

*For my wife Natalia Kazakova and my son Yuri,
great lovers of Osip Mandelstam's poetry and prose,
who encouraged me for many years.*

Contents

Acknowledgements	15
A Note on the Text	18
Osip Mandelstam: “Centuries encircle me with fire”	19
On Translating Mandelstam	66

ОСИП МАНДЕЛЬШТАМ (1891–1938) / OSIP MANDELSTAM (1891–1938)

Из книги «Камень» (стихотворения 1908–1915)

From *Stone* (poems of 1908–1915)

«Дано мне тело — что мне делать с ним...»	78
“I am given a body—what should I...”	79
«Я ненавижу свет...»	80
“I hate the light...”	81
«Паденье — неизменный спутник страха...»	82
“The fall is a constant companion of fear...”	83
Айя-София	84
Hagia Sophia	85
«... На луне не растёт...»	86
“... Not a single blade...”	87
Посох	88
The Wand	89
«Уничтожает пламень...»	90
“The fire destroys...”	91

Из книги «Tristia» (стихотворения 1916–1922)

From *Tristia* (poems of 1916–1922)

Декабрист	92
A Decembrist	93
«Когда в тёплой ночи замирает...»	94
“When a feverish forum of Moscow...”	95

«Прославим, братья, сумерки свободы...»	96
“Hail, brothers, let us praise our freedom’s twilight...”	97
Tristia	98
Tristia	99
«На каменных отрогах Пиэрии...»	100
“On steep stony ridges of Pieria...”	101
«Сёстры — тяжесть и нежность, одинаковы ваши приметы...»	102
“Sisters, heaviness and tenderness, your traits are akin...”	103
«Вернись в смесительное лоно...»	104
“Go back to the incestuous womb...”	105
«Веницейской жизни, мрачной и бесплодной...»	106
“The meaning of fruitless and gloomy...”	107
«За то, что я руки твои не сумел удержать...»	108
“Because I could not hold your hands in mine...”	109

**Из книги «Стихотворения»
(1928 г., стихотворения 1921–1925 гг.)**

**From *Poems*
(1928, poems of 1921–1925)**

«С розовой пеной усталости у мягких губ...»	110
“With the pink foam of fatigue around soft lips...”	111
Век	112
The Age	113
Нашедший подкову	116
The Horseshoe Finder	117
Грифельная ода	122
The Slate Ode	123
«Язык бульжника мне голубя понятней...»	128
“Clearer than pigeon’s talk to me is stone’s tongue...”	129
А небо будущим беременно...	130
And the Sky is Pregnant with the Future...	131
1 января 1924	134
January 1, 1924	135
«Нет, никогда, ничей я не был современник...»	140
“No, I’ve never been anyone’s contemporary...”	141

«Я буду метаться по табору улицы тёмной...»	142
"I'll rush along a gypsy camp of a dark street..."	143

Из Новых стихотворений 1930–1934 гг.

From New Poems of 1930–1934

Армения	144
Armenia	145
1. «Ты розу Гафиза колышешь...»	144
1. "You rock the rose of Hafiz..."	145
2. «Ах, ничего я не вижу, и бедное ухо оглохло...»	146
2. "Ah, I can't see a thing, and my poor ear is deaf..."	147
3. «Ты красок себе пожелала...»	148
3. "You wished colors—and then..."	149
4. «Закутав рот, как влажную розу...»	150
4. "Covering your mouth like a dewy rose..."	151
5. «Руку платком обмотай и в венценосный шиповник...»	150
5. "Wrap your hand in a handkerchief and boldly..."	151
6. «Орущих камней государство...»	152
6. "A country of roaring stones..."	153
7. «Не развалины—нет!—но порубка могучего циркульного леса...»	152
7. "Not ruins—no, but a cutting-down of a mighty circular wood..."	153
8. «Холодно розе в снегу...»	154
8. "A rose is cold in the snow..."	155
9. «Какая роскошь в нищенском селеньи...»	154
9. "It's such a luxury in a poor village..."	155
10. «О порфирные цокая граниты...»	156
10. "Clanking on regal granites..."	157
11. «Лазурь да глина, глина да лазурь...»	156
11. "Azure and clay, clay and azure skies..."	157
12. «Я тебя никогда не увижу...»	156
12. "I will never see you again..."	157
«На полицейской бумаге верже...»	158
"On the police laid paper the night..."	159
«Не говори никому...»	160
"Don't tell it anyone—forget..."	161

«Колочая речь Араратской долины . . .»	162
“A prickly speech of the Ararat Valley . . .”	163
«Как люб мне натугой живущий . . .»	164
“How dear to me are those people . . .”	165
«Дикая кошка — армянская речь . . .»	166
“A wild cat—the Armenian speech . . .”	167
«Я скажу тебе с последней . . .»	168
“I will tell you this, my lady . . .”	169
«За гремучую доблесть грядущих веков . . .»	170
“For the thunderous courage of ages to come . . .”	171
«Нет, не спрятаться мне от великой мурь . . .»	172
“No, I won’t be able to hide from a great mess . . .”	173
Неправда	174
Untruth	175
«Полночь в Москве. Роскошно буддийское лето . . .»	176
“Midnight in Moscow. A Buddhist summer is lavish . . .”	177
Отрывки из уничтоженных стихов	182
Excerpts from Destroyed Poems	183
1. «В год тридцать первый от рожденья века . . .»	182
1. “On the thirty-first year from this century’s birth . . .”	183
2. «Уж я люблю московские законы . . .»	182
2. “I have already loved Moscow laws . . .”	183
3. «Захочешь жить, тогда глядишь с улыбкой . . .»	184
3. “If you are thirsty, then look with a smile . . .”	185
4. «Я больше не ребенок! . . .»	184
4. “I am no longer a child! . . .”	185
«Ещё далеко мне до патриарха . . .»	186
“I am far from being as old as patriarch . . .”	187
«Сегодня можно снять декалькомани . . .»	190
“Today we can take decals . . .”	191
Ламарк	194
Lamarck	195
Импрессионизм	198
Impressionism	199
Батюшков	200
Batiushkov	201

«Дайте Тютчеву стрекозу...»	202
“Give Tiutchev a dragonfly...”	203
Ариост	204
Ariosto	205
«Не искушай чужих наречий, но постарайся их забыть...»	206
“Do not tempt foreign tongues—attempt forgetting them, alas...”	207
«Квартира тиха, как бумага...»	208
“An apartment is quiet as paper...”	209
«Мы живём, под собою не чуя страны...»	212
“We live without feeling our country’s pulse...”	213
Восьмистишия	214
Octaves	215
1. «Люблю появление ткани...»	214
1. “I love when the substance appears...”	215
2. «Люблю появление ткани...»	214
2. “I love when the substance appears...”	215
3. «О, бабочка, о, мусульманка...»	216
3. “Oh, Moslem-butterfly...”	217
4. «Шестого чувства крошечный придаток...»	216
4. “A tiny appendage of the sixth sense...”	217
5. «Преодолев затверженность природы...»	218
5. “Overcoming the hardness of nature...”	219
6. «Когда, уничтожив набросок...»	218
6. “When having destroyed your draft...”	219
7. «И Шуберт на воде, и Моцарт в птичьей гаме...»	220
7. “Both Schubert on the water and Mozart in birds’ chirping...”	221
8. «И клёна зубчатая лапа...»	220
8. “And the jagged bough of a maple-tree...”	221
9. «Скажи мне, чертёжник пустыни...»	222
9. “Tell me, a draftsman of the desert...”	223
10. «В игольчатых чумных бокалах...»	222
10. “We drink the enchantment of causes...”	223
11. «И я выхожу из пространства...»	224
11. “So I leave space for a wild garden...”	225
Стихи памяти Андрея Белого	226
To the Memory of Andrei Bely	227

Утро 10 января 1934	228
The Morning of January 10, 1934	229
1. «Меня преследуют две-три случайных фразы...»	228
1. "I am haunted by a couple of random phrases..."	229
2. «Когда душе столь тóропкой, столь робкой...»	230
2. "When a soul, impatient, shy and fast..."	231
3. «Дышали шуб меха, плечо к плечу теснилось...»	230
3. "The furs of coats breathed, shoulder to shoulder..."	231
10 января 1934 (вариант 2)	232
January 10, 1934 (version 2)	233

Из Воронежских тетрадей (стихотворения 1935–1937)
From the Voronezh Notebooks (poems of 1935–1937)

Из Первой тетради
From the First Notebook

«Пусти меня, отдай меня, Воронеж...»	236
"Let go, Voronezh, raven-town..."	237
«Я должен жить, хотя я дважды умер...»	236
"I have to live though I died twice..."	237
«Лишив меня морей, разбег и разлёта...»	236
"Having deprived me of seas, flight, and space..."	237
«День стоял о пяти головах. Сплошные пять суток...»	238
"The day was five-headed: five unbreakable days..."	239
«Ещё мы жизнью пóблны в высшей мере...»	240
"We are still sentenced to life..."	241
«Римских ночей полновесные слитки...»	240
"Solid gold bars of the Roman nights..."	241
«За Паганини длиннопалым...»	242
"They run like a gypsy throng..."	243
«Исполню дымчатый обряд...»	244
"I'll fulfill a dim rite..."	245

**Из Второй тетради
From the Second Notebook**

«Не у меня, не у тебя — у них...»	246
“Not I, not you—but they...”	247
«Улыбнись, ягненок гневный с Рафаэлева холста...»	248
“Smile, angry lamb from Rafael’s canvas, don’t rage...”	249
«Дрожжи мира дорогие...»	250
“World’s golden yeast, our dear...”	251
«Ещё не умер ты, ещё ты не один...»	250
“You haven’t died yet. You are not alone...”	251
«Что делать нам с убитостью равнин...»	252
“What should we do with murdered plains...”	253
«Вооружённый зрением узких ос...»	254
“Armed with the vision of narrow wasps...”	255

**Из Третьей тетради
From the Third Notebook**

Стихи о неизвестном солдате	256
Verses on the Unknown Soldier	257
«Я молю, как жалости и милости...»	264
“I beg like compassion and grace...”	265
«Я скажу это начерно, шёпотом...»	266
“I will say it in draft and in whisper...”	267
«Может быть, это точка безумия...»	268
“It might be the point of insanity...”	269
«Не сравнивай: живущий несравним...»	270
“A living man’s unique: do not compare...”	271
«Чтоб, приятель и ветра и капель...»	272
“To help a friend of rain and wind...”	273
«Гончарами велик остров синий...»	274
“A blue island, green Crete is extolled...”	275
«Длинной жажды должник виноватый...»	276
“A guilty debtor of a long-time thirst...”	277
«О, как же я хочу...»	278
“Oh, how I madly crave...”	279

«Нереиды мои, нереиды!...»	278
“My nereids, oh, my nereids!...”	279
«Флейты греческой тэта и йота...»	280
“Greek flute’s theta and iota...”	281
«На меня нацелилась груша да черёмуха...»	282
“I’m under fire of a bird cherry tree and a pear tree...”	283
[Стихи к Н<аталии> Е. Штемпель]	284
[Poems for N<atalia> E. Shtempel]	285
I. «К пустой земле невольно припадая...»	284
I. “Unwillingly clinging to a bare land...”	285
II. «Есть женщины, сырой земле родные...»	284
II. “Some women are kin to damp earth...”	285
Abbreviations	286
Bibliography	287
Publications of Works by Osip E. Mandelstam	287
Translations into English	288
Translations of Osip Mandelstam’s Poems into Other Languages	288
Criticism	288
Index of poems	297

Acknowledgements

The list of my debts of gratitude is vast, but first and foremost, I want to thank Touro College and President Kadish for granting me a sabbatical to finalize my lifelong research and translation of Osip Mandelstam's poems: in my youth my friends and I retyped Osip Mandelstam's poems using carbon paper, from his *Voronezh Notebooks*, forbidden at that time. I also want to extend my gratitude and thank my publisher, Academic Studies Press, which published my previous book as well. I am extremely grateful to Yuri L'vovich Freidin (1942–2021) who not only gave permission to publish the poems of Osip Mandelstam but also verified the Russian originals; and to Dr. Oleg Lekmanov for midful remarks concerning the Russian texts. I would also like to thank Charles Bernstein and Jerome Rothenberg for their encouragement and support, and my son Yuri Probststein-Kazakov for some insightful remarks concerning some of my translations. I am grateful to the editors of periodicals listed below where my translations of Osip Mandelstam's poems have been first published.

Several translations and a somewhat different essay on Osip Mandelstam's poetry were published in my book *The River of Time: Time-Space, Language and History in Avant-Garde, Modernist, and Contemporary Poetry* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2017).¹

My translations of Osip Mandelstam's poems "The Horseshoe Finder," "The Age," and "January 1, 1924" were finalists for the Gabo (Gabriel Marquez) Prize for translation and multilingual texts. They appeared in *Lunch Ticket* (Summer/Fall 2016), a literary and art journal Antioch University's MFA program.²

My article "On the Translations of Osip Mandelstam's 'Stalin's Epigram'" was originally published in *Jacket 2*, August 11, 2014.³

1 Available online at: <https://www.academicstudiespress.com/jewsofrussiaeasterneurope/the-river-of-time?rq=The%20River%20of%20Time>.

2 <http://lunchticket.org/the-horseshoe-finder/>.

3 <http://jacket2.org/commentary/ian-probststein-mandelstam-stalin-epigram>.

My translation of Osip Mandelstam's «Неправда» [Untruth] appeared in *Sibylla* (Rio de Janeiro, Brasil), August 10, 2014.⁴

The article “Fear and Awe: On Osip Mandelstam’s ‘The Slate Ode’” and my translation of “The Slate Ode” into English appeared in *Brooklyn Rail: In Translation* (March 2011).⁵

My translation of Osip Mandelstam’s “The Octaves” appeared in *Brooklyn Rail: In Translation* (March 2011).⁶

My translations of Osip Mandelstam’s poems “I’ll Rush Along a Gypsy Camp of a Dark Street,” and “They Run like a Gypsy Crowd” were published in *CrazyHorse* 80 (Fall 2011): 87–89.

My translations of Osip Mandelstam’s poem «Стихи о неизвестном солдате» [Verses on the Unknown Soldier] and of other poems: «Я прошу, как жалости и милости» [I Beg Like Compassion and Grace . . .], «Я скажу это начерно—шёпотом . . .» [I will Say It in Draft, in a Whisper . . .], «Может быть, это точка безумия . . .» [It Might be the Point of Insanity . . .], «Чтоб приятель и ветра и капель . . .» [To Help a Friend of Wind and Rain . . .], «На меня нацелилась груша, да черёмуха . . .» [I’m under Fire of a Bird Cherry and a Pear Tree . . .] were published in *Four Centuries of Russian Poetry in Translation* 4 (2013): 14–20.⁷

My translations of Osip Mandelstam’s “Hagia Sophia” and “Impressionism” were published in *Osip Mandelstam: New Translations*, ed. Ilya Bernstein (New York: UDP, 2006), 6 and 19.

My translations of Osip Mandelstam’s cycle *Armenia* and other poems were first published in *The International Literary Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (2011).⁸

My translations of Osip Mandelstam’s “To the Memory of Andrei Bely,” “January 10, 1934,” “When a Soul, Shy and Fast,” “He Conducted the Orchestra of the Caucasian peaks,” “Amidst the Crowd, Bearded and Deep in Thought” were published in *Four Centuries of Russian Poetry* 3 (2012).⁹

4 <http://sibila.com.br/english/osip-mandelstam-untruth/10871>.

5 <http://intranslation.brooklynrail.org/russian/the-slate-ode>.

6 <http://intranslation.brooklynrail.org/russian/octaves-and-other-poems-by-osip-mandelstam>.

7 <http://www.perelmuterverlag.de/FC42013.pdf>.

8 <http://www.interlitq.org/issue13-2/osip-mandelstam/job.php>.

9 <http://www.perelmuterverlag.de/FC32012.pdf>.

My translation of Osip Mandelstam's poem "Lamarck" was first published in *Metamorphoses* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 76–79.

My translation of four poems: "Hagia Sophia," "I will Say It in Draft, in a Whisper," "Armed with a Vision of Narrow Wasps," "I will Tell You This, My Lady," appeared in *International Poetry Review* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 64–69.

A Note on the Text

My Russian texts for the translation and citations have been verified against the splendid and thoroughful editions: Osip Mandel'shtam, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem* [Complete works and letters], 3 vols., comp. and ed. A. G. Mets (Moscow: Progress and Pleiada, 2010); and idem, *Sobranie stikhotvorenii 1906–1937* [Collected Poems 1906–1937], comp. Oleg Lekmanov and Maksim Amelin (Moscow: Ruteniia, 2017).

Osip Mandelstam: “Centuries encircle me with fire”

The great Russian poet Osip Mandelstam (1891–1938) led an unsettled life full of tribulations, wandering and exile. After his Stalin epigram of 1933, the dictator, who used to say that “vengeance is best when served cold,” never forgave the poet: Mandelstam was sent to Cherdyn’ in Siberia. Afterwards, due to the protection of Bukharin, then a powerful Communist party functionary who was fond of Mandelstam’s poetry, the term was somewhat softened: Mandelstam had to live in the provincial town of Voronezh, deprived of the right to live in the capital and big cities. He was finally arrested again in 1937 and sent to the so-called Vladivostok transition camp Vtoraya Rechka [Second River], waiting to be transferred to the main Gulag Camp. The prisoners were transported by freight cars or box cars, and the way from Moscow to Vladivostok took more than a month. When Mandelstam arrived, he was already emaciated and sick. According to the witnesses, when Mandelstam was in a good mood, he would read the poems of Baudelaire and Verlain in French, Dante and Petrarch in Italian, and would also read Balmont’s, Briusov’s and his own translations. However, in the camp, he developed a mania that someone would poison him. He would grab a ration before they were officially distributed, for which he was beaten up. When a doctor, a fellow prisoner, examined Mandelstam, he said that he would not last long, and it was a matter of several weeks if not less when the poet would die. Osip Mandelstam perished on December 27, 1938, and was buried there in a communal grave.¹

Having gone through all the circles of earthly hell and purgatory, anticipating his own arrest and perhaps death, Mandelstam nevertheless claims that

1 *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva O. E. Mandel'stama*, comp. A. G. Mets, S. V. Vasilenko, L. M. Vidgof, D. I. Zubarev, E. I. Lubiannikova, P. Mitzner (St. Petersburg: n. p., 2019), 468–471. Hereafter, *Letopis'*.

heaven is a "lifetime home," thus creating his own form of *paradiso terrestre* ("earthly paradise," as Pound put it in Italian in *The Cantos*). In his later poem of 1937, Mandelstam wrote:

I will say it in draft, in a whisper—
 Since the time has not come yet:
 The game of the instinctive heaven
 Is attained through experience and sweat.

And beneath a temporal sky
 Of purgatory we often forget
 That this happy heaven's depot
 Is our expanding and lifetime homestead.

(1937; translation here and further is mine, if not noted otherwise)

Mandelstam does not see a contradiction between nature and eternity and, unlike the great Irish poet William Butler Yeats, never dreams of departing from nature; he even feels inferior to it.

Ne u menia, ne u tebia—u nikh
 Vsia sila okonchanii rodovykh . . .
 [It's not I, not you—it's they
 Who have the entire strength of gender (ancestral) endings.²]

In his usual manner, Mandelstam simultaneously implies several meanings in the word "rodovoi": "ancestral," "genus," and "generic," thus alluding to being and procreation as well as to creativity. He then states that "porous reeds are singing naturally in the wind, / and the snails of human lips [the metaphor speaks for itself] / will gratefully absorb their breathing heaviness." Mandelstam urges one (addressing himself rather than his readers) "to enter their cartilage— / and you will be the heir of their kingdoms. // And for humans, for their living hearts / Wandering in their curves and twists, / You will picture both their pleasures / And the pain that tortures them in time of tides."³ On another occasion, he wrote: "Na podvizhnoi lestnitse Lamarka /

2 Interlinear translation is mine. For the literary translation see p. 247.

3 Here I give an interlinear translation; see also the translation of this poem of 1936 in the *Second Voronezh Notebook*. Mandelstam uses the second person singular here in place of the first person. The specific role of personal pronouns in the structure of the poetic text was profoundly analyzed by Roman Jakobson, "Poeziia grammatiki i grammatika poezii,"

Ia zaimu posledniiu stupen'⁴ [On Lamarck's flexible scale / I will take the lowest stair], alluding to Jean Baptiste Lamarck's (1744–1829) theory of organic evolution, which Mandelstam openly admired both in his poetry and in prose: "Lamarck feels the rifts between classes. He hears the pauses and syncopes of the evolutionary line." Earlier, Mandelstam noted, "In Lamarck's reversed, descending movement down the ladder of living creatures resides the greatness of Dante. The lower forms of organic existence are humanity's Inferno."⁵ "Inferno" is the key word. If memory, progress, the refined human intellect do not matter, it is better to lose memory and perhaps humanity to escape the horror of contemporary life:

If all living nature is but an error
Of a short nightmarish day,
I will take the lowest stair
On Lamark's flexible scale.

Now the stanza acquires a different connotation due to the if-clause and the epithet "nightmarish." The poem seems to be about Lamarck's theory of organic evolution, but is really a sharp protest against the poet's contemporary life:

He says that nature abounds in fractures,
There's no vision—you see for the last time.

He says: "The resonance will cease,
You loved Mozart in vain:
A spider's deafness will seize
You—this gap is beyond our gain."

Nadezhda Mandelstam wrote in her "Comments to the Poems of 1930–1937" that in "Lamarck" and in "Octaves" 8 and 9 there is "a horrible fall of human beings who forgot Mozart and denied everything (mind, vision, hearing) in that kingdom of spider-like deafness."⁶ In the "nightmarish" Soviet life of

in *Poetyca* (Warsaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, Instytut Badań Literackich, and Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1961), 405, 409; see also Iurii Lotman, "Zametki po poetike Tiutcheva," in *O poetakh i poezii* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 1996), 553–564.

- 4 Osip Mandel'shtam, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, comp. and ed. A. G. Mets (Moscow: Progress-Pleyada, 2010), 1:171.
- 5 Osip Mandelstam, *The Complete Critical Prose and Letters*, ed. Jane Gary Harris, trans. J. G. Harris and Constance Link (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979), 367 (hereafter CPL).
- 6 Nadezhda Mandel'shtam, *Tret'ia kniga* (Moscow: Agraf, 2006), 283 (translation is mine).

that time, there was no need either for vision or hearing; therefore, there was no need for art or music. Naturally, it is Mandelstam, not Lamarck, who bitterly exclaims: "You loved Mozart in vain." In contemporary life as Mandelstam observed it, only primitive types could survive. There was no more need for the "uninterrupted procession of generations," as Przybylsky observed while analyzing Mandelstam's 1912 poem "Hagia Sophia."⁷ Reading "Lamarck," one might even suppose that there is no need for humanity at all. At the end of "Lamarck," written twenty years after "Hagia Sophia," the poet makes gloomy predictions:

Nature has turned away
As if she didn't need us anymore
And put our medulla, spinal cord,
In a dark sheath like a sword.

She was late or just forgot
To put down a drawbridge for those
Who have a green grave,
A lithe laughter and red breath.

I would not agree completely with the poet's wife, however, that "The Octaves" have the same connotations as "Lamarck." In my view, in "The Octaves," the poet summons the strength and willpower to preserve cultural memory and bridge its gaps and breaks, name the unnamed and thus overcome the infernal state of oblivion:

A tiny appendage of the sixth sense
Or lizard's parietal eye,
Monasteries of snails and shells,
And a hum of flickering cilia nearby.

Inaccessible—how close, but try to unfold—
One can neither see it, nor unbind,
As if a note from somebody you hold
And it should be immediately replied.
(*"The Octaves"* 4)

7 Ryszard Przybylski, *An Essay on the Poetry of Osip Mandelstam: God's Grateful Guest* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 109.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Приобрести книгу можно

в интернет-магазине

«Электронный универс»

e-Univers.ru