

Classic Poetry Series

# Osip Emilevich Mandelstam - poems -

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# Osip Emilevich Mandelstam(1891 - 1938)

Osip Mandelstam, also Osip Mandel'shtam, was born in Warsaw and grew up in samburg. His father was a successful leather-goods dealer and his mother a piano teacher. Mandelstam's parents were Jewish, but not very religious. At home Mandelstam was taught by tutors and governesses. He attended the prestigious Tenishev School (1900-07) and traveled then to Paris (1907-08) and Germany (1908-10), where he studied Old French literature at the University of Heidelberg (1909-10). In 1911-17 he studied philosophy at St. Petersburg University but did not graduate. Mandelstam was member of 'Poets Guild' from 1911 and had close personal ties with Anna Akhmatova and Nikolai Gumilev. His first poems appeared in 1910 in the journal Apollon.

As a poet Mandelstam gained fame with the collection 'KAMEN' (Stone), which appeared in 1913. The subject matters ranged from music to such triumphs of culture as the Roman classical architecture and the Byzantine cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. It was followed by 'TRISTIA' (1922), which confirmed his position as a poet, and 'STIKHOTVORENIA' 1921-25, (1928). In Tristia Mandelstam made connections with the classical world and contemporary Russia as in Kamen, but among the new themes was the notion of exile. The mood is sad, the poet is saying his farewells: "I have studied science of saying good-by in 'bareheaded laments at night'.

Mandelstam welcomed February 1917 Revolution but he was hostile at first to October 1917 Revolution. In 1918 he worked briefly for Anatoly Lunacharskii's Education Ministry in Moscow. With his frequent visits to the south Mandelstam avoided much of the troubles that complicated everyday life during the Civil War. After Revolution his views about contemporary poetry became harsh. The poetry of young people was for him a ceaseless cry of an infant, Mayakovsky was childish and Marina Tsvetaeva tasteless. He only accepted Pasternak and also admired Akhmatova.

In 1922 Mandelstam married Madzhda Iokovlevna Khazin, who accompanied him throughout his years of exile and imprisonment. In the 1920s Mandelstam supported himself by writing children's books and translating works by Upton Sinclair, Jules Romains, Charles de Coster and others. He did not compose poems from 1925 to 1930 but turned to prose. In 1930 he made a trip to Armenia. Mandelstam saw his role as an outsider and drew parallels with his fate and Pushkin's. The importance of preserving the cultural tradition became for the poet a central concern. The Soviet cultural authorities were rightly suspicious of his loyalty to the Bolshevik rule. To escape his influential enemies Mandelstam

traveled as a journalist in the distant provinces. Mandelstam's Journey to Armenia (1933) became his last major work published during his life time.

'We live, deaf to the land beneath us,  
Ten steps away no one hears our speeches,  
But where there's so much as a half a conversation  
The Kremlin's mountaineer will get his mention.'  
(from 'Stalin' 1934)

Mandelstam was arrested first time in 1934 for epigram he had written on Joseph Stalin. 'And every killing is a treat, For the broad-chested Ossete.' Stalin took a personal interest in Mandelstam and also had a telephone conversation with Boris Pasternak, asking whether he had been present when the lampoon about himself, Stalin, was recited by Mandelstam. Pasternak answered that it seemed to him of no importance but he wanted to speak with Stalin about very important matters. Mandelstam was exiled to Cherdyn. After suicide attempt, his sentence was commuted to exile in Voronezh, ending in 1937. In his notebooks from Voronezh (1935-37) Mandelstam wrote 'He thinks in bone and feels with his brow and tries to recall his human form', eventually the poet identifies himself with Stalin, his tormentor, cut off from humanity.

During this period Mandelstam wrote for Natasha Shtempel, his brave friend in the hard conditions, a poem in which he again gave women the role of mourning and preserving: 'To accompany the resurrected and to be the first, to welcome the dead is their vocation. And to demand caresses from them is criminal.'

Mandelstam was arrested for 'counter-revolutionary' activities in May 1938 and sentenced to five years in a labour camp. Interrogated by Nikolay Shivarov, he confessed that he had written a counter-revolutionary poem which started with the lines: 'We live without sensing the country beneath us, At ten paces, our speech has no sound and when there's the will to half-open our mouths the Kremlin crag-dweller bars the way.'

In the transit camp, Mandelstam was already so weak that he couldn't stand. He died in the Gulag Archipelago in Vtoraya rechka, near Vladivostok, on December 27, body was taken to a common grave.

International fame Mandelstam started to acclaim in the 1970s, when his works were published in the West and in the Soviet Union. His widow Nadezhda Mandelstam published her memoirs 'HOPE AGAINST HOPE' (1970) and 'HOPE ABANDONED' (1974), which depicted their life and Stalin era. Mandelstam's 'Voronezh poems', published in 1990, are the closest approximation what the poet

planned to write if he had survived.

Mandelstam wrote a wide range of essays. 'Conversations about Dante' has been considered a masterpiece of modern criticism with its fanciful use of analogies. Mandelstam writes that Pushkin's 'splendid white teeth are the masculine pearls of Russian poetry.' He sees the Divine Comedy as a "journey with conversations" and draws attention to Dante's use of colors. The text is constantly compared to music. "I compare, therefore I am," so Dante might have put it. He was the Descartes of metaphor. Because matter is revealed to our consciousness (and how could we experience someone else's?) through metaphor alone, because there is no existence outside comparison, because existence itself is comparison."

# A Flame Is In My Blood

A flame is in my blood

burning dry life, to the bone.

I do not sing of stone,

now, I sing of wood.

It is light and coarse:

made of a single spar,

the oak's deep heart,

and the fisherman's oar.

Drive them deep, the piles:

hammer them in tight,

around wooden Paradise,

where everything is light.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# A Phantom Scene Barely Glimmers

1

A phantom scene barely glimmers,  
The soft choirs of shades,  
Melpomene has lashed the windows of her room with satin.  
Wagons stand in the black gypsy-camp.  
The frost crackles outside.  
Everything is dishevelled -- people and objects,  
The burning snow crunches.

2

Piece by piece, the servants take down  
Piles of bearskin coats.  
In the rumple flits a butterfly,  
A rose is muffled in the fur.  
Gnats and boxes of colorful raimie,  
The slight heat of the theater.  
On the street the lamps flicker,  
And the heavy steam belches.

3

The coachmen are weary from shouting,  
And the night is pitch black.  
No matter, my dear Eurydice,  
That our winter is bitterly cold.  
For me, my native tongue is sweeter  
Than the song of Italian speech ,  
For in it, the fount of foreign harps  
Will mysteriously prattle.

4

The pitiful sheepskin smells of smoke,  
From a snow drift the street is black.  
From a glorious melodic den  
Immortal Spring flies to us, so that  
The aria eternally resounds:

'You will return to the green meadows,'  
And the living swallow fell back  
On the burning snow.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# A Young Levite Among Priests

A young Levite among priests,  
He remained long on morning watch.  
Jewish night grew thick around him,  
The ruined temple was solemnly being raised.

He said: the yellow of the skies is alarming.  
Run, priests, for night is already over the Euphrates!  
But the elders thought: this is not our fault;  
Behold the black and yellow light, the joy, the Jews.

He was with us when, on the stream's shore,  
We swaddled the sabbath in precious linen  
With a heavy menorah lit the night of Jerusalem,  
The heady fumes of non-existence.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam



# As Psyche-Life Goes Down To The Shades

As Psyche-Life goes down to the shades  
In a translucent forest in Persephone's tracks,  
A blind swallow falls at her feet  
With Stygian tenderness and a green branch.

The shades flock to meet the fugitive,  
Welcome their new visitor with laments,  
Wring their feeble hands before her  
Bewildered and in timid hope.

One holds a mirror, another a phial of perfume --  
The soul is a woman, fond of trifles  
And the leafless forest is sprinkled with fine rain of  
Laments, dry transparent voices.

And in the gentle confusion, not knowing what to begin,  
The soul does not recognize the spectral wood,  
Breathes on the mirror, and hesitates to give  
The copper coin from the misty crossing.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Beneath A Veil Of Milky White

Beneath a veil of milky white  
Stands Isaac's like a hoary dovecote,  
The crozier irritates the grey silences,  
The heart understands the airy rite.

The wandering specter of the centennial requiem,  
The grand bearing of the shroud  
And in a decrepit seine, the Gennesarian gloom  
Of the Lenten Week.

The Old Testament smoke on warm altars,  
And the final, orphaned cry of the priest,  
A regal, humble man: clean snow on his shoulders,  
And the savage purple mantles.

The eternal cathedrals of Sofia and Peter,  
Storehouses of air and light, the possessions  
Of the universal granary  
And the threshing barn of the New Testament.

The spirit is not drawn to you in sorely troubled times,  
Here drags the wolf's track of unhappiness  
Along the cloudy steps;  
We will never betray it:

For the slave is free, has overcome fear,  
And preserved beyond measure  
In the cool granaries, in deep combines,  
Is the kernel of deep, full faith.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Brothers, Let Us Glorify Freedom's Twilight

Brothers, let us glorify freedom's twilight –  
the great, darkening year.  
Into the seething waters of the night  
heavy forests of nets disappear.  
O Sun, judge, people, your light  
is rising over sombre years

Let us glorify the deadly weight  
the people's leader lifts with tears.  
Let us glorify the dark burden of fate,  
power's unbearable yoke of fears.  
How your ship is sinking, straight,  
he who has a heart, Time, hears.

We have bound swallows  
into battle legions - and we,  
we cannot see the sun: nature's boughs  
are living, twittering, moving, totally:  
through the nets –the thick twilight - now  
we cannot see the sun, and Earth floats free.

Let's try: a huge, clumsy, turn then  
of the creaking helm, and, see -  
Earth floats free. Take heart, O men.  
Slicing like a plough through the sea,  
Earth, to us, we know, even in Lethe's icy fen,  
has been worth a dozen heavens' eternity.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Every Church Sings Its Own Soft Part

Every church sings its own soft part  
In the polyphony of a girl's choir,  
And in the stone arches of the Assumption  
I make out high, arched brows.

From the ramparts, fortified by archangels,  
I surveyed the city from a marvelous height.  
Within the walls of the Acropolis, I was consumed  
With sorrow for the Russian name, for Russian beauty.

Isn't it just marvelous, we dream  
Of an orchard, soaring pigeons in the hot blue sky,  
A nun is singing the litany:  
Tender Assumption: Florence in Moscow.

The five-domed cathedrals of Moscow,  
With their Italian and Russian soul  
Bring to mind the Aurora, but with a  
Russian name, and in a fur coat.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Go Back To The Tainted Lap, Leah

Go back to the tainted lap, Leah,  
Whence you came,  
Because to the sun of Ilium  
You preferred yellow twilight.

Go, no one will touch you,  
Let the incestuous daughter  
Drop her head on her father's breast  
In the dead of night.

But the fatal change  
Must be fulfilled in you;  
You shall be Leah -- not Helen --  
Thus not betrothed,

For it is harder for a king's blood  
To flow in the veins than another's --  
No, you will love a Jew,  
You will vanish in him, and  
God help you.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# How Hard For Me, The Splendor Of This Crown And Robe

-- How hard for me, the splendor of this crown and robe,  
amidst my shame --

-- In stony Troezen will be an infamous calamity,  
the royal staircase will grow red with disgrace,

.....  
.....

and for the mother in love,  
the black sun will rise.

-- O, if hate would boil in my breast --  
but see, the admission itself  
has fallen from my lips.

-- Phedre burns in a black flame  
in broad daylight.  
The funeral torch fumes  
in broad white daylight.  
Dread your mother, Hippolytus:  
Phedre -- night -- watche s over you  
in broad white day.

-- I have stained the sun with black love . . .  
Death from a bottle will cool my ardor --  
.....

-- We are afraid, we do not dare  
relieve the king's grief.  
Wounded by Theseus, night  
fell upon him. But we,  
with a funeral song bringing home the dead,  
will pacify the black sun

of wild and sleepless passion.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# I Am Cold. Transparent Spring Dresses

I

I am cold. Transparent Spring dresses  
Petropolis in verdant down.  
But like a medusa, the Neva's wave  
Stirs up in me a slight aversion.  
Along the northern bank,  
The headlights speed away.  
Steel dragonflies and beetles are flying,  
Golden pinpoints of starlight glimmer,  
But not one of those stars will kill  
The heavy emerald of the water's wave.

II

We shall die in transparent Petropolis  
Where Persephone reigns over us.  
We drink with every breath the deathly air  
And every hour is our last.  
Terrible Athena, goddess of the sea,  
Remove your mighty helmet of stone.  
In transparent Petropolis we shall die,  
Where Proserpine rules, not you.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam



# I Am Sorry It Is Winter Now

I am sorry it is winter now,  
And you can't hear mosquitoes in the house,  
But you reminded yourself  
Of the frivolous straw.

The dragonflies hover in the blue sky,  
And fashion twirls like a swallow;  
A basket on the head,  
Or a bombastic ode?

I don't presume to give advice  
And useless excuses,  
But the taste of whipped cream  
And the smell of oranges is forever.

You define everything without thinking,  
And things are the worse for it.  
What can you do? The most sensitive mind  
Is put wholly on the surface.

You try to beat the yolk  
With an angry spoon.  
It grew white, it succumbed.  
Yet just a little more.

In you everything teases, everything sings  
Like an Italian roulade,  
And a small cherry mouth  
Demands some dry grapes.

Don't try so hard to be smart,  
In you everything is whimsy, fleeting,  
And in the shadow from your cap,  
A Venetian bautta.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# I Can't Sleep

I can't sleep. Homer, and the taut white sails.  
I could the list of ships read only to a half:  
The long-long breed, the train of flying cranes  
Had lifted once the ancient Greece above.

The wedge of cranes to alien far frontier --  
On heads of kings, as foam, crowns shine --  
Where do you sail? If Helen were not here,  
What Troy then means for you, Achaeia's people fine?

And Homer and the sea are moved by only love.  
Whom must I listen to? Homer is silent yet,  
And blackened sea with roar comes above,  
Sunk in triumphant noise, head of my sleepless bed.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# I Could Not Among The Misty Clouds

I could not among the misty clouds  
Your unstable and painful image catch,  
'Oh, my God', I promptly said aloud,  
Having not a thought these words to fetch.

As a bird -- an immense bird and sound --  
Holly Name flew out of my chest.  
And ahead the mist mysterious crowds,  
And the empty cage behind me rests.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# I Don't Remember The Word I Wished To Say

I don't remember the word I wished to say.

The blind swallow returns to the hall of shadow,  
on shorn wings, with the translucent ones to play.  
The song of night is sung without memory, though.

No birds. No blossoms on the dried flowers.  
The manes of night's horses are translucent.  
An empty boat drifts on the naked river.  
Lost among grasshoppers the word's quiescent.

It swells slowly like a shrine, or a canvas sheet,  
hurling itself down, mad, like Antigone,  
or falls, now, a dead swallow at our feet.  
with a twig of greenness, and a Stygian sympathy.

O, to bring back the diffidence of the intuitive caress,  
and the full delight of recognition.  
I am so fearful of the sobs of The Muses,  
the mist, the bell-sounds, perdition.

Mortal creatures can love and recognise: sound may  
pour out, for them, through their fingers, and overflow:  
I don't remember the word I wished to say,  
and a fleshless thought returns to the house of shadow.

The translucent one speaks in another guise,  
always the swallow, dear one, Antigone....  
on the lips the burning of black ice,  
and Stygian sounds in the memory.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# I Dream Of Hunchbacked Tiflis

I dream of hunchbacked Tiflis,  
Where a Sazandar's groan resounds  
The people cluster on the bridge,  
The crowd carpets the whole capital,  
While below, the Kuramurmurs.

Above the Kura are dukhans  
Where there is wine and good pilaf,  
A ruddy dukhanshchik  
Gives glasses to the guests,  
He is ready to serve you.

The thick Cahetian wine  
In the cellar is ready to drink --  
There in the coolness, in peace,  
You drink your fill, drink in pairs:  
Don't drink alone.

In the smallest dukhan,  
If you ask for Teliani,  
You will find a friend.  
Tiflis will be swimming in a fog,  
Your head will be swimming at the inn.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# I Had Not Tried The Wine That Ancients Made

I had not tried the wine that ancients made,  
And had not heard of Ossian's old tune;  
So why, on earth, I seem to see the glade,  
And, in the skies -- the bloody Scottish moon?

And the call-over of a raven with a harp  
I faintly hear in that silence, full of fright,  
And, spread by winds, the winter woolen scarves  
Of knights are flashing in the red moonlight!

I had received the blessing to inherit  
Another singer's ever rambling dreams;  
For kin's and neighbor's spiritual merits  
To have despise we're absolutely free.

And not a lone treasure, I suppose,  
Will pass grandchildren and to others fling,  
Again a scald will ancient songs compose,  
And, as his own, will again them sing.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# I Often Shiver With Cold

I often shiver with cold --  
I want to be mute as a thing!  
There is, in the skies, dancing gold  
Sending me commands to sing!

Singer, be sad and upset,  
Love, and remember, and call,  
Catch, from a dark planet sent,  
Light and magnificent ball.

That's a true link, I believe,  
With the mysterious worlds!  
What an oppressive grief,  
What a misfortune holds!

What if that star, as a pin,  
Suddenly I'll pierce my heart?  
That one, which shimmering spins  
Over the shop apart?

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# I Want To Serve You

1

I want to serve you  
On an equal footing with others;  
From jealousy, to tell your fortune  
With dry lips. The word does not slake  
My parched mouth,  
And without you, the dense air  
Is empty for me again.

2

I am not jealous anymore,  
But I want you,  
Alone I will take myself,  
Like a sacrifice, to the hangman.  
I will call you  
Neither joy, nor love;  
Some wild and strange blood  
Was switched with mine.

3

One more moment,  
And I will say to you:  
It is not joy, but torment  
I find in you.  
And, like a crime,  
I am drawn to you by  
Your tender cherry mouth  
Bitten in confusion.

4

Return to me at once:  
It is awful without you,  
I have never felt  
More strongly about you.  
And in the midnight drama



In dream or reality,  
In alarm or languor,  
I will call you.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# If I Am To Know How To Restrain Your Hands

If I am to know how to restrain your hands,  
If I am to betray the tender, salty lips,  
I must wait for daybreak in the dense acropolis.  
How I hate those ancient weeping timbers .

Achaian men equip their steeds in darkness.  
With jagged saws they rip firmly into the walls.  
The dry fuss of blood does not subside at all,  
And for you there is no name, no sound, no mold.

How could I imagine you'd return! How bold!  
Why did I lose touch with you so prematurely!  
The gloom has still not dispersed,  
The cock has not finished his song,  
The glowing ax has still not entered the pulp.

The resin came forth on the walls like a transparent tear,  
And the city feels its wooden ribs,  
But the blood rushed out to the stairs, an attack,  
And thrice the men dreamed of the seductive figure.

Where is pleasant Troy, where is the king's, the maiden's home?  
Priam's great starling coop will be destroyed,  
And the arrows will fall as a dry forest rain,  
And more will spring up like a hazel grove.

The last star's sting will be extinguished painlessly,  
And morning will knock on the window like a grey swallow,  
And slow day will begin to stir, like an ox in the haystack  
Just awakened from a long dream.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# In A Crystal Whirlpool, Such Steepness!

1

In a crystal whirlpool, such steepness!  
Behind us the sienna mountains stand out,  
Jagged cathedrals of raving mad cliffs  
Are suspended in the air,  
Where there is wool and silence.

2

From the hanging staircase of prophets and kings,  
Descends an organ, the fortress of the Holy Ghost,  
The brave barking and gentle ferocity of sheepdogs,  
The sheepskins of shepherds, and the staffs of judges.

3

Here is motionless ground, and along with it  
I drink the cold mountain air of Christianity,  
The abrupt Credo and the psalmist's pause,  
The keys and tatters of apostolic churches.

4

What sort of line could deliver  
Crystal high notes in the fortified ether,  
And from the Christian mountains in the astounded space,  
Grace descends, like a song of Palestine.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# In Petersburg We'll Meet Again

In Petersburg we'll meet again,  
As though we'd buried the sun there,  
And for the first time utter  
The blessed, senseless word.  
In the black velvet of Soviet night,  
In the velvet of worldwide emptiness,  
The kind eyes of touched women still sing,  
The immortal flowers still bloom.

2

The capitol arches like a wildcat,  
A patrol is standing on the bridge,  
A single angry motor speeds by in the dark,  
And cries out like a cuckoo.  
I do not need a pass for the evening,  
I am not afraid of the sentries:  
I will pray in the Soviet night  
For the blessed and senseless word.

3

I hear the theater's light rustling  
And a young girl's 'Oh' --  
In Kypris' arms, a huge bunch  
Of immortal roses.  
Out of boredom, we warm ourselves  
By a bonfire. Perhaps centuries will pass,  
And the kind hands of touched women  
Will gather up the light ashes.

4

Somewhere the red rows of the gallery,  
The sumptuous chiffon of the boxes;  
The clockwork-puppet of the officer;  
Not for black souls or vile hypocrites . . .  
Right. Put out, please, our candles  
In the black velvet of worldwide emptiness,

The sloped shoulders of blessed women still sing,  
But you won't notice the night sun.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Insomnia. Homer. Taut Canvas.

Insomnia. Homer. Taut canvas.

Half the catalogue of ships is mine:  
that flight of cranes, long stretched-out line,  
that once rose, out of Hellas.

To an alien land, like a phalanx of cranes –  
Foam of the gods on the heads of kings –  
Where do you sail? What would the things  
of Troy, be to you, Achaeans, without Helen?

The sea, or Homer – all moves by love's glow.  
Which should I hear? Now Homer is silent,  
and the Black Sea thundering its oratory, turbulent,  
and, surging, roars against my pillow.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# I've Lost A Delicate Cameo

'I've lost a delicate cameo,  
Somewhere on the Neva's shore.  
I pity the charming Roman girl,  
You said to me, almost in tears.

But why, fair Georgian beauty,  
Stir up the dust on a sacred tomb?  
Another downy snowflake  
Melted on her eyelid's fan.

You bowed your gentle neck.  
Alas, no cameo, no Roman girl.  
I pity the tawny Tintine -- virgin  
Rome on the Neva's shore.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Just For Joy, Take From My Palms

Just for joy, take from my palms  
A little sun, a little honey,  
As Persephone's bees commanded.

An unfastened boat cannot be untied.  
A shade shod in fur cannot be heard.  
In the dense forest of life fear cannot be overcome.

Only kisses are left for us.  
Furry, like small bees  
That die when they leave the hive.

They rustle in transparent thickets of night,  
Their home is the dense Taiga woods;  
Their food -- time, honeysuckle, mint.

So take and enjoy my passionate gift,  
A dry, unsightly necklace  
Of dead bees, who changed honey into sun.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam



# Let Us Go Where There Are Varied Crafts

1

Let us go where there are varied crafts  
And trades -- shashlik and chebureki,  
Where trousers on a sign give us  
The idea of a man.  
A man's frock coat: headless aspiration,  
The barber's flying fiddle, a mesmerizing iron,  
The appearance of heavenly washer-women --  
The smile of heaviness.

2

Here, the girls, their bangs aging,  
Contemplate the strange attire,  
Admirals in stiff three-cornered hats  
Bring Scheherezade's dream to mind.  
The distance is transparent. A few grapes.  
A fresh wind ever blowing.  
Not far from Smyrna and Baghdad,  
But difficult to sail,  
And the stars are everywhere the same.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Meganom

1

Still far the asphodels,  
grey-transparent Spring.  
Meanwhile, the sand rustles,  
the wave foams.  
But here, like Persephone,  
my soul joins the gentle circle,  
and in the realm of the dead,  
there were no seductive, sunburnt arms.

2

Why do we trust the boat  
with the heaviness of the funerary urn,  
and conclude the festival of black roses  
over amethystine water?  
My soul rushes there,  
to the cloudy cape of Meganom,  
and from there the black sail will return  
after the funeral.

3

How quickly clouds rush by  
in a sunless row and  
flakes of black roses drift  
under this windy moon.  
And, a bird of death and sobbing,  
the enormous flag of remembrance  
is dragged along the mournful border  
behind a cypress stern.

4

The sorrowful fan of past years  
unfolds with a rustle.  
My soul rushes there,  
to the cloudy cape of Meganom,

where with dark trembling,  
an amulet was buried in the sand,  
and from there the black sail will return  
after the funeral.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Nature's The Same As Rome, Was Reflected In It

Nature's the same as Rome, was reflected in it.  
We see images of its civic might  
In the clear air, as in the sky-blue circus,  
In the forum of fields, the colonnade of the grove.

Nature is the same as Rome, again it seems  
We have no reason to trouble the gods.  
We've got the viscera of the sacrifices  
To tell the fortunes of war, and slaves  
To keep the silence, and stones with which to build.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

## No, Not The Moon, But Simple Dial-Plate

No, not the moon, but simple dial-plate  
Is lightning me, and 'tis my nasty fate,  
That lights of stars I feel as light internal!

And loftiness of Batyushkov I hate:  
'What time is it?' - he had been asked there  
late --  
And he had answered with curiosity 'Eternal!'

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Not Believing In The Resurrection

## I

Not believing in the Resurrection,  
we strolled in the cemetery.  
-- You know, the earth everywhere  
reminds me of those hills  
.....  
.....  
where Russia breaks off  
above the black, deaf sea.

## II

The broad meadow runs away  
from the monastery's slopes.  
I really didn't want to go so far  
south of Vladimir's expanse,  
but to stay in this wooded, dark,  
and holy foolish place with such a dizzy nun  
means disaster is in store.

## III

I kiss the sunburned elbow  
and a waxen patch of forehead.  
I know it is still white  
under the tawny golden locks.  
I kiss the wrist where a bracelet  
has left a white band.  
The flaming summer of the Taurides  
causes such marvels.

## IV

How quickly you tanned,  
came up and kissed the poor Savior,  
couldn't tear yourself away --  
but in Moscow, you were proud.  
Only the name is left for us --

a marvelous, drawn-out sound.  
Take this sand being poured  
with my hands.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# O Heavens, Heavens, See You In My Dreams

O heavens, heavens, see you in my dreams!  
It is impossible -- you had become so blind,  
And day was burned as if a page -- to rims:  
Some smoke and ashes, one could later find.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam



# O This Air, Intoxicated With Sedition

O this air, intoxicated with sedition,  
On the black square of the Kremlin.  
The agitators rock the teetering world .  
It smells of restless poplars.

The waxen facades of the cathedrals,  
The thick forest of bells,  
As if a tongueless bandit  
Had vanished in the stony rafters.

But in the sealed cathedrals,  
Where it is cool and dark,  
Like in delicate clay amphoras,  
The Russian wine sparkles.

The whole Assumption, wonderfully rotund,  
The marvel of the arches of Paradise.  
And the Annunciation, in green,  
Suddenly seems to start to crow.

The Archangel and Resurrection  
Show through like a palm,  
Everywhere the secret burning, --  
In the wine jugs a hidden flame.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

## On A Sleigh, Padded With Straw

On a sleigh, padded with straw,  
Barely covered by the fateful mat,  
From the Vorobevy hills to the familiar chapel  
We rode through enormous Moscow.

But in Uglich, the children play mumbletypeg,  
And it smells of bread left in the oven.  
They carry me along the streets without my hat;  
In the oratory three candles burn.

Not three burning candles -- three meetings.  
One consecrated by God Himself.  
A fourth would never be, but Rome is far --  
And He was never fond of Rome.

The sled dashed through black ruts,  
People were returning from the promenade.  
Wretched peasants with their angry wives  
Cracked seeds by the gate.

The damp distance blackened with flocks of birds,  
The bound hands swelled. They carry the Carevich,  
The body grows terribly numb,  
They set fire to the reddened straw.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Petropolis

From a fearful height, a wandering light,  
but does a star glitter like this, crying?  
Transparent star, wandering light  
your brother, Petropolis, is dying.

From a fearful height, earthly dreams are alight,  
and a green star is crying.  
Oh star, if you are the brother of water and light,  
your brother, Petropolis, is dying.

A monstrous ship, from a fearful height,  
is rushing on, spreading its wings, flying.  
Green star, in beautiful poverty,  
your brother, Petropolis, is dying.

Transparent spring has broken, above the black Neva's hiss  
the wax of immortality is liquefying.  
Oh if you are star – your city, Petropolis,  
your brother, Petropolis, is dying.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Rome

Rome is but nature's twin, which has reflected Rome.  
We see its civic might, the signs of its decorum  
In the transparent air, the firmament's blue dome,  
The colonnades of groves and in the meadow's forum.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Silentium

She has not yet been born:

she is music and word,  
and therefore the untorn,  
fabric of what is stirred.

Silent the ocean breathes.  
Madly day's glitter roams.  
Spray of pale lilac foams,  
in a bowl of grey-blue leaves.

May my lips rehearse  
the primordial silence,  
like a note of crystal clearness,  
sounding, pure from birth!

Stay as foam Aphrodite – Art –  
and return, Word, where music begins:  
and, fused with life's origins,  
be ashamed heart, of heart!

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Sisters

Sisters - Heaviness and Tenderness- you look the same.

Wasps and bees both suck the heavy rose.

Man dies, and the hot sand cools again.

Carried off on a black stretcher, yesterday's sun goes.

Oh, honeycombs' heaviness, nets' tenderness,  
it's easier to lift a stone than to say your name!

I have one purpose left, a golden purpose,  
how, from time's weight, to free myself again.

I drink the turbid air like a dark water.

The rose was earth; time, ploughed from underneath.

Woven, the heavy, tender roses, in a slow vortex,  
the roses, heaviness and tenderness, in a double-wreath.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Still I Have Not Died, And Still Am Not Alone

Still I have not died, and still am not alone,  
while with my beggarwoman friend  
I take my pleasure from the grandeur of the plain  
and from its gloom, its hunger and its hurricanes.

In splendid poverty, luxurious beggardom  
I live alone - both peaceful and resigned -  
blessed are those days and nights  
and blameless is the sweetly sounding work.

Unhappy the man who like his shadow  
quivers at a bark, is scythed down by the wind,  
and poor the man who, half alive himself,  
from a shadow begs for charity.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Straw

## I

When you are trying to sleep, Solominka,  
In your enormous bedroom, and are waiting,  
Sleepless, for the high and weighty ceiling to come down  
With quiet, heavy sorrow on your keen eyelids,

Sonorous Solomka, or seasoned Solominka,  
You've drunk down all death, grown tender and  
Been broken, my dear Solomka, no more alive --  
Not Salome, no, it is Solominka.

In hours of insomnia, objects are heavier  
As if fewer of them -- such a stillness --  
The cushions glitter in the mirror, whitening a bit,  
And the bed is reflected in the round pool.

No, it is not Solomka in her solemn satin  
In a huge room above the black Neva.  
For twelve months they sing of the final hour,  
And the pale blue ice waves in the air.

Solemn December sends out its breath  
As if the great Neva were in the room.  
No, not Solominka, Ligeia, dying --  
I have learned you, glorious words.

## II

I have learned you, blessed words:  
-- Lenore, Solominka, Ligeia, Seraphita --  
In the enormous room, the great Neva,  
And from the granite, the blue blood flows.

Solemn December shines above the Neva.  
For twelve months they sing of the final hour.  
No, not Solominka in her satin  
Savoring a slow, oppressive rest.



In my blood lives December's Ligeia,  
Whose blissful love sleeps in a sarcophagus,  
And which, solominka, perhaps Salome,  
Was killed by pity, and shall never return.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Stretching Taut The Silken Threads

Stretching taut the silken threads  
On a mother-of-pearl shuttle,  
O, lithe fingers, begin  
Your fascinating lesson.

Ebb and flow of your hands,  
Monotonous movements,  
No doubt you are conjuring  
Some kind of solar fright.

When your broad palm,  
Like a shell, flaming,  
First dies down, drawn to the shadows,  
Then sinks at last in a rosy light.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Take From My Palms

Just for joy, take from my palms  
A little sun, a little honey,  
As Persephone's bees commanded.

An unfastened boat cannot be untied.  
A shade shod in fur cannot be heard.  
In the dense forest of life fear cannot be overcome.

Only kisses are left for us.  
Furry, like small bees  
That die when they leave the hive.

They rustle in transparent thickets of night,  
Their home is the dense Taiga woods;  
Their food - time, honeysuckle, mint.

So take and enjoy my passionate gift,  
A dry, unsightly necklace  
Of dead bees, who changed honey into sun.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# That Evening The Forest Of Organ Pipes Did Not Play

That evening the forest of organ pipes did not play.  
A native cradle sang Schubert for us,  
The mill was grinding, the music's blue-eyed drunkenness  
Laughed in the songs of the hurricane.

The brown-green world of the old song,  
But only eternally young where the Erl-king  
Shakes the rumbling crowns of nightingaled  
Linden trees in savage rage.

The awesome force of night's return,  
That wild song, like black wine:  
It is a double, a hollow ghost  
Peering senselessly through the cold window!

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# The Age

My beast, my age, who will try  
to look you in the eye,  
and weld the vertebrae  
of century to century,  
with blood? Creating blood  
pours out of mortal things:  
only the parasitic shudder,  
when the new world sings.

As long as it still has life,  
the creature lifts its bone,  
and, along the secret line  
of the spine, waves foam.  
Once more life's crown,  
like a lamb, is sacrificed,  
cartilage under the knife -  
the age of the new-born.

To free life from jail,  
and begin a new absolute,  
the mass of knotted days  
must be linked by means of a flute.  
With human anguish  
the age rocks the wave's mass,  
and the golden measure's hissed  
by a viper in the grass.

And new buds will swell, intact,  
the green shoots engage,  
but your spine is cracked  
my beautiful, pitiful, age.  
And grimacing dumbly, you writhe,  
look back, feebly, with cruel jaws,  
a creature, once supple and lithe,  
at the tracks left by your paws.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# The Chalice Was Suspended In The Air

The chalice was suspended in the air  
Like the golden sun for a splendid moment.  
Here only Greek should be heard:  
To take the whole world in your hands, like a simple apple.

The triumphal zenith of the service,  
Light in a round room under a cupola in July,  
So outside of time we could fully sigh  
About that meadow, where time doesn't fly.

The Eucharist drags on like an eternal noon --  
Everyone takes the Sacrament, performs, and sings,  
In view of everyone the sacred vessel  
Pours out with inexhaustible rejoicing.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# The Decembrist

'To this the pagan senate bears witness:  
-- THESE DEEDS SHALL NEVER DIE! -- '  
He lit his pipe and wrapped his cloak around  
While some play chess nearby.

He traded his ambitious dream  
For a godforsaken Siberian plot  
And an elegant pipe at his venomous lips,  
Which uttered truth in a mournful world.

When the German oaks first rustled,  
Europe wept in her snare.  
Black horses in quadrigae reared  
on each triumphant turn.

Once, the blue punch glowed in our glasses.  
With the broad noises of the samovar,  
A friend from across the Rhine spoke  
In muted tones -- a freedom-loving guitar.

The lively voices are still excited  
Over the sweet liberty of citizenship;  
But the victims don't want blind skies,  
Toil and consistency are truer.

Everything's confused and there is no one to say,  
As things grow colder,  
Everything's confused, it is sweet to repeat:  
Russia, Lethe, Lorelei...

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# The Falling Is The Constant Mate Of Fear

The falling is the constant mate of fear,  
And feel of emptiness is the feel of fright.  
Who throws us the stones from the height --  
And stones here refuse the dust to bear?

Once, striding in a monk's unbending mode,  
You pierced the yard from rim to other rim;  
The cobble-stones and the coarse dream --  
Have thirst for death and sadness of the broad-

Let Gothic shelter be in ruins turned  
Where ceiling serves as a deceptive fable,  
And in the heath the gaily logs don't burn!

A few here for eternity were born;  
But if your mind has only instant label  
Your lot is awful and your home unstable!

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam



# The Greeks Planned For War

The Greeks planned for war  
On the delightful island of Salamis.  
From the harbor of Athens, you could see it  
Seized by the enemy's hand.

And now our friends the islanders  
Are fitting out our ships.  
Earlier the English didn't love  
The sweet European soil.

O, Europe, new Hellas,  
Save the Acropolis and Pireus.  
We do not need the island's gifts,  
A forest of uninvited ships.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# The Menagerie

The rejected word 'peace'  
At the beginning of an outraged era;  
A church lamp in a grotto  
And the air of mountain lands  
An ether we did not want to,  
Or would not breathe.  
Again, with a goat-voice,  
The shaggy reed-pipes sing.

While sheep and oxen grazed  
On fertile pastures,  
And friendly eagles perched  
On the shoulders of sleepy crags --  
A German reared an eagle,  
A lion submitted to a Briton,  
And a Gallic comb appeared  
From a rooster's crest.

But now the savage has captured  
The sacred mace of Heracles,  
The black earth has dried up,  
Ungrateful, as before.  
I will get the withered wand  
And draw the fire from it;  
Let the startled beasts go away  
With me into the deaf night.

The cock, the lion, the dark brown  
Eagle, the affectionate bear --  
We shall build a chamber for war,  
And warm the wild beasts' hides.  
But I sing the wine [\*] of the times --  
The font of Italic speech --  
And in a Great-Aryan cradle,  
Slavonic and Germanic flax!

Italy, is it really worth  
Disturbing the chariots of Rome  
For the clucking of a domestic bird

Flying across your fence?  
And you, neighbor, don't seek damages;  
The eagle bristles in anger.  
What if for your sling  
A heavy stone is of no use?

While the beasts are in the menagerie,  
We will settle down a while,  
The Volga stays at high tide,  
The Rhine's current grows brighte --  
The wise man will unwillingly honor  
A foreigner as a demigod  
With the revelry of a dance  
On the shores of great rivers.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# The Stalin Epigram

Our lives no longer feel ground under them.  
At ten paces you can't hear our words.

But whenever there's a snatch of talk  
it turns to the Kremlin mountaineer,

the ten thick worms his fingers,  
his words like measures of weight,

the huge laughing cockroaches on his top lip,  
the glitter of his boot-rims.

Ringed with a scum of chicken-necked bosses  
he toys with the tributes of half-men.

One whistles, another meows, a third snivels.  
He pokes out his finger and he alone goes boom.

He forges decrees in a line like horseshoes,  
One for the groin, one the forehead, temple, eye.

He rolls the executions on his tongue like berries.  
He wishes he could hug them like big friends from home.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# The Thick Golden Stream Of Honey Took So Long

1

The thick golden stream of honey took so long  
To pour, our host had time to say:  
'Here in the dismal Taurides, where fate has brought us,  
We don't get bored at all' -- and she looked over her shoulder.

2

The services of Bacchus everywhere, as if on earth  
Were only guards and dogs. You go along, you notice no one --  
Like heavy barrels, the peaceful days roll by:  
Far off. Voices in a hut: you cannot understand, nor reply.

3

After tea, we went out in the huge brown garden,  
The dark blinds were lowered like eyelashes.  
Past white columns, we went to look at the grapes,  
Where the drowsy mountains are glazed with airy glass.

4

I said: the vines live like an ancient battle  
Where curly-headed horsemen fight in twisted order.  
The science of Hellas in the stony Tauride -- and here  
There are the noble, rusty rows of golden acres.

5

Silence stands in the room white as a spinning wheel,  
From the cellar, smells of paint, vinegar, fresh wine.  
Remember, in the Greek house: the woman loved by everyone --  
Not Helen -- another -- how long she embroidered?

Golden fleece, where are you, golden fleece?  
The sea's heavy waves roared the whole way.  
Abandoning the ship, its canvas worn out on the seas,  
Odysseus returned, full of space and time.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# This

This is what I most want  
unpursued, alone  
to reach beyond the light  
that I am furthest from.

And for you to shine there-  
no other happiness-  
and learn, from starlight,  
what its fire might suggest.

A star burns as a star,  
light becomes light,  
because our murmuring  
strengthens us, and warms the night.

And I want to say to you  
my little one, whispering,  
I can only lift you towards the light  
by means of this babbling.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# This Night Is Irredeemable

This night is irredeemable.

Where you are, it is still bright.  
At the gates of Jerusalem,  
a black sun is alight.

The yellow sun is hurting,  
sleep, baby, sleep.  
The Jews in the Temple's burning  
buried my mother deep.

Without rabbi, without blessing,  
over her ashes, there,  
the Jews in the Temple's burning  
chanted the prayer.

Over this mother,  
Israel's voice was sung.  
I woke in a glittering cradle,  
lit by a black sun.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam



# To Cure Wounds Is So Rigid

To cure wounds is so rigid:  
They drank the air and poisoned bread.  
Young Joseph who was sold to Egypt  
Could not be more deathly sad!

The nomads under starry dome,  
With eyes, half-closed, and on horse,  
Compose sagas, while they roam,  
About day they vaguely crossed.

Few things they need for inspiration:  
One lost his quiver in the sand;  
One changed his horse ... . In peaceful fashion  
The daily mist comes to its end;

And if a song is simply gaining  
Your heart with non-predicted grace,  
All vanish -- only they are reigning:  
The stars, the singer, and the space!

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

## To M.L. Lozinsky

I feel the undefeated fear,  
In presence of the misty heights;  
I'm glad that swallows fly here  
And I enjoy the belfry's flight!

The ancient traveler is going, I suppose,  
Above the gulf on bending footway's planks,  
The snow ball continues in its growth,  
And great eternity on clocks of stone strikes.

But I am not that traveler at all,  
That flashes on the dry and faded leaves,  
And really in me the sadness calls;

Indeed, the avalanche among the highlands lives!  
A ring of bells my own soul fills -  
But music cannot save from devastating falls!

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

## To Read Only Children's Books

To read only children's books,  
To have only childish thoughts,  
To throw everything grown-up away,  
To rise from deep sadness.

I am deathly tired of life,  
I will accept nothing from it.  
But I love my poor land,  
For I have seen no other.

I rocked in a distant garden  
On a plain wooden swing,  
Tall dark fir trees  
I recall in a hazy fever.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Tortoise

On the stony spurs of Pierius  
The Muses conducted the first round dance  
So like bees, blind lyrists might give us Ionic honey.  
A great chill blew  
From the prominent virginal brow  
So the tender graves of the Archipelago  
Might be uncovered for distant grandsons.

2

Spring rushes to trample the meadows of Hellas,  
Sappho puts on a dappled boot,  
Cicadas click like hammers forging out a ring,  
As in the little song.  
A stout carpenter built a tall house,  
They strangled all the hens for a wedding,  
An inept cobbler stretched  
All five ox-hides for shoes.

3

The sluggish lyre-tortoise  
Toeless barely creeps along,  
Sets herself down in the sun of Epirus,  
Quietly warming her golden belly.  
Who will caress someone like her,  
Who will turn her over while she sleeps --  
She awaits Terpander in her dream,  
Sensing the sudden sweep of dry fingers.

4

A cold sprinkle waters the oaks,  
The bareheaded grasses murmur,  
The honeysuckle smells, to the joy of the bees.  
O where are you, sacred islands,

Where they do not eat broken bread,  
Where there is only wine, milk and honey,  
Creaking toil does not darken the sky, and  
The wheel turns easily?

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Tristia

I have studied the Science of departures,  
in night's sorrows, when a woman's hair falls down.  
The oxen chew, there's the waiting, pure,  
in the last hours of vigil in the town,  
and I reverence night's ritual cock-crowing,  
when reddened eyes lift sorrow's load and choose  
to stare at distance, and a woman's crying  
is mingled with the singing of the Muse.

Who knows, when the word 'departure' is spoken  
what kind of separation is at hand,  
or of what that cock-crow is a token,  
when a fire on the Acropolis lights the ground,  
and why at the dawning of a new life,  
when the ox chews lazily in its stall,  
the cock, the herald of the new life,  
flaps his wings on the city wall?

I like the monotony of spinning,  
the shuttle moves to and fro,  
the spindle hums. Look, barefoot Delia's running  
to meet you, like swansdown on the road!  
How threadbare the language of joy's game,  
how meagre the foundation of our life!  
Everything was, and is repeated again:  
it's the flash of recognition brings delight.

So be it: on a dish of clean earthenware,  
like a flattened squirrel's pelt, a shape,  
forms a small, transparent figure, where  
a girl's face bends to gaze at the wax's fate.  
Not for us to prophesy, Erebus, Brother of Night:  
Wax is for women: Bronze is for men.  
Our fate is only given in fight,  
to die by divination is given to them.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Twilight Of Freedom

1

Let us glorify, brothers, the twilight of freedom --  
The great twilight year.  
A weighty forest of nets is lowered  
Into the bubbling waters of night.  
You are rising into desolate years,  
O sun, judge, people.

2

Let us glorify the fateful burden,  
Which the nation's chief takes up in tears.  
Let us glorify the twilight burden of power,  
Its unbearable weight.  
Whoever has the heart should hear, time,  
How your ship is sinking.

3

We tied the swallows into battle legions  
And so, the sun's obscured; all of nature  
Warbles, whirls, lives;  
The dense twilight through the nets  
The sun's obscured, and the land sets sail.

4

But still, let us try: an enormous, awkward,  
Screeching turn of the wheel.  
The land is sailing. Take courage, men!  
Dividing the ocean, like a plow,  
We will recall even in Lethe's frost,  
That our land cost ten heavens.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Venetian Life

1

The meaning of somber and barren  
Venetian life is clear to me:  
Now she looks into a decrepit blue glass  
With a cool smile.

2

Refined air. Blue veins of skin.  
White snow. Green brocade.  
They are all placed on cypress stretchers,  
Taken warm and drowsy from a cape.

3

And the candles burn, burn in baskets,  
As if a pigeon had flown into the shrine.  
At the theater and the solemn council,  
A man is dying.

4

Because there is no salvation from love and fear,  
Saturn's ring is heavier than platinum,  
The block draped with black velvet,  
And a beautiful face.

5

Your headdress is heavy, Venezia,  
In the cypress mirror frame.  
Your air is faceted. In the bedroom,  
The blue mountains of decrepit glass dissolve.

6

Only in her hands are the rose and the hourglass --  
Green Adriatic, forgive me.



Why are you silent, Venetienne,  
How can I escape this solemn death.

7

Black Hesper glimmers in the mirror.  
Everything passes, the truth is dark.  
A man is born, a pearl dies.  
And Susannah has to wait for the elders.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# We Went Out Of Our Minds With The Easy Life

We went out of our minds with the easy life,  
Wine from morning on, hungover by evening,  
How can I keep this idle gaiety,  
Your blush, O drunken plague?

An agonizing ceremony in a handshake,  
Nocturnal kisses on the streets,  
While the currents of speech grow heavy,  
And lanterns burn like torches.

We wait for death, like the fairytale wolf,  
But I'm afraid that the first to die will be  
The one with the anxious red mouth  
And the forelock covering his eyes.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# What Shall I Do With This Body They Gave Me

What shall I do with this body they gave me,  
so much my own, so intimate with me?

For being alive, for the joy of calm breath,  
tell me, who should I bless?

I am the flower, and the gardener as well,  
and am not solitary, in earth's cell.

My living warmth, exhaled, you can see,  
on the clear glass of eternity.

A pattern set down,  
until now, unknown.

Breath evaporates without trace,  
but form no one can deface.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# When On The Squares And In Solitary Silence

When on the squares and in solitary silence  
We slowly go out of our minds,  
Brutal winter will offer us  
Cold and clear Rhine wine.

The frost offers us in a silver pail  
The white wine of Valhalla,  
And for us it recalls  
A clear image of a northern man.

But northern skalds are rude,  
Don't know the joy of the game,  
And to northern troops are dear  
Amber, feasts and flames.

They only dream of the southern air,  
The magic of a foreign sky.  
-- Nevertheless the stubborn friend  
Still refuses to try.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam

# Why Do The Clock-Hopperssing

Why do the clock-hopperssing,  
And fever rustle  
And dry stove crackle --  
It is red silk burning.

Why do the mice grind with their teeth  
The slender ground of life --  
A swallow has loosened  
My shuttle for her daughter.

Why does rain murmur on the roof --  
It is black silk burning,  
But the cherry blossom will hear,  
And on the bottom of the sea, forgive.

Because of the death of the innocent  
And with no way to help,  
In a nightingale's fever,  
There is still a warm heart.

Osip Emilevich Mandelstam