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COLLABORATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS: PASTERNAK AND MANDEL'SHTAM IN THE NINETEEN THIRTIES

ALEXANDER ZHOLKOVSKY

Abstract

The three-part article focuses on the paradoxical similarities and differences between the changing stances taken by the two poets vis-à-vis emerging Stalinism. The first part compares Pasternak's attempt at striking a "collaborationist" deal in his 1931 "I Want To Go Home..." fragment and Mandel'shtam's similar but desperately implausible bid in the same year's "Preserve My Speech...". The second analyzes Mandel'shtam's post-Voronezh 'Stanzas' (1937) as a last-ditch effort to gain official acceptance through an imitation of Pasternak's poetic strategies of the 1930s. The third shows the title protagonist of Doctor Zhivago, Pasternak's fictional *alter ego*, revising the poet's own earlier "collaborationist" position.

Keywords: *B.L. Pasternak; O. Mandel'shtam*

– Не упрямясь! Что тебе стоит? Плюнь да поцалуй у злод... (тьфу!) поцалуй у него ручку.
(A. Puškin, 'Kapitanskaja dočka')

The two great poets' polemic, dialogue, and even an unexpected concurrence (chronologically disparate as it was) on the subject of the Stalinism of the 1930s has long attracted the attention of critics. This began with Nadežda Mandel'shtam's take in her first book of memoirs – in the chapter programatically titled "Antipody" ("Antipodes").¹ There she outlined the dynamics

of attraction to and alienation from the regime, which started with Pasternak's accommodative *Vtoroe roždenie* (*The Second Birth*) and Mandel'stam's defiant anti-Stalin epigram but ended with a dramatic role-switch: with Mandel'stam writing his 'Ode' to Stalin and a pile of pro-Soviet poems and Pasternak (whose earlier collaborationism helped his survival) creating *Doktor Živago* and challenging the establishment with its publication abroad.

The intermediate steps of this tragic *pas de deux* are well known. Among the most relevant are the following texts:

Pasternak's: 'Borisu Pil'njaku' (1931/publ. 1931; further abbreviated as 'Drugū'), 'Volny' (1931/1932; in particular, the fragment "Mne chočetsja domoj, v ogromnost'...", abbr. MChD), "Stolet'e s lišnim – ne včera..." (1931/1932; abbr. 'Stansy'), "Kogda ja ustaju ot pustožvonstva..." (1932/1932), 'Chudožnik. 1', and its sequel "A v te že dni na rasstojan'i..." (1935/1936), "Ja ponjal: vse živo..." (1935/1936), 'Iz letnich zapisok. 3' ("Sčastliv, kto celikom...", 1936/1936), – all of them, as we can see, promptly published.

Mandel'stam's: the only poem published in his lifetime "Ja vernulsja v moj gorod, znakomyj do slez..." (1930/publ. 1932; abbr. 'Leningrad') and a number of unpublished during his lifetime – "Sochrani moju reč' navsegda za privkus nesčast'ja i dyma..." (1931; SMR), "Kvartira ticha, kak bumaga...", (1933; 'Kvartira'), "My živem, pod soboju ne čuja strany..." (1933), quite a few Voronež poems, including the 'Ode' (1935-1937) and, finally, such post-Voronež ones, as "Esli b menja naši vragi vzjali..." (1937), and the two poems dedicated to E.E. Popova: "S primes'ju vorona golubi..." (1937) and 'Stansy' ("Neobchodimo serdcu bit'sja..." ; 1937).

In an earlier essay, I dwelt on the dialogue between MChD, 'Leningrad' and 'Kvartira'.² In what follows I will focus first on the striking affinities of SMR and MChD, then on the remarkable Pasternakisms of Mandel'stam's 'Stansy' and, finally, on the interesting case of Pasternak's disowning his MChD in *Doktor Živago*.³

1. *Through Harness to Eternity*

Сохрани мою речь навсегда за привкус несчастья и дыма,
За смолу кругового терпенья, за совестный деготь труда.
Как вода в новгородских колодцах должна быть черна и сладима,
Чтобы в ней к Рождеству отразилась семью плавниками звезда.

И за это, отец мой, мой друг и помощник мой грубый,
Я – непризнанный брат, отщепенец в народной семье, –
Обещаю построить такие дремучие срубы,
Чтобы в них татарва опускала князей на бадье.

Лишь бы только любили меня эти мерзлые плахи –
 Как, прицелясь на смерть, городки зашибают в саду, –
 Я за это всю жизнь прохожу хоть в железной рубахе
 И для казни петровской в лесах топориче найду.

3 мая 1931

There exists an impressive amount of secondary criticism of this poem, unveiling most of its semantic and intertextual secrets.⁴ I will touch upon two issues: Mandel'stam's attempted acceptance of the regime and his poetic dialogue on the subject with Pasternak. The poet's readiness to a grim compromise with the reality of the "Great Turn" is a thorny topic, and SMR bears a most striking testimony to it.

A poet's reaction to change, whether personal or social, often ushers a new stage of his creative evolution, consisting in an adaptation of his established system of motifs to the challenging new realities.⁵ Two invariant motifs of Mandel'stam's poetic world were especially relevant to the tasks he undertook in SMR.

The first one features an ambivalent acceptance of life, its hardships, hostile and alien forces, evil, death and fate – in the hope of achieving unity with the people and poetic immortality. Here are a few examples, arranged in their chronological order, with the segments that are most important from the standpoint of SMR in italics.

Твой мир, болезненный и странный, *Я принимаю, пустота!*
 Легкий крест одиноких прогулок *Я покорно* опять понесу;
 Курантов бой и тени государей: *Россия*, ты – на камне и крови –
Участвовать в твоей железной каре Хоть тяжестью меня благо-
слови!

Как аттический солдат, *В своего врага влюбленный!*
 Восходишь ты в глухие годы, – О, солнце, судия, народ.
И сам себя несущая, Как жертву, палачу.
Я все отдам за жизнь – мне так нужна забота, – И спичка
 серная меня б согреть могла.

Тянуться с нежностью бессмысленно к чужому, И шарить в
пустоте, и терпеливо ждать.

Душно – и все-таки до смерти хочется жить.
 – Ничего, хороша, хороша... *Я и сам ведь такой же, кума.*
Ты должен мной повелевать, А я обязан быть послушным.
Моя страна со мною говорила, Мирволила, журила, не прочла,
 [...] Адмиралтейским лучиком зажгла. *Я должен жить, дыша и*
большевеея, Работать речь, не слушаясь – сам-друг.

The other invariant essential for SMR is the "contractual" motif, which is quite prominent in the text thanks to a consistent use of the syntactic

structures of purpose and cause, involving such prepositions and conjunctions as “за”, “чтобы”, “лишь бы только”, “для” (“for”, “so that”) and the predicates “сохрани” (“preserve”), “должна быть” (“must be”) and “обещаю” (“I promise”). In SMR, this invariant stance results in a peculiar contract concluded by the poet with Fate (represented by the authorities, the Russian people, the Russian language, the literary process). In Mandel’shtam’s oeuvre as a whole it has a range of various implementations, all in keeping with the poet’s strong conviction that the world is governed by the laws of cause-and-effect, that one has to pay for everything, which means, on balance, that sacrifices are not made in vain as they promise a meaningful future and even immortality.

I will illustrate this cluster with more quotations and highlight the passages that make it obvious how instrumental this “contractual” motif is in substantiating the difficult conformist decision underlying SMR. The persistent recurrence of the themes of poetic immortality, unity with the people and the like testifies how organic this extreme move was to Mandel’shtam’s poetic world.

За радость тихую дышать и *жить* Кого, скажите, мне *благодарить*? [...] *Пускай* мгновения стекает муть – Узора милого *не зачеркнуть*.

Я хочу *поужинать*, и *звезды Золотые* в темном *кошельке*! [...] Если я на то имею *право*, – *Разменяйте* мне мой *золотой*!

Но выдает себя снаружи *тайный план*, Здесь *позаботилась* подпружных арок сила, *Чтоб* масса грузная стены не сокрушила [...] Тем чаще думал я: из тяжести *недоброй* И я когда-нибудь *прекрасное создам*.

На каменных отрогах Пиэрии Водили музы первый хоровод, *Чтобы*, как пчелы, лирики слепые Нам подарили *ионийский мед*.

За то, что я руки твои не сумел удержать, *За то, что* я предал соленые нежные губы, Я *должен* рассвета в *дремучем* акрополе ждать.

Чтобы силой или лаской Чудный выманить припек, *Время* – царственный подпасок – *Ловит* слово-колобок. И *свое находит место* Черствый *пасынок веков* – Усыхающий довесок Прежде вынутых хлебов.

Я *хотел* бы ни о чем Еще раз *поговорить* [...] *Чтобы* розовой крови связь, *Этих* сухоньких трав звон, *Уворованная* *нашлась* *Через* *век*, сеновал, сон.

Чтобы вырвать век из плена, *Чтобы* *новый мир* *начать*, *Узловатых* дней колена *Нужно* *флейтою* *связать*.

Чур! Не просить, не жаловаться, цыц! Не хныкать – *для того ли* разночинцы *Рассохлые* топтали сапоги, *чтоб* я теперь их предал?

Он *безносой* канителью *Правит*, душу веселя, *Чтоб* *вертелась* каруселью *Кисло-сладкая земля*.

Мало в нем было линейного, Нрава он не был лилейного, *И потому* эта улица Или, верней, эта яма *Так и зовется по имени* Этого Мандельштама.

Чего добились вы? Блестящего *расчета*: Губ шевелящихся отнять вы не могли.

Чтобы Пушкина чудный товар не пошел по рукам дармоедов, Грамотеет в шинелях с наганами племя пушкинovedов.

Народу нужен стих таинственно-родной, *Чтоб* от него он *вечно* просыпался.

Чтоб, приятель и ветра и капель, *Сохранил* их песчаник внутри, Нацарапали множество цапель *И* бутылок в бутылках цари.

SMR naturally belongs to this series and at the same time stands out, based as it is on the “за + чтобы” (“for + so that”) formula. This formula appears in the text three times – indeed, four, if we count the phrase “лишь” by “только” (“if only”) as a variant of the same. The only other text where the use of the formula is as frequent is the poem “*Za gremučuju doblest' grjaduščich vekov...*”.

It is not only that the clauses of this trade-off contract pile up: they keep expanding in unexpected and bizarre ways. In the first stanza, a sensible balance of services and rewards seems to have been achieved: the poet claims a reward (= preservation of his legacy) for his triple deserts: “привкус *несчастья*” (“the aftertaste of *misfortune*”), “смолу *терпенья*” (“the resin of *patience*”), “деготь *труда*” (“the tar of *labor*”) and their logical fruits (the wells that, like poetry, can reflect higher spheres: the Christmas Star). But then, his contribution for some reason (probably because the outcast poet is, so to speak, disfranchised and his contractual claims are declared invalid) fails to earn him the reward – and he has to raise his bid by promising additional services (to build a log shell, to wear fetters, to find an axe-handle). The basic principle of the deal – the service reasonably earning an adequate reward – is undermined. But that is precisely the point: the situation *is* abnormal.

Moreover, while the first stanza refers to *literary merits* (albeit negatively flavored, see “несчастье” [“misfortune”], “дым” [“smoke”], “терпенье” [“patience”], “деготь” [“tar”], “труд” [“labor”]) and thus ones that are most likely to be rewarded with preservation of the poet's oeuvre. But the additional actions offered in stanzas II and III are *extraliterary services*, in fact, certain forms of assistance in punishing third parties as well as the claimant himself. The poet's readiness to go to such lengths is the most poignant aspect of SMR. This is further accompanied by a grotesque transformation of the motif: the option that has been accepted by the poet as hard but reasonable (cf. “за *беззаконные восторги* лихая плата *стережет*”) turns out to be gross and absurd.⁶

The topos of a poet's contract with a supreme authority granting him poetic immortality is represented in Russian poetry by the genre of 'Monument', originating in Horace. The allusions in SMR to Puškin's "I've raised a monument to myself not made by human hands..." have been noted by scholars, with special reference to the *za*-motif.⁷ In fact, the two texts share a whole cluster of common features:

- claim of immortality;
- appeal to the people;
- references to language/speech and Oriental ethnos, cf. Puškin's "Tungus" and "Kalmyk" with Mandel'shtam's "татарва" ("Tatar folk");
- the motif of cruelty (and offense);
- the basic vocabulary of "жизнь" ("life") – "смерть" ("death") – "любовь" ("love"), cf. "любезен" ("endeared") in Puškin, "любили" ("<they> loved") in Mandel'shtam;
- terms of kinship: "внук" ("grandson") – "отец" ("father"), "брат" ("brother"), "семья" ("family");
- predominance of future-tense and imperative forms;
- and the very format of a conversation about the posthumous preservation of the poetic legacy that starts in the poet's lifetime, i.e. in the present, and then gradually switches to the prospective future.

To be sure, there are obvious differences. The greatest one is that Puškin confidently, in the indicative mood, lists the events that have happened and are definitely going to happen to ensure his indubitable poetic longevity. He only resorts to the modality of the imperative in the last line where he appeals to his Muse, who is, of course, none other than his own poetic self, which leaves little doubt that she will grant all his requests. Puškin does not deny the import of objective factors – the political forces, the people, Russia, the survival of poetry as such, the prospect of personal death and decay, and, last but not least, God's will – but he is certain of the positive end result.

Mandel'shtam, on the contrary, starts with an apostrophe of the (unnamed) authorities/people/language/reader in an already somewhat problematic imperative mood: "сохрани" ("preserve"). All the subsequent verbs in the poem convey even more pronounced modalities: "должна быть" ("must be") – "чтобы отразилась" ("so that [the star could] be reflected") – "обещаю построить" ("[I] promise to build") – "чтобы опускала" ("so that [the Tatars could] lower") – "лишь бы любили" ("if [only they] would love") – "прохожу" ("[I] will always walk [wearing...]") – "для [...] найду" ("for [...] I will find"). The discourse never exceeds the limits of the contract, proposed by the poet but not yet approved by the supreme authorities: the actions, described in the future tense (and their list keeps growing throughout the text), comprises the services to be provided by the poet, yet there is no proof that he has been assured the reward he is thus pre-paying for: the preservation of his speech.

The modal nature of the discourse reaches its climax in stanza III with its subjunctives: the desperate “лишь бы только любили” (“if only [they] would love me”) and “хоть” (“even”). It was foreshadowed in stanzas I and II by the past-tense forms in the subordinate clauses of purpose: “чтобы отразилась”, “чтобы опускала”. The dubiousness of the statements gradually increases. In the first stanza (somewhat reminiscent of Puškin's ‘Monument’, as the offered services seem to be adequate for the reward), the pattern “чтобы отразилась” is used as a part of a more or less objective simile, and in connection with a peremptory “должна быть”. But in the second stanza, already rather “subservient”, the construction “чтобы опускала” functions quite unambiguously as a subordinate clause of purpose, but a purpose not yet achieved. In stanza III, both the grammatical modality of the discourse and its gruesome content reach a maximum: the offered services (wearing an iron shirt, participating in executions – on their receiving end, probably) as well as the expected benefits (being smashed to death by the loving executioners' blocks) are for the most part sacrifices made by the poet himself. There remains only a distant echo – in the ironic lines about the blocks' love for the speaker – of his hope to have his poetry preserved.

To bring Pasternak back in, what does his MChD have in common with SMR?

Мне хочется домой, в огромность
Квартиры, наводящей грусть.
Войду, сниму пальто, опомнюсь,
Огнями улиц озарюсь.

Перегородок тонкоробость
Пройду насквозь, пройду, как свет.
Пройду, как образ входит в образ
И как предмет сечет предмет.

Пускай пожизненность задачи,
Врастающей в заветы дней,
Зовется жизнью сидячей,
И по такой, грущу по ней.

Опять знакомостью напева
Пахнут деревья и дома.
Опять направо и налево
Пойдет хозяйничать зима.

Опять к обеду на прогулке
Наступит темень, просто страсть.
Опять научит переулки
Охулки на руки не класть.

Опять повалят с неба взятки,
 Опять укроет к утру вихрь
 Осин подследственных десятки
 Сукном сугробов снеговых.

Опять опавшей сердца мышцей
 Услышу и вложу в слова,
 Как ты ползешь и как дымишься.
 Встаешь и строишься, Москва.

И я приму тебя, как упряжь,
 Тех ради будущих безумств,
 Что ты, как стих, меня зазубришь,
 Как был, запомнишь наизусть.

First off, both texts feature the common “contractual” motif, typically based on the “monument” topos: Mandel’shtam’s patterns “за + чтобы” are echoed by the construction “тех ради..., что” (“for the sake of those..., that”) in MChD. The rationalistic motif of “contract” (exchange, calculations, equations, sufficient causes, etc.) was quite characteristic of Pasternak, especially in the early 1930s. Cf. the following quite impressive list of examples from *Vtoroe roždenie*:

Мы были в Грузии. *Помножим* Нужду на нежность, ад на рай [...] *И мы получим* этот край. И мы пойдем, *в сколь тонких дозах* С землей и небом *входят в смесь* Успех, и труд, и долг, и воздух, *Чтоб вышел* человек, как здесь. *Чтобы*, сложившись среди бескормиц [...] Он *стал* образчиком, *оформясь* Во что-то прочное, как соль.

Ты рядом, даль социализма [...] Где я *не получаю сдачи* Разменным бытом с бытия, Но *значу только то, что трачу*, А *трачу* все, что знаю я.

Дай мне, превысив нивелир, *Благодарить* тебя до сипу, И сверху окуни свой мир, Как в зеркало, в мое *спасибо*.

И рифма не вторенье строк, А гардеробный *номерок*, *Талон* на место у колонн *В* загробный гул корней и лон [...] *Но вход и пропуск* за порог, *Чтоб сдать*, как плащ за *бляшкою* Болезни тягость тяжкую, Боязнь огласки и греха *За* громкой *бляшкою* стиха.

Но старость – это Рим, который *Взамен* турусов и колес Не читки *требует* с актера, А *полной гибели всерьез*.

И *так как* с малых детских лет Я ранен женской долей [...] И *так как* я лишь ей задет И ей у нас раздолье, *То весь я рад сойти на нет* В революционной воле.

SMR and MChD also share a number of other situational and verbal motifs:

– appealing to some higher authority in 2nd p. sg.: SMR: “Сохрани [...] Обещаю” (“Preserve [...] [I] promise”) – MChD: “И я приму тебя [...] ты меня зазубришь” (“And I will accept you [...] you will cram me”);

– memory, preservation of speech: “Сохрани мою речь...” (“Preserve my speech...”) – “Что ты, как стих, меня зазубришь, / Как быть, запомнишь наизусть” (“That you will cram me, like a poem, / will memorize me, like a true story”);

– element of smoke in the poet's speech: “привкус несчастья и дыма” (“the aftertaste of misfortune and smoke”) – “вложу в слова, / как ты [Москва] ползешь и как дымишься” (“will put into words, how you [Moscow] are crawling and smoking”);

– winter imagery: “мерзлые плахи” (“frozen blocks”), “казни” (“executions”) – “взятки” (“bribes”), “осин подследственных десятки” (“scores of aspens on remand”); “сукно сугробов снеговых” (“the broadcloth of snow piles”) and other attributes of the winter that “хозяйничает” (“exercises its authority”);

– illumination, light: the author's poetry reflected in a well like a star – “озар[ение] огнями улиц” (“illuminating [oneself] with streetlights”) and getting through “перегородки” (“partitions”) “как свет” (“like light”);

– physical embodiment of obedience: “железная рубаха” (“an iron shirt”) – “упряжь” (“harness”);

– life-and-death imagery: “всю жизнь” (“[for] all [my] life”), “на смерть” (“[aimed] at death”) – “пожизненность задачи” (“the life-time [quality] of the task”), “опавшей сердца мышцей” (“[with] the sagged heart muscle”);

– totality of the effort – “всю жизнь прохожу” (“will walk through all my life [wearing]”) vs “пройду насквозь” (“will walk through”);

– images of construction: “обещаю построить [...] срубы” (“[I] promise to build [...] log shells”) vs “встаешь и строишься, Москва” (“[you] are getting up and building up, Moscow”);

– syntax of concession: “хоть” (“even”) – “и по такой...” (“and even such as...”);

– transition from the present to the future, with some of the verbs even rhyming in a way: the final “найду” (“will find”) in SMR – the “пройду” (“will walk [through]”) repeated three times in MChD.

But the differences are immense. While Mandel'stam is merely outlining the conditions of the arduous contract, Pasternak drafts it as if it had been already approved in advance: he does not doubt that, in return for accepting the “упряжь” (“harness”), he will be acknowledged by his contemporaries and posterity. Of course, compared to the Pushkinian-Horatian statement of an already achieved immortality (“Я [...] воздвиг” [“I have erected”]), Pasternak

is less assertive – still seeking a “deal”, but compared to Mandel’štam’s modalities, his indicative mood sounds quite confident.

As a result, Mandel’štam is ready to offer a lot more for a much weaker guarantee of preservation. In his “collaborationism”, he seems to go much farther than Pasternak, while his expectations remain much less feasible. In fact, this can be traced back to the difference in their tempers. Mandel’štam could rush from one extreme to the opposite: from SMR – to ‘Kvartira’ and the anti-Stalin epigram – and back to the pro-Stalin ‘Ode’, while Pasternak, who was originally ready “меряться пятилеткой” (“to measure [himself] with the five-year plan”; ‘Drug’), managed to negotiate a more pragmatic, moderate route to survival: “со всеми сообща и заодно с правопорядком” (“together with everybody and in keeping with law and order”; ‘Stansy’).

The most striking aspect of the unprofitability – and, what is more to the point, the absolute implausibility – of the deal planned by Mandel’štam is the following. The more concessions he is ready to offer, the more expressive he becomes in describing the atrocious terms he is willing to accept, the more unacceptable his offer becomes to his prospective partners, the powers that be. Hardly will they like being identified as executioners with their Petrine axes, frozen blocks and iron shirts, intent to smash somebody to death or, most chimerical of all, lower somebody into a dense log shell on a bucket – in a word, as Puškin’s Savel’ič would say, as “злодеи” (“villains”). Regarding themselves as revolutionaries and modernizers, they would hardly be impressed with the pronouncedly archaic props of the poem’s scenario. Offering what may seem to him a Pasternak-style compromise, Mandel’štam, in fact, speaks his mind about the situation in the country, which turns his text into an invective that sounds almost as hard as the direct accusations in his ‘Kvartira’ or the anti-Stalin epigram. That explains why SMR was not published – and, probably, was never supposed to pass the censorship. Making no effort to eliminate his “stylistic differences” with the addressees, Mandel’štam effectively sabotaged the monstrous compromise of his own making.

The most surreal are perhaps the lines: “Обещаю построить такие дремучие срубы, / Чтобы в них татарва опускала князей на бадье” (“[I] promise to build such dense log shells, / That Tatars could lower princes on buckets down into them”).⁸ In creating this eerie popular print (“лубок”), Mandel’štam, like his Ariosto, unleashes his imagination and, so to speak, “перчит все моря нелепицею злейшей” (“spices all the seas with most atrocious nonsense”; ‘Ariost’, 1933/1962). He can be said to follow the principle “the weirder – the better”: the more chimerical the log shells depicted by him are, the greater his achievement in their verbal construction is – and the less chance his “contract” has of being approved by his powerful partners.

In fact, the poet probably never had in mind participating personally in the building of log shells and delivering axe-handles to the executioners’

blocks. What he was really creating was a poetic, not man-made, monument to himself, an enterprise that is the more ambitious, the more ravingly – blessedly – nonsensical is the verbal edifice erected in the poem (cf. his programmatic lines: “За блаженное бессмысленное слово / Я в ночи советской помолюсь” (“For the blessedly raving nonsensical word / I will pray in the Soviet night”). This undertaking materializes through the very fact of writing this text – and as such it ends up being a true “monument”, no less assertive than the classical specimens of the genre.

On the other hand, Pasternak, in MChD, stays within limits – moderate, permissible, approved by the censorship, – and his “упряжь” will prove to be quite real – along with his temporary status as the Soviet poet No. 1.

2. *Outpasternaking Pasternak*⁹

It would take Pasternak years to get rid of his semi-official role. But for a time he would rest on the laurels of state recognition. Indeed,

– at the First Congress of Soviet Writers Nikolaj Bucharin suggested that Pasternak should be declared the best poet of the Soviet Union (1934);

– Pasternak was in a position to intercede – more or less successfully – with Stalin for arrested writers: first for Mandel'stam (1934), then for Anna Achmatova's husband and son (1935);

– he could afford, with exemplary modesty, to write a personal letter to Stalin thanking him for declaring Majakovskij the best and most talented poet of the Soviet epoch because the Leader's words “freed me [Pasternak] from the overestimation of my significance, that I started to be exposed to in the mid-1930s, at the time of the Congress of Writers” (1935);¹⁰ thus, he was able to keep his intention to refuse this “dangerous vacancy” (see the finale of the poem ‘Drug’);

– finally, on January 1, 1936, the major official newspaper *Izvestija* published his two poems about Stalin, in one of which the leader was directly referred to by name: “И Ленин, и Сталин, / И эти стихи” (“And Lenin, and Stalin, and these verses”).

Mandel'stam the outcast might have ascribed the lucky fate of his fellow-poet to having obtained a mysterious “охранная грамота” (“safe conduct”, as the title of Pasternak's prose piece is usually translated). He is known to have said: “I thought about him [Pasternak] so much that it made me weary” and “I'm sure, he hasn't read a single line of my poetry”.¹¹

We can suppose that trying to figure him out, Mandel'stam hoped to discover his survivor's magical recipe of adaptability to Soviet reality. One of his post-Voronež poems, apparently his very last one, looks like a desperate attempt to steal Pasternak's secret, to get a hold of the amulet granting him immunity, to fetishistically put himself in the other poet's shoes.

The title of Mandel'shtam's piece quoted below mimicks Puškin's 'Stansy' addressed to Nicholas I – the poem that was successfully recycled by Pasternak in his “Stolet'e s lišnim – ne včera...”, also known as 'Stansy'. Like the stanzas by Puškin and Pasternak (and the majority of poems from *Vtoroe roždenie*), this text is written in iambic tetrameter.

Стансы

Необходимо сердцу биться:
Входить в поля, вращать в леса.
Вот “Правды” первая страница,
Вот с приговором полоса.

Дорога к Сталину – не сказка,
Но только – жизнь без укоризн:
Футбол – для молодого баска,
Мадрида пламенная жизнь.

Москва повторится в Париже,
Дозреют новые плоды,
Но я скажу о том, что ближе,
Нужнее хлеба и воды, –

О том, как вырвалось однажды:
– Я не отдам его! – и с ним,
С тобой, дитя высокой жажды,
И мы его обороним:

Непобедимого, прямого,
С могучим смехом в грозный час,
Находкой выхода прямого
Ошеломляющего нас.

И ты прорвешься, может статься,
Сквозь чащу прозвищ и имен
И будешь сталинкою зваться
У самых будущих времен...

Но это ощущение сдвига,
Происходящего в веках,
И эта сталинская книга
В горячих солнечных руках –

Да, мне понятно превосходство
И сила женщины – ее
Сознание, нежность и сиротство
К событиям рвутся – в бытие.

Она и шутит величаво,
И говорит, прощая боль,
И голубая нитка славы
В ее волос пробралась смоль.

И материнская забота
Ее понятна мне – о том,
Чтоб ладилась моя работа
И крепла – на борьбу с врагом.

4-5 июля 1937, Савелово

'Stansy' is the second of the two poems dedicated to the beautiful Eli-konida (Lilja) Efimovna Popova, who was the object of Mandel'shtam's brief infatuation after his return from Voronež; she was the wife of the poet's friend the actor Vladimir Jachontov and a fanatical admirer of Stalin. One cannot help noticing a curious combination of the genres of a political poem and that of a love lyric: "his admiration for Stalin is inseparable from his admiration for the image of the woman Mandel'shtam is infatuated with."¹²

Not as emphatic, yet quite obvious, is the poem's emulation of Pasternak's 1930s style and his poetics in general, which, as I suggest, seemed to Mandel'shtam a guarantee of safety. As a result, his 'Stansy' to Popova might run the risk of being attributed – by a blind reviewer – to Pasternak, were it not for the ironic fact that the latter had by this time started breaking away from his collaborationism and gradually moving into internal opposition (which led to the gestation of *Doktor Živago*).

Let us outline a set of telling similarities between Mandel'shtam's 'Stansy' and some poems by Pasternak.

"Необходимо сердцу биться" – cf. in Pasternak: "Но как мне быть с моей грудною клеткой; Словесный сор из *сердца* вытрясть; *Опять опавшей* сердца мышцей Услышу и вложу в слова; [...] Событья былью заставляет биться."

"Входить в поля, вращать в леса" – cf.: "Из сада, с качелей, с бухты-баракты Вбегает ветка в трюмо!; И ливень въезжает в кассеты Отстроившейся красоты; Пускай пожизненность задачи, Врастающей в заветы дней; Струитесь, черные ручьи. Родимые, струитесь. *Примите в заводи* свои Околицы строительства; Ложиться будут [...] Живые нравы, навыки и песни В луга и пашни и на промысла."

"Вот 'Правды' первая страница, Вот с приговором полоса" – cf.: "И разве я не мерюсь пятилеткой, Не падаю, не подымаюсь с ней?; И вот года строительного плана, И вновь зима, и вот четвертый год; В ту даль, куда вторая пятилетка Протягивает тезисы души."

"Дорога к Сталину – не сказка, Но только – жизнь без укоризн [...]"
Мадрида пламенная жизнь" – cf.: "Ты куришься сквозь дым теорий,

Страна вне сплетен и клевет; А ты прекрасна без извилин; Ты стала настолько мне жизнью [...] И вымыслов пить головизну...; Эпохи революций Возобновляют жизнь [...] В громах других отчизн.”

“Футбол – для молодого баска, Мадрида пламенная жизнь. Москва повторится в Париже” – cf.: “Уходит с Запада душа, Ей нечего там делать.”

“Дозреют новые плоды” – cf.: “Вечерний мир всегда бутон кануна. У этого ж особенный почин. Он расцветет когда-нибудь коммуной В скрещении многих майских годовщин [...] Но с каждой годовщиной все махровой Тугой задаток розы будет цвель [...] Все встрепаннее, все многолепестней [...] Пока, как запах мокрых центифолий, Не вырвется, не выразится вслух, Не сможет не сказаться поневоле Созревших лет перебродивший дух.”

“Но я скажу о том, что ближе, Нужнее хлеба и воды” – cf.: “Ты рядом, даль социализма. Ты скажешь близь?..; Чтобы, сложившись средь бескормиц, И поражений, и неволь, Он стал образчиком, оформясь Во что-то прочное, как соль.”

“О том, как вырвалось однажды” – cf.: “И когда к колодцу рвется Смерч тоски [...] Что тебе еще угодно?”

“Непобедимого, прямого, С могучим смехом в грозный час, Находкой выхода прямого Ошеломляющего нас” – cf.: “О, если б я прямой возник!; Он мял бы дождь моих пророчеств Подошвой своего хребта; Не ведай жизнь, что значит обаянье, Ты ей прямой ответ не в бровь, а в глаз; Но корпуса его изгиб Дышал полетом голой сути, Прорвавшей глупый слой лузги [...] Он управлял теченьем мыслей И только потому страной; За древней каменной стеной Живет не человек, – деянье: Поступок, ростом с шар земной. Он – то, что снилось самым смелым, Но до него никто не смел. И этим гением поступка Так поглощен другой, поэт...; И смех у завалин, И мысль от сохи, И Ленин, и Сталин, И эти стихи.”

“И ты прорвешься, может статься, Сквозь чашу прозвищ и имен И будешь сталинкою зваться У самых будущих времен...” – cf.: “Может статься так, может иначе...; Разбужен чудным перечнем Тех прозвищ и времен, Обводит день теперешний Глазами анемон; Он вырвется, курясь, из прорв Судеб, расплющенных в лепеху, И внуки скажут, как про торф: Горит такого-то эпоха; И, протискавшись в мир из-за дисков Наобум размещенных светил, За дрожащую руку артистку На дебют роковой выводил.”

“Но это ощущение сдвига, Происходящего в веках” – cf.: “Это не ночь, не дождь и не хором Рвущееся: ‘Керенский, ура!’; Это слепящий выход на форум Из катакомб, безысходных вчера [...] Заколебавшийся ночи Европы, Гордой на наших асфальтах собой; Лишь был на лицах

влажный сдвиг, Как в складках порванного бредня. Ты спал [...] Врезаясь вновь и вновь с наскоку В разряд преданий молодых.”

“И эта сталинская книга В горячих солнечных руках” – cf.: “Но, исходив из ваших первых книг [...] Где крепи прозы пристальной крупицы, Он и во всех, как искры проводник, Событья былью заставляет биться.”

“Да, мне понятно превосходство И сила женщины – ее Сознание, нежность и сиротство К событиям рвутся – в бытие. Она и шутит величаво, И говорит, прощая боль” – cf.: “Ты стала настолько мне жизнью, Что все, что не к делу, долой; Ты точно бурей грации дымилась. Чуть побывав в ее живом огне, Посредственность впадала вмиг в немилость, Несовершенство навлекало гнев; Ты вся, как мысль [...] Твое присутствие, как зов За полдень поскорей усестся И, перечтя его с азав, Вписать в него твое соседство; Еще ты здесь, и мне сказали, Где ты сейчас и будешь в пять, Я б мог застать тебя в курзале, Чем даром языком трепать. Ты б слушала и молодеда, Большая, смелая, своя...;”

“И голубая нитка славы В ее волос пробралась смоль” – cf.: “А ты – подспудной тайной славы Засасывающий словарь.”

“И материнская забота Ее понятна мне...” – cf.: “Она вселяла гнев в отчизне, Как ревность в матери, но тут Овладевали ей, как жизнью, Или как женщину берут.”

“Чтоб ладилась моя работа И крепла – на борьбу с врагом” – cf.: “И так как с малых детских лет Я ранен женской долей, И след поэта – только след Ее путей, не боле, И так как я лишь ей задет И ей у нас раздолье, То весь я рад сойти на нет В революционной воле.”

It stands to reason that to make my point thoroughly and definitively convincing I would have to show which of these *loci communes* are rooted in Mandel'stam's own earlier works, which others are characteristic not only of Pasternak but perhaps of an entire stratum of Soviet poetry of the 30s,¹³ and, finally, where Mandel'stam obviously outdoes Pasternak, e. g., in the lines: “Я не отдам его! – и с ним, / С тобой, дитя высокой жажды, / И мы его обороним” (“I won't give him up! – and with him, / With you, the child of the noble thirst, / And we will protect him”).¹⁴ This, however, calls for a special research project, while the general picture seems quite clear: Mandel'stam is trying to borrow Pasternak's protective mantle as a shield against “the great rubbish” of the times.¹⁵ In vain, alas.

3. *Doctoring a Life*

Pasternak, who once wrote: “Я не рожден, чтобы три раза / Смотреть по-разному в глаза” (“I wasn't born to look into [somebody's] eyes three times in different ways”; ‘Vysokaja bolezn', 1923), dramatically changed his view

of Soviet history and his place in it in his novel *Doktor Živago*. He retrospectively renounced his “second birth” of the early 1930s – his one-time acceptance of socialism and its prospects.

The issue of this acceptance marks the watershed between the novel’s title protagonist and his old friends. A short time before his Tolstoj-like exodus, Jurij Živago, the author’s alter ego, harshly rebukes his friends for their pro-Soviet exhortations. Unwilling to hurt their feelings, he keeps his innermost – quite offensive – thoughts to himself for quite a long time, but finally makes a clean breast of it.

[Zhivago’s friends] were always at a loss for an expression. They did not possess the gift of eloquence. [...]

Both Gordon and Dudorov moved among cultured academicians, they spent their lives among good books, good thinkers, [...] and they did not know that the misfortune of having average taste is a great deal worse than the misfortune of having no taste at all.

Neither Dudorov nor Gordon realized that even their admonitions to Zhivago were prompted less by a friendly wish to influence his conduct than by their inability to think with freedom and to guide the conversation at will. *Like a runaway cart, the conversation took them where they did not want to go. Unable to steer it, they were bound, sooner or later, to bump into something [...].* And so, in their sermonizing, time and again they got off their tracks.

To Zhivago, their unconscious motives, their artificial emotionalism, and their strained reasoning were transparent. But he could hardly say to them: “Dear friends, how desperately commonplace you are – you and your circle [...]! The only bright and vital thing about you is that you are my contemporaries and friends!” [...] So, in order to spare their feelings, he listened meekly.

Dudorov had recently come back from his first deportation. His civil rights had been restored, and he had been allowed to resume his regular work at the university.

Now he was telling his friends about his experiences as a deportee. [...]

He said that the arguments of the prosecution, his treatment in prison [...], and particularly his private talks with the examining judge had “aired” his brains, re-educated him politically, opened his eyes to many things he had not seen before, and made him more mature as a person. [...]

Dudorov’s pious platitudes were in the spirit of the times. But it was precisely their conformism, their transparent sanctimoniousness, that exasperated Iurii Andreievich. Men who are not free, he thought, always idealize their bondage. [...] Zhivago could not bear the political mysticism of the Soviet intelligentsia, [...]. But this he also kept to himself in order not to hurt the feelings of his friends. [...]

[But finally he told Dudorov] “I found it painful to listen to you, Innokentii, when you told us how you were re-educated and became mature in jail. It was like listening to a circus horse describing how it broke itself in.”¹⁶

Quoting this fragment, I highlighted three key phrases that are relevant for the problem of conformism and tellingly reminiscent of Pasternak's poems of the 1930s.

First is the mention of the “cart” (“телега”), in a likely reference to the well-known lines from “Kogda ja ustaju ot pustozvonstva...” (1932):

Мы в будущем, твержу я им, как все, кто
Жил в эти дни. А если из калек,
То все равно: телегою проекта
Нас переехал новый человек.

The cart's co-occurrence, in the poem, with “проект” (“the project”, obviously that of building socialism) and the “новый человек” (“the new man”, undoubtedly, Soviet) and, in the novel, with Dudorov's idea of maturing as a “человек” (“person”) thanks to ideological brainwashing under duress makes the link between the two texts quite conspicuous.

This motif reaches its climax in the third key phrase highlighted above, where a character's transformation is associated with the image of a horse (and thereby again that of a cart). Now, who could be this horse that practically breaks itself in – not unlike the Gogolian “corporal's widow” (“унтер-офицерская вдова”), famous for having, according to the Mayor (“городничий”), whipped herself (“сама себя высекла”; *Revizor*), – if not the poet himself?! Cf. the finale of MChD:

И я приму тебя, как упряжь,
Тех ради будущих безумств,
Что ты, как стих, меня зазубришь,
Как бьль, запомнишь наизусть.

Pasternak's image of a horse harnessed to the new epoch can, in turn, be traced back to Majakovskij, who, in his poem ‘Dve Moskvy’ (1926), described how the new city “деревню погонит на корде” (“will lunge the village [like a horse]”). Later, in ‘Na čto žaluetes?’ (1929), Majakovskij formulated the tasks of poetry as follows:

Слезайте
с неба,
заоблачный житель!

- 3 See Žolkovskij (2014: 144-152, 242-255).
- 4 See Averincev (1990: 53); Vidgof (2010); Gasparov (1995: 44); Levin (1998: 16-17); Ronen (2002); Stratanovskij (1998); Surat (2011).
- 5 For a more detailed overview of methods of describing such processes as seen in Pasternak's and Mandel'stam's works see Žolkovskij (2011: 17-33, 301-309) and Žolkovskij (2005: 70-75) respectively.
- 6 This semantic shift is accompanied by a transition from the anapestic hexameter of stanza I to the anapestic pentameter of stanzas II and III.
- 7 See Vidgof (2010: 67-68).
- 8 For the real – historical, cultural and political – background of these lines see Ronen (2002: 51); Stratanovskij (1998: 217-218); Surat (2011).
- 9 I borrowed this formula from Achmatova's line: "Он Пастернака перепастерначит" ("he [a poet, admittedly Achmatova's own double in the mirror] will outpasternak Pasternak [himself]"; see the fragment "A v zerkale dvojnik burbonskij profil' prjačet..."; 1943/1969). Achmatova echoes there Pasternak's own line: "Он [город] звезды переобезьянил" ("it [the city] has outaped the stars"; 'Gorod', 1940-1942/[1943]), thus acknowledging Pasternak's role as the greatest poetic authority of the time and as such, a natural object of emulation, parody, and rivalry.
- 10 "Because they spared me the inflation of my importance, to which I began being subjected in the middle of the thirties around the time of the Writers' Congress" (see Pasternak's autobiographical sketch 'Ljudi i položenija'; Pasternak 1993, 3: 337).
- 11 See Anna Achmatova's biographical sketch 'Mandel'stam' (Achmatova 2001: 22). For Mandel'stam's obsession with Pasternak, particularly in connection with the anti-Stalin epigram, see Kušner (2005).
- 12 "Умиление Сталиным [...] неотделимо от умиления обликом той женщины, которой Манделштам увлечен" (Lekmanov 2004: 191). One is tempted to add that Mandel'stam's infatuation with a friend's wife who is a Stalin worshipper looks like a belated parody of Pasternak's own love for another Stalin fan – the wife of his friend Genrich Nejgauz.
- 13 See Gasparov (1996), and Lekmanov newest article (forthcoming), the author was so kind to show me.
- 14 This problem is touched upon in Lekmanov (forthcoming), according to which in the Stalin 'Ode', the motif of the poet protecting Stalin is practically the only instance of Mandel'stam's divergence from the standards of Stalin-adulation in 1937 Soviet texts.
- 15 See his 1931 poem opening with the line: "Нет, не спрятаться мне от великой муры."
- 16 *Doctor Zhivago*, XV, 7 (Pasternak 1958: 306-308).
- 17 Vykov (2005: 723). Indeed, that was probably the reason Pasternak made his protagonist an amateur-poet, completely free from the epoch's pressure, – something he had no chance of enjoying as a professional writer. In this way Živago was retroactively freed from those features of Pasternak's early writing that Pasternak later regretted as his formalistic experiments. Živago

proceeded directly to the style of “неслыханная простота” (“unheard-of simplicity”) and ideological compromises of the 1930s (see Pasternak 1993).

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