stubborn  
speeches;  
His eyelid sculpted complicated and abrupt  
Projects it must be out of a million frames.  
He is--all sincerity he is--all brass of fame.  
And his far-sighted hearing is intolerant to muffling.  
His careworn little wrinkles are playfully stretching  
To reach out to all who are ready for living and dying.

5

Grasping the charcoal the focus of everything  
Summoning with a greedy hand the likeness alone  
With a rapacious hand--to catch only the axis of  
likeness--  
I shall make the coal crumble searching out his  
features.  
I am learning from him but learning not for my own  
sake  
I am learning from him to be merciless to myself.  
Should even a part of his great plane be hidden by  
misfortunes  
I'll seek it out in the confusion of their fumes...  
Granted I am still unworthy of having friends  
Granted I have not yet been sated with gall or tears  
Still I sense his presence: in his military coat and  
cap  
He is standing in the miraculous square his eyes  
happy.

6

Stalin's eyes made the mountain come apart  
And the plain is squinting into the distance.  
Like the sea without wrinkles like tomorrow out of  
yesterday--



The furrows of a colossal plough reach to the sun.  
 He is smiling with the smile of a harvester  
 Of handshakes in the conversation  
 Which once began and has continued since without end  
 On the expanse of his six oaths.  
 And each threshing-floor and each sheaf  
 Is strong fit and clever--living wealth--  
 People's miracle! Let there be large life.  
 The axial happiness keeps on turning.  
 7  
 And six times over I cherish in my mind--  
 A slow witness of labors struggles harvests--  
 The enormous distance he has traversed across the  
 taiga  
 And from the Leninist October--to the fulfilled oath.  
 The hills of people's heads are growing more distant:  
 I am diminishing in them and I cease being noticed  
 But in tender books and in children's games  
 I shall be resurrected to say that the sun--shines.  
 No truer truth exists than a warrior's sincerity:  
 For [such words as] honor and love for valor and  
 steel  
 There is a glorious name made for the taut lips of a  
 rhapsode--  
 We heard it we had the fortune to encounter him.  
 January 1937

No other Stalin-related poem possesses the scope of the "Ode." Its size makes it the second longest poem ever composed by Mandelstam (after "He Who Found the Horseshoe") and its thematic breadth offers a unique entry into the conceptual and mythic world of his later poetry. Mandelstam's idea of himself and his art his view of his "crime" and approaching death his vision of Stalin and the posthumous life of his poetry--are all contained in the "Ode" and are presented with the kind of skill that would have been appreciated in the Greece of the tyrants or Augustan Rome and should therefore be of aesthetic value in our own day. To judge by formal features alone the poem belongs to one of the most difficult genres of panegyric poetry the Pindaric ode. The exuberance of imagery framed in the rhetoric of praise triadic divisions within stanzas which follow the pattern of strophe antistrophe and epode and finally the lines of unequal length combining hexameter pentameter and tetrameter conform to the basic scheme of the ancient genre of glorifying a supreme leader.[83] Such a strict adherence to the Pindaric rules is unknown to the mainstream of the Russian odic tradition which may in part explain why the editors published the poem under a provisional title "Verses on Stalin." It is safe to assume that Mandelstam who must have been aware of his priority in the genre wished to produce something unique--a fitting tribute from a great master of verbal art to a great master of political power.

Among the letters he wrote upon finishing the "Ode" is one addressed to the authority on the genre a critic who had praised Mandelstam's poetry as "philosophical odes" Iu. Tynianov. The poem although it was not mentioned explicitly served as a hidden focal point of the letter--a subtle implicit tuning of the reader to the wave length of the "genre." Alluding to the now sinister-sounding words of Trotsky "In the beginning was the deed (delo also a criminal case) and the word followed as its phonetic shadow" Mandelstam was appealing to literary loyalties of the 1920's seeking to convince one of the foremost literary scholars novellists and screen writers of the decade that he deserved the attention afforded the dead classics of Russian literature:

Dear Iurii Nikolaevich!

I want to see you. What can I do about it? It's a legitimate wish. Please do not consider me a shadow. I still cast one. But of late I am becoming comprehensible decisively to all. This is menacing. For a quarter of a century now I mixing the serious with trifles flow onto Russian poetry; but soon my verse will fuse with it having altered certain elements in its structure and composition.

It is easy not to answer my letter. To justify abstaining from writing a letter or a note is impossible. You shall do according to your wishes.

Your O. M.[84]

The "oceanic" metaphor of poetry here[85] represents in fact a double entendre since the word *naplyvat'* (to flow as in "ebb and flow") denotes also the technique of a cinematic close-up referring on the one hand to Mandelstam's poetics of metapoetry (the Formalist foregrounding of the device) and the cinematic perspective realized in the "Ode." Tynianov who used cinematic techniques in his own novels[86] was one of a small number of people on whom such prompting would not have been lost and it will be of use in the present reading of the "Ode."

The poem begins with a traditional poetic conceit for expressing the ineffable: if only the poet possessed the limitless power of representation he would sketch with a charcoal across the firmament of heaven the portrait of the one "who had shifted the world's axis" (or axle). The purpose of this conceit naturally was to convert the poet's confessed inadequacy into an affirmation of his creative gift at a higher rate of exchange. In an unspoken competition Mandelstam invited Aeschylus to watch him "weep as he is drawing"--now with the flaming coal of Prometheus. Transcending pain the poet will offer a pictorial tribute to Stalin in the form of a long-overdue atonement for the transgression of Prometheus which had once angered Stalin's counterpart in the pantheon of Greek deities. The second stanza as it continues the theme of representation introduces another conceit central to the "Ode" namely a rapturous search for Stalin's likeness.

His aim shall be achieved Mandelstam says enigmatically after he produces a twin (bliznets) whose identity he pointedly refuses to disclose. Yet in his features one would be able to recognize the "father's" face "gasping" from the proximity of the essence of the world a feeling A. Blok had once associated with the Revolution resorting to identical rhetoric.[87] The third stanza exhorts artists not to misrepresent the leader now named as the "warrior" (boets) and once again as the "father" (otets). The main part of the poem begins with the fourth yet another painterly or rather cinematographic stanza: Stalin is addressing the "hillocks of heads" from a mountain-like podium. Remarkably this portrait appears to derive from a newsreel of Lenin addressing a crowd in Sverdlov Square on 5 May 1920--a prototype for many a Lenin poster. Such a substitution is doubly significant: first because Stalin was not known for his oratorical skill and second because the person Lenin who was a skillful speaker is missing from the "Ode" (except by attribute and implication). In 1937 such an omission was rare and therefore meaningful even in the unabashedly worshipful Soviet folklore of those days.[88]

In the fifth stanza Mandelstam returns to the subject of his craft and speaks about the technique he employs in drawing the portrait of Stalin. It is only in this section that Mandelstam discloses the nature of his relation to his subject whose portrait is once again composed out of bits and pieces of propaganda placards.

In the sixth stanza Mandelstam goes on to describe the transformation of the earth under the power of Stalin's vision (a trompe-l'oeil one is tempted to say): Stalin's eyes make a mountain come apart opening to view a cultivated plain with furrows stretching into the sunset. The "six-fold oath" which qualifies this field of plenty refers of course to Stalin's funeral oration following Lenin's death: "We vow to thee Comrade Lenin" etc. and so six times.[89] In order to emphasize the magical or miraculous nature of the transformation Mandelstam suddenly shifts to trochee--Chudo narodnoe! ("People's miracle!")--creating a metrical equivalent of the Greek spondee. Such a shift Mandelstam may have learned from Viacheslav Ivanov although not unusual for the Russian iambic served as a mark of epiphany in sacred Greek poetry.[90] Appropriately this line also contains an element of an archetypal verbal formula with which God brought forth the universe: Da budet zhisn' krupna ("Let there be large life" or "let life be large").

The poem's coda (stanza seven) falls into three distinct parts. In the first the poet recalls Stalin's life six times partly in reference to the sixfold oath and partly in allusion to the six days of Creation. He then expresses the hope that his own art will survive him and will benefit future generations and finally he thanks fate for having allowed him to be a contemporary of the man who embodies honor and love valor and steel-like firmness. Not surprisingly the last rhyme is a paronym of Stalin (stali zastali) prompting a few thoughts on magic spells and riddles which paronymically encode names of deities or spirits to whom an enchanter makes an appeal.

Intended in part as a masterful example of official Stalinist literature the "Ode" had to and did absorb contemporary official rhetoric with all its maniacal verbosity. Consider for example the following greeting to Stalin "telephoned" to Moscow by the Congress of Yakutian Soviets which had just finished debating the project of the Stalin constitution:

and our first thought our first word are addressed to you our dear leader and teacher father and friend Iosif Vissarionovich! We have no words to express our gratitude and love for you the creator of the new Constitution--this charter [Magna Carta?] of the socialist peoples.... You have made a vow over Lenin's sepulcher to fulfill Lenin's commandment.... Have the Yakutian people ever dreamed that they would have in abundance not only bread meat and butter but vegetables whose growth on a massive scale has until recently been considered a miracle.... We vow a holy vow: to cherish to preserve... to broaden further the Stakhanovite movement that you have brought forth...." [91]

In fact the Promethean motif too was not uncommon among the paeans to the great Socialist construction as "Prometheus Unbound" by a Belorussian poet Iakub Kolos should indicate (it appeared in the same October issue of Izvestiia):

[Russian text no. 8-25 Iakub Kolos here]

Stretching his shoulders-wings  
Prometheus is free.

Days have become an epic poem--  
A fairy tale come true.  
Who and where from are these heroes--  
Demchenko Stakhanov--  
That are marching in a triumphant formation  
At the pace of giants?"

Stakhanov it may be recalled was a miner whence his association with the Titans--one of them the father of Prometheus--imprisoned in the bowels of the earth.[92] Indeed as Mandelstam was complaining to Tynianov his poetry was becoming comprehensible.

Viewed from another intrinsic perspective the "Ode to Stalin" functions as a keystone in a cycle which consists of some twenty-four poems written between December and February 1936-

37.[93] Some of them such as the "twin" poems dealing with a statue of a Buddha-like deity residing inside a mountain[94] are barely comprehensible without the "Ode" while others acquire a new fuller meaning which otherwise would have been lost. For example one is tempted to see features of Stalin in the "cat" from the "Kashchei" poem.[95] A particularly striking insight is produced when the "Ode" is juxtaposed with the "wasps" poem. Clarence Brown suspected a link between this poem and the "Ode"[96] and Nadezhda Mandelstam who unlike him had access to both texts pointed out that the two have a central image in common: the "axis" or os'.[97] In the "Ode" Stalin is called the one who "had shifted the world's axis" (stanza 1) and the word appears once again in stanza 5 where Mandelstam develops the theme of his relation to Stalin. Attempting to "catch the likeness of his subject" the poet isolates the essence of Stalin's appearance the core to which he refers as the "axis of likeness" (skhodstva os'). The nature of this latter axis is broached in the second stanza (cited above) where Mandelstam introduces a mysterious "twin" of his subject in whose features one is bound to recognize the father.

The choice of the word "twin" for the poet's representation of Stalin was far from random. To begin with it resonated with Pasternak's choice of an equivalent image in his "Stalin" poem one of the two published in the first January issue of Izvestiia in 1936.[98] Like Mandelstam's Pasternak's "twin" (Pasternak used a more colloquial dvoynia) was a mysterious creature whose identity was nowhere explicitly defined but whose attributes suggested a christological image--shared by poets precursors and leaders alike. Below are the first five stanza of the poem as it appeared in the newspaper publication:

[Russian text no. 8-26 Pasternak "Ia ponial" here]

I have realized: all's alive.  
Centuries won't perish  
And life without accumulated wealth  
Is an enviable affair.

There have been slaughters before  
And the devouring of the living  
But our twin for ever  
Thundered like a nightingale.

In the deep night  
Thought up to last a long time  
Wasn't it he who prophesying  
Predicted you and me.

Thanks and thanks again  
To the two thousand years  
Which laboring without unbending

Have left this world.

Thanks be to the precursors  
Thanks be to the leaders  
If not in the same kind  
We'll have nothing to repay with.

And the laughter outside peasants' huts  
And thought coming from the plough  
And Lenin and Stalin  
And these verses. . . .

One can imagine that Pasternak's "idea" to begin with fundamental to the charismatic mission of a Russian poet struck Mandelstam as highly appropriate as he was "tuning himself" for the composition of the "Ode." An equally pertinent suggestion was contained in the other of Pasternak's Izvestiia poems "Obstreporous Temperament Is to my Liking." I quote the conclusion:

[Russian text no. 8-26a "Mne po dushe" here]

And this genius of action  
Is so absorbing for the other poet  
Who weighs heavy like a sponge filled  
With any of his features  
However small he himself is in this double voiced fugue  
He believes in the mutual awareness of each other  
By these infinitely diametrical essences.

This motif of "doubling" powerfully resonated with Pasternak's earliest collection *The Twin in Storm Clouds* (*Bliznets v tuchakh* 1914) the title of which yielded easily to a narrative elaboration: a fellow- poet (Pasternak's "twin") drafting in the stormy sky that had gathered over his head the "thunderous" outlines of his other "twin" the "fatherly" Joseph Stalin.[99] In a letter to Pasternak written on 2 January 1937 when the "Ode" had been almost or entirely completed Mandelstam appears to be alluding to this borrowing via a "contiguous" citation of the key word in Pasternak's first line: "...Thank you for all and for the fact that that 'all' is 'not all yet.'"[100]

In the third stanza the "father" and the twin are presented in their martial aspect emphasized by the rhyming scheme: *otets-bliznets-boets*. In the fourth stanza where the first real portrait of Stalin appears--a poster-like image of Stalin addressing the crowd--Mandelstam refers to his subject as a "debtor stronger than the claim" (*dolzchnik sil'nee iska*) and once again as father. The insistence on the paternity of Stalin echoes the Old Testament with its paternalistic symbolism and one indeed encounters a similar "debtor" formula in the Psalms: "The Lord hath sworn and will not

repent"[101] or "My covenant will I not break... Once I have sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David." The formula itself however stands at the core of Mandelstam's conception of poetry as an ever-continuing exchange of gifts poetic prestation which here manifests itself as a transcendent contractual agreement between the supernatural figure of the "father" whose gifts are inexhaustible and his "children" whose "claims" could never exceed his magnanimity. (A potlatch in which he always triumphs).

But how does the poet define himself in relation to Stalin the father? The answer is contained in stanza V which becomes transparent when juxtaposed with Mandelstam's 1937 "wasps" poem:

[Russian text no. 8-27 here]

Armed with the eyesight of slender wasps  
Sucking the earth's axis the earth's axis  
I sense all that I have ever encountered  
And recall by heart and profanely. . . .[102]

Even though the choice of "wasps" may have been determined by Mandelstam's reading of Bergson according to whom these insects were the paragons of intuitive perception[103] the poem's "poetics" are defined by paronomasia in this case a play on the phonetic similarity between the genitive plural of *osa* *os* the accusative singular of the word *axis* *os*' the ending of the verb signifying an unpremeditated encounter *prishlos'* and of course the vocative form of his own first name *Osip Os'* a contraction of Joseph the name he happened to share with Stalin.[104] "Solominka" a famous poetic declaration of the earlier Mandelstam is constructed on such a play on first names[105] and in the "Ode" the poet exploited the potential of the remarkable coincidence transforming it into a likeness. A careful reading of the fifth stanza demonstrates that Mandelstam made the coincidence work for him with supreme mastery.

### ***Image and Likeness***

The similitude then that Mandelstam was seeking with such fervor as he was sketching in the air the portrait of Stalin as he was creating the "twin" involved not only the morphological essence of Stalin's face (a portrait arranged around the axis of facial symmetry) but also and indeed primarily the identity between his famous tormentor and himself. This kind of an identification of

the poet's persona with the subject of his poetic portrait is common in poetic iconography[106] and is not unrelated to confessional literature both mediaeval and modern.[107] But it had a special significance for the tradition in which an author's place in the culture was in large measure predicated on his capacity to project onto himself by means of challenge the aura of the focussed charismatic authority of the supreme ruler.

The authority of one both undermined and supported the authority of the other in a relation of mutually reinforced rivalry. This was the conflict that the "Ode" was meant to resolve by drawing on the paternalistic vocabulary of the Stalin cult[108] while making the Aeschilian version of the myth of Prometheus coextensive with the sacred narrative about the Son and the Father.[109] Consider the fifth stanza: "Granted--I have not been sated with either gall or tears" (line 10). Here the poem's artist with a burning coal in his hand (recall Prometheus Pushkin's "The Prophet" and the calling of Isaiah) wore the transparent mask the One who accepted the bitter cup predestined for him by his Father.[110] To leave no doubt about the parallelism--a kenotic imitatio Christi--Mandelstam offers a prophecy concerning his own resurrection in the final stanza: "...in tender books and in children's games I shall be resurrected to say that the sun is shining." But what can this imitation of Christ's voluntary submission to an ordeal have to do with the pagan myth of Prometheus opening the poem?

The conjuncture of the two narratives bore the unmistakable signature of Mandelstam "the last Helleno-Christian poet"[111] who had once imagined that a poet's life resembled a "game played by the Father with His children" ("Pushkin and Skriabin"). It was this view of "Christian art" that defined the use of the Aeschilian myth in the "Ode to Stalin." The story of Joseph the dreamer and once the pharaoh's prisoner was also summoned up to facilitate the transition from a relationship of conflict to one of indispensable service and ultimately identification (neither of the namesakes was an ethnic Russian). Prometheus of Aeschilus recalled at the outset passed almost imperceptibly into another mythic register where the guilty poet his once misused creative gift and the Zeus of the Soviet Olympus could all be presented respectively as Christ and God the Father. After all Prometheus like Christ was a transgressor with respect to established authority. But while his offense even though beneficial for mankind served to set the tragic cycle in motion Christ's much later violation of the Law and his subsequent Crucifixion put the tragic cycle to rest. Mandelstam's personal misfortune was thus recapitulating the religious and moral evolution of humanity or to put it differently the phylogeny of history was recapitulated by the ontogeny of Mandelstam.

Emphasizing the dynamic aspect in the development of the "Ode's" central myth that is by having the Christian view supersede its Greek counterpart Mandelstam was pleading for a different interpretation of his predicament integrating it into the framework of universal Christian redemption forgiveness. "Where is the bound and nailed-down groan Where is Prometheus--the rock's support and likeness?... That is not to be--tragedies cannot be brought back..." wrote Mandelstam shortly after completing the "Ode" almost in an attempt to exorcise the tragic pattern from his own life.[112]



The "Ode to Stalin" too seems to have been meant as an exorcism at least to the extent that it bore some features of an elaborate magic spell. The coincidences of the first name of the poet and his addressee and the talismanic "charcoal" point in the direction of such a pattern. Prior to Mandelstam the burning coal of the archetypal rebel had touched the lips of the prophet Isaiah replaced the heart of Pushkin's Prophet and in more recent times mined in fabulous quantities earned a singular fame for Stakhanov (one can expect an acmeist Mandelstam to outline his paradigms with this kind of precision). Such a history is bound to confer transcendent powers on the mineral transforming it by contagion[113] not only into a magical tool with which to fashion a fitting image of Stalin but also into a talisman that would grant the poet his wishes. This was not the first time that Mandelstam had occasion to recall Pushkin's "talismanic" words: "Guard me in the days of persecution In the days of remorse and agitation: You were given me on the day of sorrow." [114]

Finally the structure of the poem provides an even stronger indication of a magical subtext for the "Ode" follows the two-fold formula of a homoeopathic spell[115] that is one based on analogy or comparison.[116] The first part of such a spell recounts a phenomenon that has already taken place-- here the development of tragedy into the Christ event-- while the second contains a wish for a similar outcome with respect to an unrelated but in some ways comparable situation-- Mandelstam's desire to have his predicament interpreted within the Christian rather than Promethean or the Old Testament framework. Thus the initial analogy with Prometheus would yield to the desired imitatio Christi the "stolen fire" to the magnanimity of the "debtor stronger than any claim" and the angry Zeus-Stalin to God the Father.

This Helleno-Christian myth tragic and heroic as well as kenotic and redemptive in the specific way it was generated in the "Ode" became the foundation (a concealed one as myths require[117]) of a book which more than any other work contributed to Mandelstam's revival: the two volumes of Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoirs. There of course Stalin was revealed as a false god but the "Ode's" pattern of self- presentation the "twins" could function well without him: the "prodigal son" could practice his divine gift and even return to his Father.[118] The very first paragraph of her memoirs defines the reader's frame of reference tuning him to the correct "mythology" once again imperceptibly as myths require establishing a theme that will inform the entire narrative like a Wagnerian leit-motif:

Having slapped Aleksei Tolstoi [the author of the famous Road to Calvary] O.M. without delay returned to Moscow and there telephoned Anna Andreevna [Akhmatova] every day pleading with her to come to Moscow. She tarried; he was getting angry. With her ticket purchased and ready to go she paused by the window and became pensive. "Praying that this cup may pass you?" asked Punin an intelligent bilious and brilliant man. It was he who suddenly said to Akhmatova as they were strolling through the Tretyakov Gallery: "And now let us look how you are going to be

conveyed to the execution" [reference to Surikov's "Boiarynia Morozova"]. This prompted the poem "And afterwards on a peasant cart..." But she was not fated to make this journey: "They are saving you for the very end" Nikolai Nikolaevich Punin would say and his face would become distorted by a tic. But at the very end they forgot about her and did not arrest her...

The scandalous slap cannot but be read in the Dostoevskian tradition of unmasking an antichrist in a sudden breakdown of social conventions (viz. scandals in *The Possessed*). Here the slap exposes the "other" Tolstoi as a false prophet and by implication his famous trilogy *Khozhdenie po mukam* as a diabolical perversion of the Road to Calvary or the apocryphal story of the Virgin's Descent into Hell (the Russian title alludes to both) which will be set aright in Nadezhda Mandelstam's own narrative.[119] As befits an imitator of the One who prayed at Gethsemane Mandelstam pleads with his friend Akhmatova to come and keep vigil with him; and as befits one assigned the role of the poet's apostle she delays. The third sentence contains an allusion to the prayer at Gethsemane and Punin's biliousness once again reminds the reader of the "bitter cup" (zhelch is bile and/or gall). Punin's reference to Surikov's painting of the Archpriest Avvakum's disciple functions as another metonym of Christ's Passion and alludes directly to Russia's most famous autobiography of an imitator of Christ. Along the way and without any apparent motivation the narrator finally focuses on Punin's nervous tic. In part a mimetic ploy this singled out detail begins to generate its own associations in a densely allusive context. Punin formerly a militant member of LEF is represented by a feature that he shares with Mikhail Bulgakov's Pontius Pilate as he is interrogating Ieshua and with Dostoevskii's Tikhon as he is listening to the most inspired portions of Stavrogin's confession.[120] Like most other "intelligent and brilliant" people that one encounters in the memoirs Punin bears the mark of possession or so the context seems to suggest.

The symbolism of Gethsemane would once again reappear in the chapter devoted to the "Ode" where the poem itself would be referred to as the "Prayer of the cup." [121] Few of the things that happened to Mandelstam are excluded from this scenario. The key event was the death of the poet in a transit concentration camp central also because it had at once converted into prophecy all the kenotic topoi of Mandelstam's oeuvre. What remained was the task of integrating the poet's biography into the mythologies of his writings. "My goal" wrote Nadezhda Mandelstam about her memoirs "was to justify Mandelstam's life by means of preserving what constituted its meaning." [122] If what she had in mind was a demonstration of the poet's identification with the central concerns in the culture of the Russian intelligentsia this task could not have been better accomplished. In the words of Mandelstam's poem "To the German Tongue" (1932) enveloped in another's speech he has become a letter an intoxicating line a book that we are now dreaming.

## Notes

[1] See a draft of Mandelstam's letter to I. I. Ionov. SS 4, pp. 121-126. The letter was written some time in January, 1929.

- [2]"Potoki khaltury" ("Streams of Slap-Dash"), *Izvestiia* 80 (April 7, 1929). SS 2, p. 428. The same issue contained a lengthy unsigned with the following impressive title: "To Purge the State Apparatus by Means of the Masses and together with the Masses." Appearing three months later in *Na literaturnom postu* (no. 13, July 1929), Mandelstam's "On Translations" ("O perevodakh"), was a much calmer and reasoned article.
- [3]D. I. Zaslavskii, "Skromnyi plagiat ili razviaznaia khaltura," *Literaturnaia gazeta* 3 (1929).
- [4]NM 1, p. 120.
- [5]NM 1, p. 186.
- [6]In a surviving draft of "The Egyptian Stamp," with the action set in the 1920's rather than during the "Kerenskii summer," the Oedipal theme was much more explicit, as was Parnok's identification with authorship: "Parnok wrote not for himself, not for the critics but for his dear mustachioed mother who deified him." The Princeton Archive. In the final version, "professional authorship is attributed only to the narrator, and the "mustachio" to the "young Greek woman lying in a coffin." Cf. also the "mustachioed silence of the [narrator's childhood] apartment."
- [7]SS 1:254. Bearing the date 7-9 May, 1932, the poem was first published in *Novyi mir* 6 (1932). Lamarck is presented here in terms of Mandelstam's "patriarchal" image. Cf. Khardzhiev's letter to Eikhenbaum (discussed in chapter 1) and the 1931 poem "Eshche daleko mne do patriarkha" (SS 1:251).
- [8]One might say that this metamorphosis had been "programmed" in the genetic code of the "mosquito," since it originated in the disguise used by Pushkin's Tsar Saltan (a character whose fate was similar to Joseph's) when he wished to visit incognito the county of his birth. On the "mosquito prince" from Mandelstam's poem "Ia ne znaiu s kakikh por," see Taranovsky (1976), pp. 30ff., and G. Levinton and R. Timenchik, "Kniga K. F. Taranovskogo o poezii O. E. Mandel'shtama, RL VI-2 (1978):200ff.
- [9]The poem was composed during Mandelstam's friendship with a biologist Boris Kuzin (like Mandelstam, an admirer of Bergson and a neo-Lamarckian) who was involved in the contemporary debates concerning the viability of Lamarckism for Soviet science. On B. S. Kuzin see his memoirs of his friendship with Mandelstam, "Ob O. E. Mandel'shtame," *VRKhD* 140, no. III-IV (1983):99-129. On the debates see P. P. Bondarenko, *Protiv mekhanicheskogo materializma i men'shevistvuiushchego idealizma v biologii* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1931), David Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science* (New York, 1961), his *The Lysenko Affair* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p. 207ff. and elsewhere, and Zh. Medvedev, *The Rise and Fall of T. D. Lysenko*, trans. by I. Michael Lerner (New York, 1969), pp. 9-17 and elsewhere.
- [10]"Gde noch' brosaet iakoria" (SS, 2:458). Although he did it without invoking the Dantean subtext (*Inferno* 3:111ff.), Ronen (1976) convincingly demonstrated that the subject of the poem, the "dry leaves of October falling off the Tree of Life," were not the Bolsheviks but the Whites fleeing the Crimea in the fall of 1920. Ronen thus disputed the assertion contained in the commentary accompanying the poem in *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* (New York), April 16, 1971. See also Broyde (1975), pp. 70-73 and p. 214 (note 37).

- [11]"Proslavim, brat'ia, sumerki svobody" (SS 1:103). This is another Dantesque poem by Mandelstam, at least, in so far as the last stanza recapitulates the story told by Dante's Ulysses about his last journey "beyond the pillars of Hercules" (hence "Take courage, men"). Cf. an analysis of this poem see Steven Broyde, *Osip Mandel'shtam and His Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1975), p. 47ff., and Aleksandr Morozov, "Mandel'shtam v zapiskakh dnevnika S. P. Kablukova," *Vestnik russkogo khristianskogo dvizheniia* 129, no. 3 (1979):134, and Nilsson, "Ship Metaphors in Mandel'shtam's Poetry," *To Honor Roman Jakobson*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (The Hague, 1967), pp. 1436-44.
- [12]Nadezhda Mandelstam described her husband's position in the years 1924-27 as a period when he tried to reconcile himself to the regime, "The Egyptian Stamp" being one product of this attempt at a reconciliation (NM 2, p. 255). See also her description of their visit to Shileiko in 1924, demonstrating that contemporaries were not unaware of these attempts. NM 2, p. 500ff. "Mandelstam was one of those who began to see early but he was not among the first of them, by far." NM 1, p. 186.
- [13]The "Light Cavalry" was the name of the special Komsomol groups charged with assisting the Party in its struggle against bureaucratization and poor economic performance in Soviet enterprises. These groups became especially active following the adoption of the Five-Year Plan in 1928. According to Nadezhda Mandelstam (NM 1, 186), "after severing his connections with the writers' organizations, Mandelstam served on the staff of *Moskovskii komsomolets* for almost a year," i.e., from the summer of 1929 to the spring of 1930. Cf. the interpretation of the passage below in Baines (1976).
- [14]SS 2, p. 179. The "Chinese games" (*kitaishchina*) most likely is an allusion to Dostoevskii's famous comparison of Russian bureaucracy with the Chinese Imperial state: "I would say that we are just like China only without her orderliness. We are only beginning what the Chinese have already accomplished. Doubtless, we will achieve the same accomplishment, but when? In order to accept a thousand volumes of ceremonies, in order to win the right never to think about anything once and for all, we will have to live for at least another thousand years of pensiveness..." F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols. (Leningrad, 1972-), 21:7. Given this subtext, to use the terminology of Kiril Taranovsky, Mandelstam's invective can hardly represent a wish for the return of the good old days before 1917. Rather, it has much in common with the mentality of War Communism when one did not have to "encode" into the
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- "formulae of "Chinese" servility the "great and powerful concept of class." Compare this with a 1922 essay, "The Furcoat": "This was a severe and beautiful winter of 1920-21, the last harvest-time winter of Soviet Russia; and I miss it, remember it with tenderness.... I feel oppressed by my heavy furcoat, just as the whole of Russia feels oppressed by the fortuitous satiety, fortuitous warmth, the ill-gotten second-hand wealth...." SS, 4:95. This is about the first glimmers of economic recovery under NEP.
- [15]O. Mandelstam, "Chetvertaia proza," SS 2, p. 178.
- [16]Sometime in the early spring, 1930, simultaneously with finishing "The Fourth Prose," and shortly before departing for Armenia, Mandelstam paid a visit to a psychiatrist. NM 2:298.

See also Nadezhda Mandelstam's petition to V. Molotov (December, 1930) requesting a university teaching position for Mandelstam. The request was motivated, in the words of the petition, by the "grievous state of poet Mandelstam," his "serious nervous disorder caused by a trauma (which resulted from the persecution of Mandelstam)." "Dva pis'ma N. Ia. Mandel'shtam," *Pamiat': Istoricheskii sbornik 1* (Moscow, 1976, New York, 1978), pp. 302-307. For additional biographical

" materials pertaining to the late 1920's and the early 1930's, see A. Grigor'ev and I. Petrova, "Mandel'shtam na poroge tridtsatykh godov," *Russian Literature V-2* (1977):181-192.

[17]NM 2, p. 405. All that Nadezhda Mandelstam remembered from the a destroyed section of "The Fourth Prose" were two sentences. One, quoted above, was followed by expletives (Komy on teper' nuzhen etot sotsializm zalapannyi. . .). The other: "If citizens suddenly decided to construct Renaissance, what would have come out of it? A cafe 'Renaissance,' at best." The second sentence suggests that the Menshevik position was not alien to Mandelstam.

[18]Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938*, (New York, 1973) pp. 313-15 and elsewhere.

[19]O. Mandelstam, "Polnoch' v Moskve." SS 1:260 (see above). According to Baines (1976), the poem was written in May, 1931. "1 ianvaria 1924" (SS 1:140) is perhaps the most elaborate of the early representations of this dilemma. On this poem and, specifically, on the use of the "fourth estate" in Mandelstam see Omry Ronen, "An Introduction to Mandelstam's Slate Ode and 1 January 1924: Similarity and Complementarity," *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 4(1979): 146-58. See also Ronen (1976) and his "C^etvertoe soslovie: Vierte Stand or Fourth Estate? (A Rejoinder)," *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 5-6 (2981):319-24. Ronen's insistence on interpreting the term chetvertoe soslovie as the proletariat is supported, if indeed it needs any additional support by the following instance of contemporary usage: "...Kuskova writes: 'the growing "fourth estate" cannot give up its hope for a distant paradise for labor, for the great promised land where there will be neither the rifles that shoot nor any inequality....'" A. S. Izgoev, "Na perevale. Zhizni' i publitsistika," *Russkaia mysl'* 33, no. 27 (1912):142 (2nd pagination).

[20]Responding to Pasternak (see Chapter VII on Spektorskii), Mandelstam was defending in this poem his right to pass judgement on the epoch. History was neither a fragile, nor cheap (pen'kovaia dusha), nor fastidious affair which constantly requires a ritual bath as a sacred monkey in a Tibetan temple. Fleishman (1980, p. 150, n46) offers a valuable subtext for these lines (Pasternak's 1928 poem, "Bal'zak"). The "Buddhist" motif, however, points strongly to Mandelstam's intellectual hero, Alexander Herzen, specifically, to his characterization of Peter I: "Petr I ne mog udovol'stvovat'sia zhalkoi rol'iu

" khristianskogo Dalai-Lamy. . . Petr I predstaet pered svoim narodom slovno prostoi smertnyi. Vse vidiat kak etot neutomimyi truzhennik, odyti v skromnyi siurtuk voennogo pokroia, s utra do vechera otdaet prikazaniia i uchit, kak nado ikh vypolniat'; on kuz- nets, stoliar, inzhener, arkhitektor i shturman." *O razvitii revoliutsionnykh idei v Rossii*, vol 3, p. 413. The Petrine metaphor for Stalin (recall his "Mao jacket") and the first Five-Year Plan were, of course, commonplace at the time. On one level, therefore, the poem's message is the awakening of Moscow-Russia from its ahistorical "Buddhist" (Herzen's epithet) torpor under the guidance of the "indefatigable laborer in a modest coat of a military cut," who

"from morning till night issues orders and teaches how they ought to be carried out [...]." On Stalin as one who does the "awakening" see below. This was not the first time that Mandelstam invoked Herzen's Peter (echoing Pushkin's view) as a measure of modern Russian history. See especially "Nashedshii podkovy." Cf. Broyde (1975), pp. 180-82. See also Henry Gifford "Mandelstam and Pasternak, the Antipodes," *Russian and Slavic Literature* (Banff, 1976), pp. 376-86.

[21] Pasternak (1965), p. 377.

[22] "Vek" (SS 1:135).

[23] "S mirom derzhavnym ia byl lish' rebiacheski sviazan" (SS 1:222). First published in *Zvezda* 4 (1931):113.

[24] "Ia s dymiashchei luchinoi vkhozhu" (April 4, 1931, SS 1:231). Cf. Baines (1976), pp. 27-28, 66.

[25] Kuzin, p. 114.

[26] "Za gremuchiu doblest' griadushchikh vekov" (SS 1:227). A number of drafts of this poem may be found in the Mandelstam archive at Princeton University. They indicate that during the initial stages of composition, Mandelstam was working on a text that would later yield three separate poems: the one mentioned above, "Ia s dymiashchei luchinoi vkhozhu" (SS 1:227), and "Net, ne spriatat'sia mne ot velikoi mury" (SS 1:232). Other lines and whole stanzas belonging to these drafts, though not all, have been published in SS 1:242-46. The "wolf" poem is dated by Nikolai Khardzhiev "17-28 March 1932." Osip Mandelstam, *Stikhotvoreniia* (Leningrad, 1973), p. 153. The dates for the other two in SS 1 are 4 April 1932 and April 1932, respectively. Khardzhiev also cites four different versions of the concluding stanza of the "wolf" poem (p. 288). For a discussion of the composition of the poem see NM 1, pp. 158, 197, 201-

" 202, 204, and Baines (1976), pp. 20-24.

[27] Mikhail Lermontov, "Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu," "Zvezda"; "Na severe dikom stoit odinoko Na goloi vershine sosna."

[28] Cf. "Zamechaniia" (1981); the anonymous author of the article was puzzled by Mandelstam's "over-reaction" to Pasternak's "perfectly innocent words."

[29] Boris Pasternak, "Krasavitsa moia, vsia stat'" (1931) *Vtoroe rozhdenie*. Cf. a discussion of Mandelstam's polemic in NM 1, pp. 158, and "Zamechaniia" (1981), p. 313ff.

[30] The story begins: "I have always been in sympathy with the central institutions. Even when they were introducing NEP during the epoch of War Communism, I did not protest. If it's NEP, it's NEP. You know better. But, by the way, during the introduction of NEP, my heart would desperately sink. I somehow envisioned certain radical changes. And indeed, during the War Communism, it was really free with respect to culture and civilization. Say, in the theater you were free to sit without taking your clothes off--just sit there in what you had on when you came. That was an achievement. This question of culture is a hard one. Take, for example, that [rule about] taking your

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"clothes off in the theater. Of course, no argument, without their overcoats on, the public is better distinguished. . ." Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Izbrannoe*, 2 vols., vol. 1: *Rasskazy i fel'etony. Povesti* (Leningrad, 1978), p. 168.

[31]O. Mandelstam, SS 1:230. The motif of the coat appears in another poem composed in March, 1931, "Zhil Aleksandr Gertsevich," an ironic self-portrait made up of Pushkin's first name, Herzen for a patronymic, and pieces of Schubert's *Lieder* for the family name. Recalling Gornfel'd's words, perhaps, Zoshchenko's Siniagin, and definitely Schubert's "Der Kra"he" from *Die Winterreise*: "With music-dove, Death isn't frightening, And afterwards--a crow furcoat--To hang on a hook."

[32]"As to the wolf cycle, it did not bode any special hardship--a labor camp at worst." Nadezhda Mandelstam, p. 16. See also Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Vtoraia kniga* (Paris, 1972), p. 603ff., which refers the composition of the "wolf cycle" to the period when the Mandelstams "thought that the screws had been tightened to the limit and it was time to expect an improvement." This ambivalence is, of course, detectable in much of Mandelstam's poetry written after his return from Armenia in the fall of 1930.

[33]The last stanza of the third version cited by Nikolai Khardzhiev (see note 30) contains another allusion to Dante in the second line (*Inferno* 32:46-8). Mandelstam: Take me away into the night where the Enisei flows And a tear on the eyelashes in like ice, Because I am not a wolf by blood And a human being will not die in me." Cf. Dante: "...their eyes, which before were moist only within, gushed over at the lids, and the frost bound the tears between and locked them up again." *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, tr. and comment. John D. Sinclair; *Inferno* (New York, 1961), p. 397. Dante's description refers to the traitors frozen in the ice of the Caina. Following the logic of the poem, it appears that Mandelstam was prepared to accept from the authorities a possible damnation as a "traitor," a betrayer of his own "oath of allegiance to the fourth estate," i.e., the people's Revolution, but not their definition of himself as a man guilty of such treason. If this misfortune were to befall him, the lines suggest, he would interpret it in the same way as Dante--another poet accused of treason--interpreted his exile by transforming it into the pilgrimage of *The Divine Comedy*.

[34]NM 2, pp. 460ff.

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[35]O. Mandelstam, *Puteshestvie v Armeniiu*, SS 2, p. 175ff. On it see Henry Gifford, "Introduction," in O. Mandelstam, *Journey to Armenia*, trans. Sydney Monas (San Francisco, 1979)

[36]NM 2, pp. 466-73.

[37]"Avtoportret" (SS, 1:164).

[38]"Kholodnaia vesna. Golodnyi Staryi Krym." SS 1:271.

[39]Mauss, *The Gift* (1967), pp. 41-43 and elsewhere.

[40]NM 1, p. 157, and "Zamechaniia" (1979), p. 314ff.

[41]For a discussion of these several other important subtexts of this poem (B. Pasternak, "V kvartire prokhlada usad'by"; Aleksandr Blok, "Druz'iam"; Nekrasov, "V. G. Belinskii,"

"Deshevaia pokupka") see Ronen (1973), p 385ff, and Ronen (1983). See also, V. V. Musatov, "Nekrasov v poeticheskom soznanii Mandel'shtama," in N. A. Nekrasov i russkaia literatura vtoroi poloviny XIX--XX vekov (Iaroslavl', 1982), pp. 94-101.

[42]"Kvartira tikha, kak bumaga." SS 1:272. A future student of this poem may wish to juxtapose the "still telephone" with the suicide theme in Mandelstam ("samoubiitsa-telefon" in SS 1:194; "k PerseFONe teleFON eshche ne proveden" in "Egipetskaia Marka");

" line 10 with the similar line in "1 January 1924"; line 18 with line 48 in "Polnoch' v Moskve" and with Pasternak's 1928 poem, "Bal'zak": "On v'et, kak nitku iz pen'ki, istoriiu sego pritona." See Fleishman (1982).

[43]Some time in the early 1930's, before Mandelstam's arrest, wrote Nadezhda Mandelstam, "The three of us [herself, her husband, and Akhmatova] were standing together when suddenly Mandelstam melted with joy: several little girls ran past us in a single file, imagining themselves to be horses. The first one stopped and impatiently asked: 'Where is the previous horsy?' The 'previous horsy' got bored with stomping its hooves and had fled... I grabbed Mandelstam by his hand to prevent him from joining the kids as the lead horse. Akhmatova, too, was sensing danger. She said to Mandelstam: "Do not run away from us-- you are our previous horsy." And we went to the Punins to have tea." NM 2, p. 415.

[44]For the events surrounding the composition of this poem see NM 1, p. 165-67ff. See also Baines (1976), pp. 84-86.

[45]O. Mandelstam, "My zhivem, pod soboiu ne chuiia strany." SS 1:286. For another version in which Stalin,

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"in reference to the brutality of the collectivization, is called a "murderer and a muzhikoclast" (dushegubets i muzhikoborets) see Baines (1976), p. 84.

[46]Vl. Maiakovskii, "Levyi marsh" (Left March): "We shall ride the nag of history to death with our left, left, left." The relation between this poem and Mandelstam's "He Who Found a Horseshoe" is discussed in Broyde (1975).

[47]"Dovol'no kuksit'sia! Bumagi v stol zasunem." SS 1:247.

[48]"Vy pomnite, kak beguny." SS 1:257.

[49]"Polnoch' v Moskve. . . ." SS 1:260.

[50]"Segodnia mozhno sniat' dekal'komani." SS 1:265.

[51]NM 1, p. 101 and elsewhere. The attitude of the other exiles in Cherdyn', who turned away from Mandelstam after the news of the commutation had arrived.

[52]"Ty dolzhen mnoi povelevat'" (SS, 4:515).

[53]"Stansy" (SS 1:312).

[54]"Ot syroi prostyni govoriashchaia" (SS, 1.311).

[55]"Den' stoial o pitai golovakh. . . ." SS 1:313.



[56]"Oboroniaet son moiu donskuiu son" (SS 1:371).

[57]"Sred' narodnogo shuma i spekha" (SS 1:361).

[58]"Esli b menia nashi vragi vziali" (SS 1:372). The correct version of the poem's coda, cited here, appears in a draft copied by Nadezhda Mandelstam's hand (deposited at the Mandelstam archive at Princeton University). Baines (1976), p. 202, however, follows the poet's widow in insisting that the poem ends instead in "Budet gubit' razum i zhizn' Stalin" (Stalin will keep destroying reason and life). But as previously noted by Brown (1967, pp. 601-3) and Jangfeldt (pp. 39-41), this reading, or version, contradicts the logic of the rest of the poem. The edition of Mandelstam's Voronezhskie tetradi prepared by Shveitser follows Brown and Jangfeldt, attributing the other version to "the memory of Nadezhda Mandelstam" (p. 85).

[59]SS, 4:147-48.

[60]Baines (1976), p. 175ff.

[61]This and the two poems to follow are SS 1:346, 347, and 348. Cf. Baines (1976), pp. 174-78. The word marked with asterisk is *verstki*, a play on at least two terms: *prodrazverstka* (grain requisitioning during the War Communism and the collectivisation), *verstka* ("galleys").

[62]"In the evening, at a dacha in Pavlovsk, these same gentlemen litte`rateur taught a lesson to a " poor youth--Hippolytus. He did not even get a chance to read to them out of his calico notebook. Some Rousseau!" O. Mandelstam, *Egipetskaia marka*, SS 2, pp. 27.

[63]"Net, nikogda nichei ia ne byl sovremennik" (SS 1:141).

[64]Anna Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, 2 vols. (1967-68), 2:181. Originally, these reminiscences appeared in *Vozdushnye puti*, 4 (1965).

[65]Clarence Brown, "Into the Heart of Darkness," *Slavic Review* 26, no. 4 (1967): 584-604. Hereafter referred to as Brown (1967).

[66]O, Mandelstam, "Esli b menia nashi vragi vziali." SS 1:372 represents a corrupt version of the poem. I am citing it here in the form it appears in V. Shveitser's edition of Mandelstam's *Voronezhskie tetradi* (Ann Arbor, 1980). See also a discussion of the text in Baines (1976), pp. 201-3, 205. The most apparent allusions are to the Lay of Igor's Campaigne (the ten hawks and the ten swans of Baian's fingers strumming the strings vs. Mandelstam's far less aristocratic and far more Biblical bullocks); to a Rembrandt "Pieta" (via the metonym of Rembrandt, his "Night Watch"; see also SS 1:364 and discussion below); to Pushkin's "Ne dai mne Bog soiti s uma" (lines 2-3 and 7-8 are an obvious polemic with Pushkin's "anti-civic" poem) and his "Pamiatnik" (line 22). The most important, polemical and therefore meaningful allusion is to Pasternak's "On vstaet. Veka. Gelaty" from his "Gerogian" cycle "Khudozhnik" (1936). The cycle appeared in *Znamia* 4 (1936) and elicited more than one response from Mandelstam. In this poem, Pasternak presented the poet as a folkloric warrior on a high horse riding into the "epoch," and pointedly not as a Baian ("gusliar") or a narrator of magic tales ("balakir"). The ostensible allusion is to the seventh stanza: "Like a thunderstorm, uniting on the road Life and chance, death and passion, You shall pass through minds and lands, to fall into eternity as a legend." Mandelstam's poem is,

obviously, a kenotic response to Pasternak's high-minded attempt to inscribe himself into Soviet modernity.

[67]NM 1, pp. 216-220 ("Oda").

[68]"Mandelstam's 'Ode to Stalin,'" *Slavic Review* 34, no. 4 (1975): 683-691.

[69]Jangfeldt, "Mandel's^tam's 'Ode to Stalin.'" K. Taranovsky discussed both the *Slavic Review* and Jangfeldt's texts in light of two authentic versions made available to him in "Dve publikatsii 'Stalinskoi ody' O. E.

"Mandel'shtama," *cando-Slavica* 23 (1977):87-88. The publication of the "Ode" in SS 4 follows the text established by Taranovsky.

[70]NM 1, pp. 216-220. See also Baines, *The Later Poetry*, pp. 174-98, whose account, although more detailed, closely follows that of Nadezhda Mandelstam.

[71]For the list of poems constituting *The Second Voronezh Notebook* see Baines, *The Later Poetry*, pp. 242- 243. The same list with only minor variations may be found in O. Mandelstam, *Voronezhskie tetradi*, pp. 35- 80.

[72]NM 1. pp. 212ff. ,

[73]SS 4, pp. 143-145.

[74]Most of Mandelstam's letters of this period end with an urgent plea for an answer by telegraph- a good indication of the sense of isolation Mandelstam was experiencing. ,

[75]O. Mandelstam, SS 2, p. 280ff.

[76]Pasternak's growing visibility and importance on the eve and during the Congress, culminating in Nikolai Bukharin's high praise, prompted a campaign on the part of Lilia and Osip Brik on behalf of the dead Maiakovsky which, in its turn culminated in Stalin's immortal formula (suggested by Osip Brik), "Maiakovskii was and remains the best and most talented poet of our Soviet epoch." Edward J. Brown, *Mayakovsky: The Poet and the Revolution*, p. 370. See also Guy de Mallac (1981), p. 142ff.

[77]For the accounts of the incident, see NM 1, pp. 25-27, 145-149, 152-157, 214. See also Iu. Krotkov, "Pasternak," *Grani* 63 (1967): 62, and O. Ivinskaia, *V plenu u vremeni* (Paris, 1978), pp. 75-82. Two most recent summaries can be found in "Zamechaniia" and in L. Fleishman, *Pasternak v tridtsatye gody* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 163-178 ("Arest Mandel'shtama").

[78]For Mandelstam, the term "master" had a negative connotation, as it designated older poets, no longer needed by the new Soviet state except for their expertise as versifiers. This was what Mandelstam had in mind when in the "apartment" poem he refused to "teach executioners how to twitter." For this usage of "master" see the review of Mandelstam's *Stikhotvoreniia* (1928) in *Izvestiia*. See also debates on Acmeism in *Literaturnyi Leningrad* in 1933-34. In this respect, Mikhail Bulgakov's designation of his novel's protagonist as "master" must be seen as a polemical attempt to return to the term its traditional honorable connotation.

[79]NM 1, p. 220.

- [80] Bruno Bettelheim, "Remarks on the Psychological Appeal of Totalitarianism," *Surviving and Other Essays* (New York, 1979), p. 319ff.
- [81] Cf. Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of language, or word, as a locus of clashing attitudes of speakers, elaborated in *Poetika Dostoevskogo* (especially, "Slovo u Dostoevskogo"), "Slovo v romane" and, in Voloshinov's *Marksizm i filosofiiia iazyka* (the final chapter on "nesobstvenno-priamaia rech"). In a sense the poetics of Acmeism, particularly Mandelstam, model this particular aspect of language insofar as they conjoin conflicting usages of poetic expressions. Even where the focus of the work falls on a "mythic" elaboration of a rhetorical item, the same operation of "clash" obtains. Cf. Akhmatova's recollection that Mandelstam's advice was "to clash words with diametrically opposing meanings." ("Mandel'shtam," in Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, vol. 2). However, this orientation toward "the word of the other," foregrounded in Acmeist poetics where it is foregrounded (Ronen, 1973), is common to any ideological text, and as such represents a certain ideological position. It is itself a "mythology" (R. Barthes), linked to others comprising contemporary ideological universe. Cf. R. Timenchik, "Tetkst v tekste u akmeistov" (1981), p. 73.
- [82] Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, pp. 147-54.
- [83] T "Nashedshii podkovu" (SS 1:140) bore a subtitle "Pindaricheskkii otryvok" (Pindaric fragment) which places this most "irregular" of Mandelstam's poems in the Pindaric tradition, not via Russian classical poetry, but but bypassing it. On this poem see Broyde (1975), pp. 169-99.
- [84] Letter of January 21, 1937. SS 2, p. 280ff.
- [85] Cf. Mandelstam's words from *Journey to Armenia*: "the oceanic news of Maiakovskii's death" with the "oceanic" metaphor here and in the "Conversation about Dante" where he likens the composition of blood to that of the ocean, salt, and the sun: "krov' soliarna, solonna."
- [86] Grigorii Kozintsev, "Tynianov i kino," and Sergei Eizenshtein, "Neposlannoe pis'mo Tynianovu," in V. A. Kaverin, comp., *Vospominaniia o Iu. Tynianove*, pp. 262-71 and 272-77, respectively.
- [87] [...] *Novoe chuvstvo prirody i istorii, chuvstvo tainstvennoi blizosti mira i prisutstviia beskonechnogo v konechnom sostavliaet sushchnost' vsiakoi podlinnoi romantiki [...]*. A. Blok, "O romantizme" (1919). In Blok, this was the "proximity to  
" the World Soul." A. Blok, SS, p. 363. See also Blok, SS 12, p. 171.
- [88] Frank J. Miller, "The Image of Stalin in Soviet Russian Folklore," *The Russian Review* 39, no. 1 (1980):60ff.
- [89] Iosif Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 13 vols. (Moscow, 1949-52), 4:46-61. The speech containing these famous six vows was made the day before Lenin's entombment, on 26 January 1924. The formula Stalin used runs as follows: "We vow to thee, Comrade Lenin, that we shall with honor fulfill this thy testament" (My klianemsia, tovarishch Lenin, chto my s chest'iu vypolnim etot tvoi zavet) And so six times. The words klianemsia and zavet, needless to say, belong to the Scriptural vocabulary, the first to The Old Testament, the second to both The New and The Old Testament (Novyi i Vetkhii Zavet). They emphasize the sacred nature of the leadership transition, sanctify its legitimacy and correspond to Stalin's self-

image that he would later so assiduously cultivate. As the "Ode" demonstrates, Mandelstam knew well how to "read" Stalin's speeches. Compare Stalin's vows to Genesis 26:3: "...for unto thee and thy seed I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath (kliatvu) which I swear (klialsia) unto Abraham thy father."

[90]Viacheslav Ivanov, "Pindar, Pif. 1," Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia, no 7-8 (1899), Otdel klassicheskoi filologii, pp. 50-51.

[91]Izvestiia, 2 October 1936.

[92]Apollodorus 1,2:2. There may be another, metonymic or contiguous, association of Stalin with the myth of Prometheus, which is focused on the Caucasus, the place of Stalin's birth and Prometheus's punishment.

[93]On the Stalin cycle see Cl. Brown (1967) and Baines (1976), pp. 174-98. On the function of cycles in Mandelstam's poetics see and NM 1, pp. 198-212, and the work of Taranovsky and Ronen.

[94]SS 1:330 and 331. ,

[95]Cf. Omry Ronen, "Mandel's^tam's Kas^c^ej," Studies Presented to Professor Roman Jakobson by His Students (Cambridge, MA, 1968), pp. 252-64, and Baines (1976), pp. 170-73. The poem is "Ottogo vse neudachi" (SS 1:337).

[96]Brown (1967), 598-600. "Vooruzhennyi zren'em uzki kh os" (SS, 1:367).

[97]NM 1, pp. 216-20, and Baines (1976), pp. 174-98. Nadezhda Mandelstam, for example, insists that the words of the "wasps" poem "I neither draw, nor sing..."

" are in direct opposition to the persona assumed by the poet in the "Ode" where he indeed draws. This observation, although backed by the authority of, perhaps, the sharpest reader of Mandelstam's poetry, has the flaws of any literal interpretation. In the "wasps", Mandelstam neither "draws nor sings," but in the poem written on the same day, 8 February 1937, he "sings while the soul is moist and the throat dry..." (SS 1:365). The same may be said about another poem (one among many) where a similar reversal takes place: "Do not compare, a living man cannot be compared" (SS 1:352). But on February, that is, seventeen days later, the poet breaks his own vow: Like the martyr of chiaroscuro Rembrandt, I have gone deep into the mute time, But the sharpness of my burning rib Is guarded neither by those guards Nor by this warrior who are asleep under the thunder-storm...(SS 1:364). Here the poet compares himself, not only to his brother artist, but also to the subject of the artist's painting: either the Crucifixion or Christ's resurrection from the tomb (viz., the "burning rib", the "sleeping warrior," the "guards"). Cf. Brown (1967), p. 385. On this subject cf. also Kiril Taranovsky (1976), p. 113ff.

[98]For the text of Pasternak's "Stalin" poem and its versions see his Stikhi 1936-1956. Stikhi dlia detei. Stikhi 1912-1957, ne sobrannye v knigi avtora. Stat'i i vystupleniia (Ann Arbor, MI, 1961), pp. 138-39 and 256. See also "Zamechaniia" (1981).

[99]See especially Pasternak's 1913 poem "Bliznetsy" ("Twins"). It begins, appropriately for Mandelstam, with the motif of solitary confinement: "Hearts and companions, we freeze, we--[freeze] like twins in cells of solitary confinement." B. Pasternak, Stikhotvoreniia i poemy (Leningrad, 1965), p. 495. The collection is permeated with astral thematism--

another aspect that Mandelstam, who would soon be composing his "stellar" cycle (including "Verse on the Unknown Soldier") must have found appealing.

[100]O. Mandelstam, SS 4, p. 140. If I am reading this letter correctly, the "Ode" represented another instance in an intense dialogue between the two poets in the 1930s. After all, the "wolf cycle" was prompted by among other things Pasternak's "Krasavitsa moia, vsia stat" (see above) while certain lines in Pasternak's "Vse naklonen'ia i zalogi" read like an admonition to Mandelstam put together from bits and pieces of Mandelstam's own poetry (The "Ariosto" cycle; SS 1:267-70). The admonition may have actually had an

" effect on Mandelstam, since its echoes are audible in "Esli b menia nashi vrugi vziali" ("Had Our Enemies Captured Me," see above).

[101]"Klialsia Gospod' i ne raskaetsia..." (Psalms 109:4); "Ne narushu zaveta Moego...Odnazhdy Ia poklialsia sviatostiiu Moeiu: solgu li Davidu? (Psalms 88:35-36).

[102]An English rendering of this stanza: "Armed with the eyesight of the slender wasps, Sucking the earth's axis, the earth's axis, I sense all that I have happened to encounter And recall by heart and for no reason...."

[103]Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York, 1944), pp. 153, 188-94.

[104]NM 1, p. 218, Baines (1976), p. 175. Curiously, neither author mentions this coincidence of Mandelstam's and Stalin's first names.

[105]SS 1:86-87. For an analysis of this poem see Clarence Brown, *Mandelstam* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 237- 45, and Gregory Freidin, "Time, Identity and Myth in Osip Mandelstam," Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979, pp. 164-68.

[106]Cf Derzhavin's ode "Bog."

[107]St. Augustin's *Confessions* and those by J.J.Rousseau. ,

[108]Katerina Clark, "Utopian Anthropology as a Context for Stalinist Literature," *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York, 1977).

[109]The appropriation of Prometheus to Christianity is, by no means an uncommon theme in modern European literature. "If the identification of Prometheus with Christ," wrote one scholar, "was the result of a mistake which was as much historical as ideological, then, it has to be recognized, rarely has a mistake been more productive." Raymond Trousson, *Le the`me de Prome'the'e dans la litte'rature europe'enne*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Geneva, 1964), p. 479.

[110]Apart from the "prayer of the cup" at Gethsemane, compare line 10 of stanza V with Matthew 27:34: "Dali Emu pit' uksusa, smeshannogo s zhelch'iu i, otvedav, ne khotel pit'."

[111]Reported by N. Khardzhiev, see NM 1, p. 268.

[112]"Gde sviazannyi i prigvozhdennyi ston" (SS 1:356).

[113]Sir James Frazer, *The New Golden Bough* (an abridged edition), ed. Theodore H. Gaster (New York, 1959), p. 35 (The Roots of Magic").

[114]"Khrani menia, moi talisman." See Ronen (1976).

[115]Frazer, p. 35

[116]To cite A. A. Potebnia, the "fundamental formula of a spell (zagovor)...constitutes a verbal representation in which a given or contrived phenomenon is compared to one that is desired, with the purpose of fulfilling the latter." *Malorusskaia narodnaia pesnia* (Voronezh, 1877), p. 21.

[117]I am relying here on Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York, 1972), especially pp. 117-21. Significantly for the history of myth in contemporary culture, Mandelstam praises myth in "Pushkin i Skriabin" in virtually the same words as Barthes uses to damn it: "It is this constant game of hide-and-peek between the meaning and the form which defines myth" (p. 118). Compare this with Mandelstam's idea of a poet "playing hide-and-peek with God." On the problem of this sort of concealment fundamental to texts in general see Jacques Derrida, "La pharmacie de Platon," *La dissemination* (Paris, 1972), where one finds the following definition of a text: "...un texte n'est un texte que s'il cache au premier regard, au premier venu, la loi de sa composition et la regle de son jeu..." (p. 71).

[118]"Prodigal Son" is the title of a chapter in NM 2

[119]Contrary to the sense conveyed in NM 1, Mandelstam's friend B. S. Kuzin, recalled that Aleksei Nikolaevich Tolstoi was a magnanimous actor in the arbitration between Mandelstam and Sargidzhan, who allegedly used force against the poet's wife. Kuzin (1983), p. 122: "A. Tolstoi, it was plain to see, did not try to add to the yapping of the dogs from the Writers' Union which had been loosed on Mandelstam. He did not even respond to the symbolic slap, which he received from O. E., in any way that might have worsened the clouds gathered over him."

[120]"The Procurator's cheek twitched and he said: 'Bring me the accused....'" Mikhail Bulgakov, *Belaia gvardiia. Teatral'nyi roman. Master i Margarita* (Moscow, 1973), p. 438. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochineii* 11:28.

[121]NM 1, p. 220.

[122]NM 2, p. 103.