

Literature for the Planet

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Literature for the Planet

WAI CHEE DIMOCK

THE YEAR WAS 1934, A YEAR IN WHICH OSIP MANDELSTAM lived in constant terror. Just a few months before, he had committed political suicide by reciting a satirical poem on Stalin, featuring “the ten thick worms his fingers” and “the huge laughing cockroaches on his top lips.” The poem concludes:

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.¹

Mandelstam’s arrest came as expected. On the night of 13 May 1934, about one in the morning, came a knock on the door. Mandelstam was taken by the secret police to their headquarters in the Lubyanka Prison, interrogated, and later sentenced to three years of exile in Cherdyn.²

Since the arrest was not a surprise, Mandelstam at least had the luxury of preparing for it. His preparations were recorded by Nadezhda Mandelstam (a “pre-Gutenberg” figure, as Seamus Heaney calls her [“Osip” 74], safeguarding her husband’s poems by committing them to memory):

M. obtained an edition of the *Divine Comedy* in small format and always had it with him in his pocket, just in case he was arrested not at home but in the street. You could be arrested anywhere—sometimes they came for you at your place of work, and sometimes you were lured out to another place on a false pretext and no one ever heard of you again. [. . .] When M. went to Samatikha (the place where he was arrested the second time), he left his pocket Dante in Moscow and took another, rather more bulky edition. I do not know whether he managed to keep it until he reached the transit camp at Vtoraya Rechka, near Vladivostok, where he died. I somehow doubt it:

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in the camps under Yezhov and Stalin, nobody could give any thought to books.

(Hope against Hope 228)

In a moment of extreme political terror, Mandelstam—Russian and Jewish—saw fit to immerse himself in a medieval Christian poem. The immersion did not save him. Within four years he was dead, on his way to a labor camp in eastern Siberia. Still, in spite of this overwhelming biological fact, it was not trivial that the medieval poem was still around, after hundreds of years, and in the Soviet Union no less. Its very existence gave Mandelstam a different reference point, dimensions of space and time not reducible to the arm of the Soviet government.³

Mandelstam's love of Dante—the physical presence of the poetry inside his pocket—suggests that there is much to be said for literature as a continuum. This continuum extends across space and time, messing up territorial sovereignty and numerical chronology. Authors centuries and thousands of miles apart can turn out to be inseparable. Their adjacency stems from a linguistic bond and has little to do with the metrical structure articulated by numbers, whether these numbers take the form of latitudes and longitudes or whether they take the form of dates. For the remoteness or proximity of linguistic events does not lend itself to uniform calibrations. It cannot be expressed as a numerical constant: as one hundred years or one thousand miles. Literary space and time are conditional and elastic; their distances can vary, can lengthen or contract, depending on who is reading and what is being read. No mileage can tell us how far one author is from another; no dates can tell us who is close to whom.

This nonnumerical structure of space and time might be described by way of a concept from Einstein: “relativity of simultaneity.” Einstein uses this to challenge the notion of a universal present, a now everywhere enforced, a temporal plane that synchronizes the entire globe, putting it under a unified chronology. There is no such synchronized plane, Einstein

says, because space and time are not absolute givens but operational effects, deriving their lengths and widths from the relative motion of the frames in which measurements are taken. What is simultaneous in one frame might not be simultaneous in another; what registers as now in one might not so register elsewhere. Of course, for Einstein relativity of simultaneity is strictly a mathematical concept: it is a description of the geometry of space-time.⁴ I have argued elsewhere that this concept can also be understood nonmathematically, that it can be transposed to describe the temporal effects engendered by reading.

Transposed in this way, relativity of simultaneity highlights the existence of different time frames in any population of readers. The apparent unity of the chronological date gives way to a plurality of operative nows. These nows are not discretely or uniformly slotted; they do not all line up on the same synchronic plane. They owe their shapes to the irregular compass of words: words with different antecedents, different extensions of meaning. Nows are different because reading habits are, because the strength of linguistic bonds can have a drastic effect on the distance between any two users of words. Two thousand years and two thousand miles can sometimes register as near simultaneity; ten years and ten miles can sometimes pose an unpassable gulf. Thanks to this elasticity, the now experienced by any reader is idiosyncratic, unlike anyone else's. It has its particular radii, particular genealogies and coevals. Its relational fabric is separately cut, stretching and bulging in odd places. It is not synchronized with the numerical now on any standard calendar.

Understood in this sense—as the temporal disunity among readers—relativity of simultaneity suggests that the continuum of literature is anarchic: impossible to regulate or police. Where literary bonds are intensified by circumstances—as happens with Mandelstam and Dante—space and time can undergo the most astonishing contraction, can turn a standardized metrical unit into

a virtual zero, bringing supposedly remote objects into direct contact. Space and time, in short, have no absolute jurisdiction when it comes to the bond between texts and readers. Not a preassigned grid, they are molded instead by the actions and passions of words. They can behave like “a kind of fan,” as Mandelstam says (“On the Nature” 73). This fan can be folded up, putting Italy in the immediate vicinity of Russia and making strange bedfellows out of the fourteenth and the twentieth centuries. The now thus begotten does not in the least resemble the now legislated by the Soviet government. Stretching across hundreds of years and thousands of miles, it is temporally and spatially wayward, out of step with any party line, any mechanical clock of progress.

Aiding and abetting this population of nows, all unsynchronized, literature stands accused as the enemy of the state. Its projective and retrospective horizons play havoc with territorial sovereignty. To each of its readers it holds out a different map, a different time scale, pre-dating and outlasting the birth and death of any nation. Morphologically speaking, literature might turn out to be one of the most robust inhabitants of the planet, a species tougher than most. We can think of it as an artificial form of “life”—not biological like an organism or territorial like a nation but vital all the same, and durable for that reason. Its receding and unfolding extensions make it a political force in the world. To acknowledge this force, we need to stop assuming a one-to-one correspondence between the geographic origins of a text and its evolving radius of literary action. We need to stop thinking of national literatures as the linguistic equivalents of territorial maps. For the continuum between Dante and Mandelstam tells us (if nothing else) that the nation-state is not all, that when it comes to the extended life of literary objects, the inscriptional power of the state is not complete, just as its jurisdictional power is not absolute. An emerging and globalizing readership undermines it on both fronts. Theorized as the consequences of this global readership,

literature handily outlives the finite scope of the nation. It brings into play a different set of temporal and spatial coordinates. It urges on us the entire planet as a unit of analysis.

This is a minority view. The study of national literatures is currently dominated by a different premise—dominated, in fact, by an almost automatic equation between the literary and the territorial.⁵ Nothing better exemplifies this premise than the influential work of Benedict Anderson. For Anderson the advent of modernity is marked by the rise of the nation-state, a political entity whose “sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory” (26).⁶ This territorial sovereignty produces cultural artifacts likewise territorially predicated, likewise bounded by the geopolitical map. Literature is one such artifact. Since state sovereignty, according to Anderson, is no less fully, flatly, and evenly operative in this domain, literature becomes a necessary instrument as well as a necessary epiphenomenon of the nation. Along with the newspaper (from which it turns out to be indistinguishable), literature enforces the standardized time of print, a territorial timetable. This territorial time is “homogeneous, empty time,” measured by clock and calendar. It is a regime of “simultaneity,” binding all its citizens to the same temporal plane (30–31).

I argue for a conception of literature directly opposite to Anderson’s. Instead of upholding territorial sovereignty and enforcing a regime of simultaneity, literature, in my view, unsettles both. It holds out to its readers dimensions of space and time so far-flung and so deeply recessional that they can never be made to coincide with the synchronic plane of the geopolitical map. This is a risky proposition, but it can be tested with any number of texts having a prolonged life and a global following. In what follows I do so, using as my primary evidence the extension and telescoping of space and time brought about by one literary encounter, between Mandelstam and Dante. That extension and telescoping are all the

more remarkable for taking place in an extreme form of the nation-state, one that fits Anderson's description to a fault. The Soviet Union, offering itself as the successor to capitalism—the final act on the world stage—had always been a fervent exponent of an official chronology, an official schedule of progress. It had tried to rationalize time, tried to bind its citizens to a revolutionary timetable: a regime of simultaneity, just as Anderson suggests. That timetable happened not to be Mandelstam's. His love of Dante—his adjacency to Dante—put him in a continuum of his own. That continuum extended from fourteenth-century Italy to twentieth-century Russia. It put the two poets side by side, in defiance of chronology, and in doing so it also denationalized each of them, making each Italian and not Italian, Russian and not Russian.

This shared denationalization began with Mandelstam's attempt to learn Italian to read Dante. He was joined by Anna Akhmatova, another fan. The two poets would compare notes, testing each other's memory, savoring every word from that alien tongue that had ceased to be alien. "Poetry itself is one enormous quotation," Akhmatova would later note.⁷ Mandelstam might have said the same. One would taunt the other: "Do you remember this line?" "Did you notice that wonderful bit?" Then they would settle down to read "aloud together, pointing out the passages they liked best, sharing their finds with each other" (N. Mandelstam, *Hope against Hope* 223). Spending so much time among these barely domesticated words—so much time away from his supposedly native tongue—Mandelstam ended up reliving the fate of his father: the fate of a linguistic alien, denied citizenship by every language, fully at home in none. Such an alien

had absolutely no language; his speech was tongue-tie and languagelessness. The Russian speech of a Polish Jew? No. The speech of a German Jew? No again. Perhaps a special Courland accent? I never heard such. A completely abstract, counterfeit language, the ornate and twisted speech of an autodidact, where normal

words are intertwined with the ancient philosophical terms of Herder, Leibniz, and Spinoza, the capacious syntax of a Talmudist, the artificial, not always finished sentence: it was anything in the world, but not a language, neither Russian nor German. (O. Mandelstam, *Noise* 85)

Neither Russian nor German. And for Mandelstam, one might add, neither English, nor French, nor Italian. To embrace one of these adjectives is to be fully naturalized in one national tongue. That full naturalization was never Mandelstam's. A linguistic hybrid—partly by temperament but most of all through the habit of reading—he was a "translator by calling, by birth," a "foreign emissary from a non-existent phonetic kingdom" (O. Mandelstam, "On the Nature" 79). Translation was what he did for a living when his official status as a pariah barred him from all other jobs. But he also lived off it in a deeper sense, as Clarence Brown suggests, consigning himself to it as to "a sort of intellectual Siberia" (*Mandelstam* 90).

This intellectual Siberia is not a Soviet address. Its terrain, like its provenance, cannot be exclusively localized in one nation. To be sure, the intellectual Siberia has something to do with the territorial Siberia, but this territorial alignment might not be the primary one and is certainly not the only one. Two frames of reference, at least, are involved here, each playing on and relativizing the other. For the presence of a foreign tongue—the meaningfulness of that tongue—already suggests a counterpoint to the entity called the nation, showing up its limits, its failure to dictate an exact match between the linguistic and the territorial. Every intellectual Siberia is an affront to the sovereignty of the state. It points to dimensions of space and time not fully nationalized because not fully rationalized, space and time not conforming to an official number, not integrated by a unified metric. Translation turns a foreign language into Russian and, in the same measure, unsettles the native tongue (Benjamin, esp. 73): alienates it, puts it into perspective, throws it into a linguistic continuum more turbulent and more alive than the inert lines of a geopolitical map.

This linguistic continuum is the basis for a limited freedom. It is the freedom of an alien life-form: a form of extension and duration not matching those of the nation and perhaps not coming to an end with the nation's demise. This alien life-form sustains every author and every translator, as Mandelstam makes clear in "To the German Language":

Destroying myself, contradicting myself,
like the moth flying into the midnight flame,
suddenly all that binds me to our language
tempts me to leave it.

[.]

An alien language will be my swaddling clothes.
Long before I dared to be born
I was a letter of the alphabet, a verse like a vine,
I was the book that you all see in dreams.⁸

Under political repression the only life a poet can have is nonbiological. Wislawa Szymborska, writing in Poland in 1970, made the same point:

When in danger the sea-cucumber divides itself
in two

[.]

We know how to divide ourselves, how true,
we too.

But only into a body and an interrupted whisper.
Into body and poetry.⁹

The latter alone has a chance for rebirth in a different tongue. Of course, that chance depends on events altogether accidental: the luck of foreign translators' adopting the poems, the luck of foreign readers' picking them up. Haphazard as this sequence might seem, many of Mandelstam's poems were indeed translated, wrapped in swaddling clothes made in England, France, and the United States, long before they were published in the Soviet Union. He is in this sense the obverse of a national poet. "Of course he was a Russian, but not any more so than Giotto was an Italian," says Joseph Brodsky, who should know a thing or two about that predicament. There is a morphological mismatch between literature and the nation, between the

dynamic expanse of a linguistic continuum and the finite borders of a territorial regime. The swaddling clothes of foreign languages highlight that fact. They highlight what happens to official borders and official timetables when texts are born again and again, into different countries, different centuries. For literature, as Brodsky says, "speaking both metaphorically and literally [. . .] is translation. The wandering of a Greek portico into the latitude of the tundra is a translation" (139).

The morphology of literature cannot be described by one set of space-time coordinates. With luck, translations will disperse a momentarily assembled group of words, will turn every seemingly bounded text into something far more random, scattered by circumstances across the centuries and across the entire planet. The life of literature depends on such randomizations. Not stuck in one national context—and saying predictable things in that context—a literary text becomes a new semantic template, a new form of the legible, each time it crosses a national border. Global transit extends, triangulates, and transforms its meaning. This fact alone challenges the power of the territorial as a determining force in literature. The space-time coordinates of any text are not only fluid when they first come into being, poorly captured by the map of geopolitics, they are also subsequently and unforeseeably revisable, induced by their temporal and spatial displacements to play new tricks with the static borders of the nation. With every new translation they punch a hole in those borders; they create a bump, a slope, an incline that rolls outward:

The earth is at its roundest on Red Square
And its unchained curve is hard,

On Red Square the earth is at its roundest
And its curve, rolling all the way down to
the rice fields,

Is unexpectedly expansive
While there are still any slaves on the earth.¹⁰

Political repression, its incontestable might in one locale, forces the mind to think globally. The earth on Red Square is roundest because, for anyone who does not wish to be chained to that spot, this bit of earth must be taken as a curve, an arc of a larger circumference. That circumference, instead of being a slavish copy of its origins, is an off-center set of vibrations, chaotic and tangential—expanding with the more or less random accretion of signifying moments, emerging at various temporal and spatial removes. Literature, understood as these random radii linking a text to an ever more dispersed readership, is extraterritorial in every sense. *Russian poet* is, strictly speaking, an oxymoron.

Nor is this only a twentieth-century phenomenon. As instanced by Dante, the quarrel between literature and the nation has the weight of history behind it. Again, for Mandelstam and Brodsky, Dante is a world poet—claimable as an ally against national regimes—because he both is and is not Florentine, because, indelibly marked as he is by his native city, he is noticeably not swallowed up by it.¹¹ Dante, perhaps still the most celebrated exile in Western history, is also the first to call attention to an asymmetry, a mismatch, between the literary and the geopolitical. In his letter to Cangrande della Scala, Dante famously describes himself as “a Florentine by birth but not in character.”¹² And in *De vulgari eloquentia*, his vigorous defense of the vernacular, he makes a point of chiding the linguistic patriot, one who is “so misguided as to think that the place of his birth is the most delightful spot under the sun [and who] may also believe that his own language—his mother tongue, that is—is preeminent among all others [. . .]”:

To me, however, the whole world is a homeland, like the sea to fish [. . .]. And although for my own enjoyment (or rather for the satisfaction of my own desire), there is no more agreeable place on earth than Florence, yet when I turn the pages of the volumes of poets and other writers, by whom the world is described as a whole and in its constituent parts, and when

I reflect inwardly on the various locations of places in the world, and their relations to the two poles and the circle at the equator, I am convinced, and firmly maintain, that there are many regions and cities more noble and more delightful than Tuscany and Florence, where I was born and of which I am a citizen, and many nations and peoples who speak a more elegant and practical language than do the Italians.¹³

For Dante the centrifugal force of literature is deeply at odds with the vainglorious talk of fatherland.¹⁴ To yield to this centrifugal force is to yield to an onslaught of space and time, an onslaught unavoidably brutal, centered on no one nation and tender to no one nation. Dante, poet of that centrifugal force, reckless in his embrace of space and time, is thus interchangeably a reader, a writer, and a translator. For if writing must end up being a form of translation (not always voluntary) from the here and now, it is reading that initiates that process. Reading ushers in a continuum that mocks the form of any finite entity. It mocks the borders of the nation, just as it mocks the life span of the individual. As a global process of extension, elaboration, and randomization, reading turns literature into the collective life of the planet. Coextensive neither with the territorial regime of the nation nor with the biological regime of a single human being, this life derives its morphology instead from the motion of words: motion effected when borders are crossed, when a new frame of reference is mixed with an old, when foreign languages turn a native tongue into a hybrid.

Motion, indeed, is what Mandelstam celebrates in his remarkable essay “Conversation about Dante,” written one year before his arrest. “Both the *Inferno* and, in particular, the *Purgatorio* glorify the human gait, the measure and the rhythm of walking, the footstep and its form. [. . .] In Dante philosophy and poetry are constantly on the go, perpetually on their feet.” For Mandelstam it is a literary question, and a serious one, to ask, “How many shoe soles, how many oxhide soles, how many sandals did Alighieri

wear out during the course of his poetic work?" (254). Mandelstam's Dante is, in fact, a strange figure, often unrecognizable to others (Bethea 52–60; Cavanagh 210–14). I argue that this is a Dante denationalized in a particular way—a Dante both Italian and not Italian, Russian and not Russian—a figure born into the world at the same time that a denationalized Mandelstam is. Dante, it seems, can take on Russian features, features legible only to this Soviet reader. Extraterritoriality activates a special register of meaning, calls forth a special kind of resonance.

Such resonance points to the importance of environmental "background noise" as a generative force in literature. Acting as a stochastic booster, background noise puts an amplifying mechanism—a kind of accentual cushion—under some words but not others, bringing them into relief, pushing them above a threshold of detectability (Dimock).¹⁵ The Soviet Union was an environment rich in noise in just this way. It was an environment that altered the hearable frequencies of words, sharpening the ears of readers to an unbearable acuteness. Such readers could not help singling out words, underscoring them, hearing in them Soviet echoes, accenting them always with that feared knock at one in the morning. It is not surprising the *Divine Comedy* should resonate in such a context. And it resonates because it has been denationalized, because it has been acted on by a new, overwhelming, but also unforeseeable conjunction of circumstances. It has become a partially Russian poem, no longer strictly Italian yet not grandly universal. Switching to a different metaphor, we can also say that denationalization has randomized the poem by turning it into a temporal hybrid, a hybrid accidentally born into the world through the accidental union between fourteenth-century Italy and twentieth-century Russia. Such a hybrid is singular. It resembles none other. It cannot be reproduced anywhere else.

Here it is helpful to contrast Mandelstam's Dante with another Dante, also hybridized around the same time, parented by a reader who, though

a chronological coeval of Mandelstam's, was clearly not his coeval in any deep sense: T. S. Eliot. In his well-known essay *Dante* (1929), written three years before Mandelstam's essay, Eliot offers up a poet "universal" to all readers, requiring no translation. This universal Dante, Eliot says, writes in an Italian that is an effective Esperanto:

Dante's universality is not solely a personal matter. The Italian language, and especially the Italian language in Dante's age, gains much by being the immediate product of universal Latin. There is something much more *local* about the languages in which Shakespeare and Racine had to express themselves. This is not to say, either, that English and French are inferior, as vehicles of poetry, to Italian. But the Italian vernacular of the late middle ages was still very close to Latin[, which] had the quality of a highly developed and literary Esperanto. [. . .] Some of the character of this universal language seems to me to inhere in Dante's Florentine speech. (17)

Ignoring the fact that Italian was a vernacular chosen by Dante as a clear alternative to Latin, Eliot insists on its linear descent from that universal language. This descent gives it a hereditary power: the power of centralized jurisdiction, the power to bind one word to one meaning. Dante's Italian, so described, is a language homogeneous because hegemonic. It will not tolerate foreign nuances. It means the same thing to any reader anywhere in the world.

Eliot's Dante, in short, is a Dante blessed with an absolute sovereignty. That sovereignty is not only wielded by a Latin-like Italian, it is further consolidated by one particular genre, allegory, a genre that dictates a unity of response, a single, predictable, and irresistible flow of visual data. "Allegory means *clear visual images*," Eliot says; it aligns our eyes with the poet's; it "make[s] us see what he saw." The *Divine Comedy* is able to bind all its readers to a single regime of meaning because "Dante's is a visual imagination." That visual imagination makes the poet the unopposed ruler of his poem, for "speech varies, but our eyes are all the same" (22–23).

“There is a stern and didactic profile to the Dante whom Eliot conjures up,” Seamus Heaney notes. This orthodox Dante tells us something about the context in which he is read, for what Eliot is looking for (and what he eventually finds) is Christian faith: “salvation by conversion” (Heaney, “Government” 98). Mandelstam’s Dante is very different. Orthodoxy has no appeal to this reader, for unlike Eliot he is gleefully a lost soul, gleefully unregenerate, not Christian, and not entirely Jewish.¹⁶ Having had his fill of the stern and didactic language perfected by the Soviet government, he has no wish for more. Mandelstam’s Dante, as Heaney also points out, is a Dante beloved for his imperfect authority, his failure to bend his lips to an official shape: “not an allegory-framer up to his old didactic tricks in the middle of the journey, but a lyric woodcutter singing in the dark wood of the larynx” (95). This lyrical Dante, invoked by a reader who knows something about the eyes of Stalin, is not a visual poet at all. He is decidedly aural. And he is aural because, for Mandelstam, the ear is the most unruly (and therefore the least tractable) of all our organs. An aural poet, one who writes with the ear and who is in turn heard with the ear, has no supervisory power, no control over the reader, a handicap Mandelstam translates into a gift:

It seems to me that Dante made a careful study of all speech defects, listening closely to stutterers and lispers, to nasal twangs and inarticulate pronunciation, and that he learned much from them.

I would very much like to speak about the auditory coloration of Canto XXXII of the *Inferno*.

A peculiar labial music: “abbo”—“gabbo”—“babbo”—“Tebe”—“plebe”—“zebe”—“converrebbe.” It’s as if a nurse had participated in the creation of phonetics. Now the lips protrude in a childish manner, now they extend into a proboscis.

The labials form some kind of “numbered bass”—*basso continuo*, namely, the chordal basis of harmonization. They are joined by

smacking, sucking and whistling sounds, and also by dental “zz” and “dz” sounds.

I pulled out a single thread at random: *ca-gnazzi—riprezzo—guazzi—mezzo—gravezza*.

The tweaking, smacking and labial explosives do not cease for a single second. [. . .]

Suddenly, for no apparent reason, a Slavic duck begins quacking: *Osteric, Tambernic, cric* (the onomatopoeic word for crackling).

(“Conversation” 275–76)

The quacking of the Slavic duck in the *Divine Comedy* is not surprising. It shows how shaky the poem is on the territorial front, how tenuous and indefensible its Italianness. The poem *was* Italian to begin with, but there is nothing to stop it from being heard subsequently with a Russian accent, for the ear is a domain in which native and foreign sounds can meet, can recombine, can trade attributes, redrawing phonetic and semantic maps as they go. No walls can be thick enough here to block off such hybridizing spirals. To a Russian reader coming across the words *Osteric, Tambernic*, and *cric* (*Inferno* 32.25–30), the *Divine Comedy* can indeed sound Russian. And even though such aural crossovers are intermittent rather than systemic, they indicate what happens generally when a text becomes extra-territorial, when it is acted on by the literal and metaphoric “translations” of a foreign ear.¹⁷

Aurality is a dynamic process. Mandelstam links it in particular to one activity, reading. Reading allows the ear to come into contact with tongues not spoken in its vicinity, to hear foreign echoes in the midst of native speech. To a practiced reader the hearable world is nothing less than the planet as a whole, thick with sounds human beings have made across the width of the globe and across the length of history. It is the habit of reading, then, that makes Dante an aural poet:

What is Dantean erudition?

Aristotle, like a double-winged butterfly, is edged with the Arab border of Averroës.

Averrois, che il gran commento feo

(*Inferno*, IV, 144)

Here the Arab Averroës accompanies the Greek Aristotle. They are both components of the same drawing. They can both find room on the membrane of a single wing.

The conclusion of Canto IV of the *Inferno* is truly an orgy of quotations. I find here a pure and unalloyed demonstration of Dante's keyboard of references.

A keyboard stroll around the entire horizon of Antiquity. Some Chopin polonaise in which an armed Caesar with a gryphon's eyes dances alongside Democritus, who had just finished splitting matter into atoms.

("Conversation" 255)

The orgy of quotations is not only Dante's hallmark, it is Mandelstam's as well. Quotations do not have to be foreign, but they can be. No border patrol can stop them. This breach of territorial sovereignty is the starting point for a global continuum of words. It is the point where temporal and spatial distances break down, where chronological jumbles and jurisdictional jumbles produce weird offsprings. Dante speaks Russian, and he speaks some fifty other languages.¹⁸ These translations—all different and all denationalized, not governed by any one regime—make up the global phenomenon called the *Divine Comedy*.

The globalization of Dante is, in part, the work of time in the centuries after his death. But even from the beginning, from the extraterritorial leaps propelling its "keyboard of references," the *Divine Comedy* has always been global, as global as a fourteenth-century poem can be. Mandelstam here singles out three foreign languages crucial to its making: Greek, Provençal, and Arabic. These languages he identifies by way of four human figures, some obvious, others not: Aristotle, Democritus, Chopin, and Averroës. Dante's debts to Aristotle are, of course, large and acknowledged, beginning with the extravagant tributes in the *Convivio* (where Aristotle appears as the master of human reason and the perfection of ethics [Lansing 162–63; 4.6]) and modulating, in the *Divine Comedy*, into somewhat more tempered allusions to the *Ethics*,

the *Physics*, and the *Metaphysics*.¹⁹ Likewise, the troubadours are familiar figures in Dante: Bertran de Born, Arnaut Daniel, and Giraut de Borneil are named in *De vulgari eloquentia* (2.2.7–8) and reappear even more dramatically in *Purgatorio*, in the form of nearly three tercets of Provençal spoken by Arnaut.²⁰ Finally (and in keeping with the intellectual ferment of the Middle Ages), Arabic scholarship also has an important presence here, showing up in the person of Averroës, the twelfth-century philosopher who appears twice in the *Divine Comedy*²¹ and whose influence on Dante is sometimes said to be comparable to Aristotle's.²²

For Mandelstam this Islamic presence in a Christian poem sums up the politics of "erudition." The *Divine Comedy*, according to his often unshared judgment, is as shaky on the religious front as it is on the territorial.²³ Nor is this all. What makes the poem even shakier is the temporal heresy it espouses, the way it incites adjacencies, creating couples who have no chronological reason to be seen side by side. "Having combined the uncombinable, Dante altered the structure of time." What results is a "synchronism of events, names and traditions severed by centuries" ("Conversation" 282). Mandelstam pays tribute to this temporal heresy by writing off the fifteen hundred years separating Averroës from Aristotle. The two are paired up, both of them contemporaries of Dante's in the fourteenth century. To add to the outrage, he throws in Chopin, not exactly around when Dante was alive but eventually to be born, the supposed Frenchness of whose music he traces to Florentine origins. And he does not stop there. For good measure he also throws in Democritus, invoked by Dante in *Inferno* 4.136²⁴ and catapulted now from the fifth century BC to the fourteenth and onward to the twentieth and beyond. *Heretical* is too mild a word for the *Divine Comedy* thus created, a temporal monstrosity that, to quote Mandelstam again, features "[s]ome Chopin polonaise in which an armed Caesar with a gryphon's eyes

dances alongside Democritus, who had just finished splitting matter into atoms.”

This might seem a bizarre description of a medieval poem, but Mandelstam is trying to highlight a giddy voluminousness peculiar to Dante, innocent of anything that might be called chronological decorum. Balloonlike, Dante’s metaphors yoke together terms so disparate, so perilously strung out, as to leave the poem hanging by a hair across vast temporal and spatial distances. Something of that giddiness can be seen in these familiar lines from *Paradiso* 12:

As two concentric arcs of equal hue,
are seen as they bend through the misty clouds
when Juno tells her handmaid to appear—
the outer from the inner one an echo,
like to the longing voice of her whom love
consumed as morning sun consumes the dew—
and reassure the people here below
that by the covenant God made with Noah,
they have no need to fear another Flood—
even so those sempiternal roses wreathed
twin garlands round us as the outer one
was lovingly responding to the inner.²⁵

Dante seems to see nothing wrong with mixing Greek mythology and biblical allusions, mentioning Juno and her handmaid, Iris, goddess of the rainbow, in the same breath as Noah and the Flood. Also in the same breath he mentions Echo, consumed by her love for Narcissus as dew is consumed by the morning sun, until nothing is left of her but her “longing voice.” Jupiter’s heavens and Jehovah’s heavens seem to have merged into one. The same rainbow brightens the horizons of both. And nimble figures of speech move from one to the other: Echo is both the name of a nymph and the name for the mutuality of the blessed revolving in their concentric circles. Thanks to Dante, centuries of readers have swallowed such temporal heresies with barely a gulp.²⁶

For Mandelstam such temporal heresies are the largest gifts poetry has to offer, to reader and writer alike. This claim is not the familiar one

about the “timelessness” of literature. Mandelstam’s point is much more interesting than that. To him the “anachronism” of the *Divine Comedy* (“Conversation” 282) comes about not because the poem is *timeless* but because it is *timeful*. It is full of time, densely populated, home to each of the centuries bearing signs of human life. This is a home not numbered by a metric, not sequenced by a chronological axis. A continuum, it grants adjacency to any two points in space and time. And since it goes forward as well as backward, it stretches the life of every finite point to a potential infinity. This is why Aristotle and Averroës are both here, why latecomers such as Chopin can be included, and why Democritus, exponent of an ancient “atomic theory” in the fifth century BC, can be said to have lived out his extended life through the extended life of the poem, surviving with the help of the *Divine Comedy* to split matter into atoms in the twentieth century.²⁷

An “anachronistic” poem, as Mandelstam uses the term, is one that makes the world both cumulative and nonsequential. It gathers together all coordinates, all points in the life of the planet, paying no attention to their supposed remoteness or proximity. In this way, the human species articulates itself across space and time, its signature coterminous with its habitat. As a form of duration and extension, literature is thus a heresy, an insult and an affront to the finiteness that is the norm of biological organisms and territorial jurisdictions. This heresy allows human beings to have a collective life, not identical to the life span of a perishable individual or of a perishable nation. Against the robust continuum of the *Divine Comedy*, either of these life spans might look like “less than a wink of the eyelash” (O. Mandelstam, “Conversation” 254).

Mandelstam, who learned about Einstein during his stay in Kharkov (N. Mandelstam, *Hope Abandoned* 74; Brown, *Mandelstam* 97), might have referred to this continuum as the relativity of simultaneity. He in fact begins one of his essays, “On the Nature of the Word,” with an ex-

plicit tribute to Einstein: "Due to the quantitative change in the content of events occurring over a given time interval, the concept of a unit of time has begun to falter, and it is no accident that contemporary mathematical science has advanced the principle of relativity" (73). To anyone living under Stalin, relativity of simultaneity is not an esoteric idea. It is a living fact, a political fact, the only recourse against the absolute tyranny of an absolute synchronic plane. A long past and a long future are signs of hope. And hopelessness, conversely, is to be trapped in a time slot, changeless and dimensionless. Being thus trapped is the condition of hell. But hell, Mandelstam also insists, is no more than a temporal effect, the effect of a now that has everything under its thumb. That thumb shrinks in size the moment we can bring to bear on it a different time scale, different verb tenses. This, for Mandelstam, is the central meaning of *Inferno* 10, a meaning that pits him not only against Stalin but also against Dante the Christian poet. Against both he reads *Inferno* 10 as a canto driven by contrary "forms of verb tenses: the perfective and imperfective past, the subjunctive past, even the present and the future are all categorically and authoritatively presented" ("Conversation" 256). This jumble of tenses is occasioned by Dante and Vergil's visit to the sixth circle of hell, the circle of the heretics. Among these none is more heretical than Farinata, that proud and unregenerate Ghibelline, who, hearing the Florentine speech from Dante's tongue, cannot hold his own tongue.

Dante, already frightened, draws closer to Vergil. Now the present tense enters the scene, in a little cry of annoyance. Vergil has no patience with Dante's slinking and shrinking, and he is not too ceremonious in his response: "Turn around: What are you doing?" "Volgiti: che fai?" (my trans.; 10.31). Most readers would see this as an offhand rebuke. Mandelstam turns it into a capsule summary of hell, hell as a verb tense:

The horror of the present tense is given here, some kind of *terror praesentis*. Here the unal-

loyed present is taken as a sign introduced to ward off evil. The present tense, completely isolated from both the future and the past, is conjugated like pure fear, like danger.

("Conversation" 256)

The horror of the present tense is perhaps more vivid to Mandelstam than to Dante. Still, even for the latter, hell is hell because its time is overdetermined, because its torments have an iron necessity, a here and now from which all doors are closed. What is striking about Farinata, though, is that for him the doors are not closed, at least not the door to the past. It remains open, and the traffic through it is constant and uninterrupted. Farinata's love for Florence is as lively as ever; its familiar accents stir him even in hell. Indeed, it soon becomes clear that Farinata is "in" hell only in the weakest possible sense. No full containment comes with that preposition. His heart and mind are elsewhere, still caught up in the past, a Florentine past in which he takes great pride and which for him remains the eternal reference point. It is from that reference point that he asks Dante, "Who were your ancestors?" "Chi fuor li maggior tui?" (my trans.; 10.42). Here of all places ancestry is still the first thing to find out. The question is rude, crude, effortlessly insulting, because Farinata, great nobleman that he is, still has the right to exact that bit of information and in just that tone of voice. When told, he lifts his eyebrows a little, half in recognition and half in disdain. And he persists in both veins: "Bitter enemies of mine they were / and of my ancestors and of my party; / I had to scatter them not once but twice."²⁸ Even in hell what matters the most to Farinata is the memory of that scattering, the grim satisfaction of it, not once but twice. That memory is untouched by hell and is forever untouchable. For Farinata is his memory: a memory prior to hell and external to hell and enfolding him forever in that priority and externality.

To Mandelstam the powerful past tense of "Chi fuor li maggior tui?" explodes "like a mighty tuba."²⁹ Hell does not exactly crumble

with that sound, but it is no longer what it was. Its eternal present has been punctured, shown to be not sovereign, not absolute, not even governed by a single verb tense. It cannot banish the echoes of an alien tongue, and it cannot erase the memories of an earthly city, both of which make a mockery of its less than unified now. Indeed, hell does not even have the power to inflict the worst suffering on its inmates. When told by Dante that the Ghibellines have been defeated and sent into exile but, unlike the Guelfs, have not “learned the art” of returning, Farinata counters with this lament: “If they have badly learned that art, [. . .] it is worse torment to me than this bed [. . .].”³⁰ Just as he loves Florence the best, so he is pained the most by what he sees as its reverses. Nothing in hell can compete with that. Farinata will never be anything other than what he was: a Florentine, a Ghibelline, someone who lived by the sword and revered only the sword. No length of sojourn in hell would make him a well-behaved inmate.

Surprisingly, the power of the past tense is not even unique to Farinata, so haughty, so magnificent, and so obviously a heretic. Canto 10 is not the sole habitat of one individual. Another Florentine is there. This turns out to be Cavalcante, father of Dante’s best friend, Guido. Listening for some time to the exchange between Dante and his neighbor, Cavalcante can finally stand it no longer. Suddenly raising himself up, he looks around eagerly to see if anyone is with Dante. Not finding anyone, he cries out:

“Where is my son? Why is he not with you?”
 “I do not come alone,” I said to him,
 “that one waiting over there guides me through
 here,
 the one, perhaps your Guido held in scorn.”
 [.]
 Instantly, he sprang to his full height and cried,
 “What did you say? He *held*? Is he not living?”
 The Day’s sweet light no longer strikes his eyes?”
 And when he heard the silence of my delay
 responding to his question, he collapsed
 into his tomb, not to be seen again.³¹

Like Farinata, Cavalcante is Florentine, but he is almost the opposite of his compatriot. Mandelstam is not the only one to notice the relation between these two heretics. Erich Auerbach, writing *Mimesis* in Istanbul after his banishment from Nazi Germany, is also struck by the pairing of Farinata and Cavalcante.³² For Auerbach canto 10 is structured by three abrupt interruptions: first the interruption of Vergil and Dante by Farinata, then the interruption of Farinata and Dante by Cavalcante, and finally the resumption of Farinata’s speech, as if Cavalcante had not spoken. Each of these shifts is so violent that “its connection with what precedes is not mere juxtaposition but the vital relationship of counterpoint.” Farinata’s firm and weighty words, the stately balance of his syntax, give way to Cavalcante’s “irregular and plaintively thronging questions” (Auerbach 156, 158).³³ The civic and military glories of Florence are now set aside, leaving a single tie, an affective tie, in the foreground. Cavalcante loves Guido, believes in his genius, and wants him to be still alive, his eyes bathed in the sweet light of Tuscany. He wants him to be Dante’s honored companion in this tour of hell. But Guido is nowhere in sight. Not seeing him and catching Dante’s words—“held in scorn” ‘ebbe a disdegno’—he can only repeat that verb in dumb terror: “What did you say? He *held*? Is he not living?” ‘Come dicesti: “Egli ebbe”? non viv’elli ancora?’

Ebbe, a slip of a word, will travel across the centuries, coming home to Mandelstam as the sound of the “fated past perfect.”³⁴ As in the exchange with Farinata, the human drama here revolves around a dramatized verb tense. The kinship between the two inmates is all the more significant in the light of their obvious difference. For Farinata the word *fuor* is summoned with all due deliberation; for Cavalcante the word *ebbe* falls like a bolt from the sky. Still, the two are the same: both temporal heretics. In his single-minded devotion to his son and in his devastation at the (mistaken) news of Guido’s death, Cavalcante turns out not to be a slave to

the now of hell, just as Farinata is not a slave. Cavalcante's reference point too remains anterior and exterior. He too will never be anything other than what he was: a weakling, too easily broken, too easily given to despair, but prior to hell in just that weakness, not a full-time resident of the sixth circle.

Farinata and Cavalcante, one larger than life, the other not, together give voice to the heresy of an unofficial timetable. This heresy infiltrates and permeates even where it does not altogether liberate. Bursting through the supposedly closed doors of hell, it clashes as a "mighty tuba" or as "an oboe or clarinet" (O. Mandelstam, "Conversation" 257). Either way, it lets loose the force of the unsynchronized, the relativity of simultaneity. That force breaks up the territorial sovereignty of hell. It also breaks up another kind of territorial sovereignty. The Soviet Union had never been airtight: Mandelstam and Dante made it less so.

NOTES

¹ "The Stalin Epigram" (Brown and Merwin 70).

Его толстые пальцы, как черви, жирны
[.]
Тараканы смеются усища
[.]
Как подковы кует за указом указ —
Кому в пах, кому в лоб, кому в бровь, кому в глаз.
Что ни казнь у него, — то малина
И широкая грудь осетина. (McDuff 130)

"The Stalin Epigram," never written down but recited only to a small gathering of friends, must be read in conjunction with a later poem, an ode apparently in praise of Stalin. For the latter, see Brown, "Into the Heart"; Coetzee.

² N. Mandelstam, *Hope against Hope* 4. For further documentation see Maggs; Shentalinsky.

³ No doubt for this reason, the *Divine Comedy* was also important to many other Soviet authors, including Anna Akhmatova, Joseph Brodsky, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

⁴ "Relativity of Simultaneity" is the title of ch. 9 of Einstein's *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*.

⁵ For a general critique of this territorial paradigm, see Gilroy; for a specific critique of the "insularity" of new historicism, its "national and monolingual" bias, see Wallace xiii–iv. It is useful to recall, as Gellner does, that "[c]ulture

and social organization are universal and perennial. States and nationalisms are not" (5).

⁶ For a suggestive critique of Anderson, see Bhabha, esp. 157–61.

⁷ The line "No, mozhет byt', poezii sama — / Odnа velikolepnaia tsitata" is from Akhmatova's poem "Ne povtoriai — dushа tvoia bogata" (Pollak 4).

⁸ Brown and Merwin 65.

Себя губя, себе противореча,
Как моль летит на огонек полночный,
Мне хочется уйти из нашей речи
За все, чем я обязан ей бессрочно.
[.]
Чужая речь мне будет оболочкой,
И много прежде, чем я смел родиться,
Я буквой был, был виноградной строчкой,
Я книгой был, которая вам снится.
(“К немецкой речи”; Мандельштам 69–70)

⁹ W niebezpieczeństwie strzykwa dzieli się na dwoje
[.]
Potrafimy się dzielić, och prawda, my także.
Ale tylko na ciało i urwany szept.
Na ciało i poezję.

¹⁰ O. Mandelstam (Greene 68).

На Красной площади всего круглей земля
И скат ее твердеет добровольный.
На Красной площади земля всего круглей,
И скат ее нечаянно раздолжный,
Откидываясь вниз до рисовых полей,—
Покуда на земле последний жив невольник.
(Мандельштам 91)

¹¹ For the importance of Dante to Brodsky, see Bethea 52–73.

¹² Latham 187; "Florentinus natione non moribus" (*Epistola* xviii).

¹³ Botterill 11, 13; 1.6. "Nam quicumque tam obscene rationis est ut locum sue nationis delitiosissimum credat esse sub sole, hic etiam pre cunctis proprium vulgare licetur, idest maternam locutionem [. . .]. Nos autem, cui mundus est patria velut piscibus equor [. . .]. Et quamvis ad voluptatem nostram sive nostre sensualitatis quietem in terris amenior locus quam Florentia non existat, revolventes et poterarum et aliorum scriptorum volumina, quibus mundus universaliter et membratim describitur, ratiocinantesque in nobis situationes varias mundi locorum et eorum habitudinem ad utrunque polum et circumulum equatorem, multas esse perpendimus firmiterque censemus et magis nobiles et magis delitiosas et regiones et urbes quam Tusciam et Florentiam, unde sumus oriundus et civis, et plerasque nationes et gentes delectabiliore atque utiliori sermone uti quam Latinos" (Botterill 10, 12). Dante then goes on, in 1.15.2, to single out for praise the poet Sordello, who, though born in Mantua, abandoned his native tongue and wrote in Provençal, when composing not only poetry but any discourse

whatsoever (“qui, tantus eloquentie vir existens, non solum in poetando sed quomodocunque loquendo patrium vulgare deseruit” [Botterill 34]).

¹⁴ Bloch sees paternity as a sovereign trope in Dante’s model of linguistic derivation (43). While *De vulgari eloquentia* does argue for a single “illustrious Italian vernacular” ‘latium vulgare illustre’ (Botterill 46–47; 2.1.1), this illustrious offspring is parented by multiple and decentralized local dialects. In *De monarchia*, Dante likewise argues for a world government, working against sovereign states and especially against the pope (Henry).

¹⁵ The concept of noise is also important to many scientific disciplines. See Moss and Wiesenfeld; McClintock.

¹⁶ In his youth, to sidestep the Jewish quota and gain admission to the University of Saint Petersburg, Mandelstam had converted to Christianity. As Brown points out, such an opportunistic move hardly signals any deep faith of Mandelstam’s (*Mandelstam* 46). For Mandelstam’s complicated negotiations with his Jewishness, see Cavanagh 104–45, 193–214; Pollak.

¹⁷ Translation theory is a broad field. See esp. Steiner.

¹⁸ The *Divine Comedy* has been translated into at least these languages: Albanian, Arabic, Aramaic, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Basque, Catalan, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Esperanto, Finnish, French, Georgian, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Icelandic, Irish, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Latvian, Lithuanian, Low German, Macedonian, Moldavian, Norwegian, Pahlavi, Polish, Portuguese, Provençal, Romanian, Russian, Sardinian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Welsh, and Yiddish.

¹⁹ In *Inferno* 4.131–32 Aristotle appears among the virtuous pagans. Further references to him appear in *Inferno* 11.79–84, 11.101–05; *Purgatorio* 3.40–43; *Paradiso* 24.133–35, 26.37–39.

²⁰ Arnaut’s Provençal speech is perhaps the most obvious instance of multilingualism in the *Divine Comedy*: “So much does your courteous question please me that I neither can nor would conceal myself from you. I am Arnaut, who weep and sing as I go. I see with grief past follies and see, rejoicing, the day I hope for before me. Now I beg of you, by that goodness which guides you to the summit of the stairway, to take thought in due time for my pain.”

Tan m’abellis vostre cortes deman,
Qu’ieu no me puese ni voill a vos cobrire.
Ieu sui Arnaut, que plor e vau cantan;
Searsiros vei la passada folor,
e vei jausen lo joi qu’esper, denan.
Ara vos prec, per aquella valor
que vos guida al som de l’escalina,
sovenha vos a temps de ma dolor!

(Sinclair 342–43; 26.140–47)

For the relation between Dante and Arnaut, see Barolini 112–14. For Bertran de Born, who appears in *Inferno* 28, see Mazzotta 92–95.

²¹ *Inferno* 4.144: “Averroës, who made the great commentary” ‘Averois, che ’l gran comento feo’ (my trans.). In *Purgatorio* 25.63–66 Averroës is referred to indirectly: “which once made a wiser than thou to err, so that in his teaching he made the possible intellect separate from the soul, because he did not see an organ appropriated by it.”

che più savio di te fè già errante,
sì che per sua dottrina fè disgiunto
dall’anima il possibile intelletto,
perchè da lui non vide organo assunto

(Sinclair 326–27)

In *De monarchia*, discussing the multiplicity of creatable things, Dante says, “With this belief Averroës accords in his commentary on the treatise *Concerning the Soul*” ‘Et huic sententie concordat Averrois in comento super hiis que de Anima’ (Henry 13; 1.3).

²² In the Middle Ages Averroës was known primarily through his commentary on Aristotle. See Walzer 1–37. For Dante’s “Averroism” see Gilson 126–27, 157–58, 168–71, 259–62. Mazzotta discusses *Purgatorio* 17 and the *Vita nuova* in the context of Aquinas’s critique of Averroës (12, 122–27).

²³ For a persuasive account that contradicts Mandelstam’s, one that sees the *Divine Comedy* as centrally structured by an anti-Islam ideology, see Menocal.

²⁴ “Democritus, who ascribed the world to chance” ‘Democrito, che ’l mondo a caso pone’ (my trans.).

²⁵ Musa 144–45; 12.10–21.

Come si volgon per tenera nube
due archi paralleli e concolori,
quando Iunone a sua ancella iube,
nascendo di quel d’entro quel di fuori,
a guisa del parlar di quella vaga
ch’amor consunse come sol vapori;
e fanno qui la gente esser presaga,
per lo patto che Dio con Noè pose,
del mondo che già mai più non s’allaga;
così di quelle sempiternose rose
volgiensi circa noi le due ghirlande,
e sì l’estrema all’intima rispose.

(Sinclair 174)

²⁶ Of course, it is Christian theology—Christian teleology—that enables Dante to see the entire course of time on the same synchronic plane. In this sense Dante is not heretical at all.

²⁷ By “atoms” Democritus means small invisible particles differing from one another only in size, shape, and motion. The modern atomic theory is far more elaborate, assigning to atoms an internal structure with neutrons, protons, and electrons.

²⁸ Musa 160; 10.46–48. “Fieramente furo avversi / a me e a miei primi e a mia parte, / sì che per due fiato li dispersi” (Sinclair 134).

²⁹ “Conversation” 257. He makes a slight error here, misquoting the line as “Chi fuo li maggior tui.”

³⁰ “S’elli han quell’ arte [. . .] male appresa, / ciò mi tormenta più che questo letto” (Sinclair 137; 10.77–78).

³¹ Musa 160; 10.60–63, 10.67–72.

mio figlio ov’ è? perchè non è ei teco?”

E io a lui: “Da me stesso non vegno:

colui ch’attende là per qui mi mena,

forse cui Guido vostro, ebbe a disdegno.”

[.]

Di subito drizzato gridò: “Come

dicesti: ‘Egli ebbe’? non viv’elli ancora?

non fiere li occhi suoi il dolce lome?”

Quando s’accorse d’alcuna dimora

ch’io faceva dinanzi alla risposta,

supin ricadde e più non parve fora.

(Sinclair 134, 136)

³² For Auerbach’s years in Istanbul, see Lerer.

³³ Auerbach points out that Cavalcante’s lines “might have been modeled after Andromache’s in *Aeneid*, 3, 310, that is, after a woman’s lamentations” (158).

³⁴ “Conversation” 257. “[E]bbe a disdegno” are three of the most puzzled-over words in the *Divine Comedy*. For a reading of these words, see Singleton. Durling sums up the ambiguity of the verb tense: “in addition to its meaning as a *past absolute* (Guido habitually disdained), a *passato remoto* (Guido at a specific time did indeed disdain), or as a *passato prossimo* (Guido just now disdained),” it also stands “as a *perfect* (Guido no longer disdains)” (24–25).

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