

Osip Mandelstam and T. S. Eliot between Tradition and Innovation: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

During the second decade of the twentieth century, the advent of Imagism led by Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot in Anglo-American poetry coincided with the rise of Acmeism in Russia, led by Osip Mandelstam and Anna Akhmatova.

Being a study that belongs to the field of comparative literature, it is a study of analogy that reveals the correspondences between Imagism and Acmeism as they manifest themselves in the works of Eliot and Mandelstam. In the total absence of cross cultural exchanges between the two movements at the time, the study attributes the analogies in their works to the use of the same sources, for innovation, in the European cultural heritage as well as to the socio-political factors surrounding the comparison of their works.

INTRODUCTION

The second decade of the twentieth century witnessed the advent of two of the most iconoclastic and influential poetic movements in the world of literature, namely Imagism in Anglo-American literature and Acmeism in Russia. In the Anglo-American poetic tradition, Imagism gained in force and credibility because it became associated with the names of such bold innovators as Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot (1888-1965). The Imagists Pound and Eliot, among others, revolutionized poetry through introducing a set of distinct poetic devices that came to be known as Imagism. In Russia, the poet Nikolay Gumilyov laid the foundations of Acmeism in 1913, but the movement traditionally attributes its success because two of Russia's leading modern poets, Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938) and Anna Akhmatova were its most influential adherents.

What concerns this paper is not the concurrent rise of Imagism and Acmeism in the second decade of the twentieth century, but the *striking similarities* between them. The similarities between the poetry and the poetics of Mandelstam and Eliot are so real and so striking that Clare Cavanagh (1995: 54) deems Acmeism to be the cousin of Imagism. The analogies reveal that modernism is unique in that the traditions to which the modernists

belong were vastly different ones, yet they resembled each other in important ways (Cavanagh, 1995:27). For this reason, they are quite astonishing because they are similarities that occurred even though the two poets in question belong to entirely different poetic traditions that developed in societies world apart (Cavanagh, 1995:9). Where the Imagists are concerned, it is known that Pound, Eliot, and other Imagist poets had no ties with Russian literature. Pound, as it is known, turned to Japanese haiku, in addition to European sources to write his poetry, just as Eliot turned to Dante Alighieri, John Donne and his school of English Metaphysical poets, Charles-Pierre Baudelaire and numerous other European masters. By the same token, even though Mandelstam was well-versed in European literature, and his Acmeism had more ties with Pound and Eliot than with his European peers, Mandelstam did not know about the Imagists for the very simple reasons that the poet could not read English and the work of the Imagists was virtually unknown in Russia at the time (Cavanagh, 1995:9).

Where the issue of the similarities itself is concerned, the correspondences between the works of Mandelstam and Eliot indicate that they share two fundamental aspects in their respective poetry and poetics. The first one is their mutual reliance on tradition as their means for innovation. The second one is relevant to their insistence on maintaining aesthetic distance, which they achieved through the reliance on images, allusions to myths, and

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the use of poetic masks. Initially, Eliot broke away from the belated Romantic poets because he disapproved their exaggerated subjectivism and their vague emotionalism just as Mandelstam had denounced the subjectivism and the vague mysticism of the second generation of the Russian Symbolists. Imagism, therefore, resembled Acmeism in that it called for greater equilibrium, control, and a more exact knowledge of the relationship between subject and object (Brown, 1973:139). Like the Acmeists, the Imagists also experimented with meter and leaned towards its liberation, and their poetry was marked by irony. Moreover, in the period between 1915-1916, Mandelstam had set a new stage of poetry through the use of a myth that he himself formulated; the device resembles modern Western poetry because the poets provided them with mythical frameworks (Freidin, 1987: 99; 154) through allusions to the vegetation myths of death and resurrection, where Eliot's allusion to the wasteland of the mythical Fisher King in *The Waste Land* (Selected *Poems*: 49-74) is a case in point. The use of myths made the poems more interesting while they raised the modern poems to a universal level through establishing analogies with some mythical counterparts, as the title and the subject matter of Eliot's *The Waste Land* suggests. Finally, Eliot and Mandelstam were equally adept in creating poetic masks which simultaneously resist time and embody history by yoking together the disparate "Is" of different nations and ages with their own lyrical voices (Cavanagh, 1995:26). The device manifests itself in Mandelstam's adoption of the mask of the historical Ovid in his second collection of poems *Tristia* (1923). The title makes an appropriate choice on Mandelstam's part because he compares himself to Ovid, the author of the previous *Tristia*. The analogy between the two poets emanates from the similarities between the circumstances surrounding their lives as artists. In his *Tristia*, the Roman poet describes his last night in Rome before his banishment to the shores of the Black Sea (Translator's note, *50 Poems*: 104). In Eliot's case, the poetic mask is illustrated by Eliot's use of the mask of the mythical seer, Tiresias, in *The Waste Land*.

As far as the reasons that contributed to the rise of twentieth-century literature in general, it is known that numerous cultural factors such as Einstein's Theory of Relativity, William James's philosophy of immediate experience, the *Avante Garde* plastic art, especially cubism, Bergsonian, Jamesian, and Freudian psychology,

in addition to anthropology, and even the technique of montage in films, played major roles in shaping the literature of the early twentieth century. All these circumstances were instrumental in developing the poetry and the poetics of Mandelstam and Eliot, but their impact does not concern this paper's argument. However, as far as the occurrence of similarities between the works of Mandelstam and Eliot is concerned, *the study attributes* the rise of Acmeism and Imagism to two factors. The first factor is tied to the *socio-political* events surrounding the composition of their works. Mandelstam and Eliot had to change the current poetry and poetics because the circumstances, political and otherwise, had changed drastically, forcing both poets to abandon the conventions that governed the late nineteenth-century poetry at the turn of the twentieth century because they felt that such poetry was *inadequate for speaking the language of the times*, that is, of conveying the concerns of the times. The second factor was a *cultural* one, relevant to their dissatisfaction with the works of their immediate predecessors that eventually forced them to create their own traditions through seeking inspiration in the European cultural heritage. In fact, both Eliot and Mandelstam had resented being barred from using the inherited tradition and insisted upon the poet's right to choose his own ancestry and sources (Cavanagh, 1995:10). Nothing could deter Eliot from turning to the European heritage because he believed that the "mainstream of culture is the culture of Latin Europe" (Quoted by Cavanagh, 1995:17). Likewise, Mandelstam considered the Mediterranean the center of the world culture. In his essay "The World and Culture," Mandelstam describes what it meant to him to have the masterpieces of Western literature available to him, for he says:

In sacred frenzy poets speak the language of all times, all cultures. Nothing is impossible. As the room of a dying man is open to everyone, so the door of the old world is flying open before the crowd. Suddenly, everything becomes public property. Come and take your pick. . . .[The modern] poet-synthesizer . . . [is free to choose, mix and match] (CCPL: 116).

Mandelstam's observations imply that the modern poets have liberated themselves from the *tyranny of sequence and succession* mine. Such liberation allowed

Eliot, another modern poet-synthesizer, to create a new tradition out of the old one that commences with Homer, in defiance of time and space. (Cavanagh, 1995:19; the emphasis is mine). By laying claim on the same literary genealogy-Homer, Villon, Dante, Shakespeare, Gautier-the modernist orphans, Mandelstam and Eliot, became if not brothers, then at least not-so-distant cousins (Cavanagh, 1995:28). They are “orphans” because they rebelled against their predecessors while they searched for new sources of inspiration. Their search led them to what Eliot calls “a living and central tradition,” by which he means the ancient worlds of Greece and Rome, and to the Romance cultures that sprung up where Rome had sown it. In this way, the modernist poet is free to orphan himself in the hope of achieving a more distinguished lineage and a richer and a more rewarding legacy (Cavanagh, 1995:17).

Owing to the heavy reliance of Mandelstam and Eliot on the European heritage for innovation, the **study contends** that both poets developed similar poetic devices and “theories” *as a result of their interaction with the same tradition*. This factor itself will be examined in the above-mentioned socio-political and cultural context, wherever relevant, rather than in isolation from it. As such, the study examines two inter-related issues. The first pertains to why the similarities did occur after all and to the nature of the similarities. In this respect, the central issue of this study pertains to investigating the similarities between their works as an *outcome of their interaction with the same tradition*. The second is relevant to the need to understand the deep veneration and indebtedness that Mandelstam and Eliot showed to the European cultural heritage. On the other hand, the paper’s central contention requires making a brief digression that clarifies the relevance of its title. Because the title of the study indicates that it belongs to the field of a comparative literature, one expects to be approaching a treatise that deals with cross-cultural influences. Within such a context, the study would be examining the impact of one national literature on another, through conscious or unconscious borrowings, on the part of the writers in question. Nevertheless, the topic of this paper is still bound to comparative studies because it pertains to the issue of *analogy* rather than to cross-cultural exchanges. It aims at examining the astonishing, yet an equally interesting phenomenon in modern poetry pertaining to the similarities between the work of the Imagist poet Eliot and the work of the Acmeist poet Mandelstam through

their interaction with the same tradition; the phenomenon itself is quite interesting because it occurred despite the total absence of any mutual cultural ties between the two literatures at the time, or the traditional conscious, or even an unconscious borrowing of a poet from the work of a peer who belongs to another national literature.

In order to achieve its purposes, the study is divided into two parts. In the first division, the study briefly examines Eliot’s poetics, his valuation of tradition, and makes a brief digression into his masterpiece, *The Waste Land* to illustrate how Eliot benefited from the European cultural heritage. The second part focuses on Mandelstam; it commences by examining the circumstances that surrounded the composition of Mandelstam’s poetry collections *Stone* (1913), and *Tristia* his critical autobiography, *The Noise of Time* (1925), in addition to his numerous critical essays. This part makes a brief digression into the rise of Acmeism and its attributes and objectives as a literary movement to facilitate explaining Mandelstam’s poetry and poetics. The study next examines Mandelstam’s poetics and emphasizes his commitment to the European cultural heritage as a source of innovation as well as a source of revival of Russian culture in general. Within this context, the study makes brief excursions into Mandelstam’s poetry; it refers to his two poems “Hagia Sophia” (1912) and “The Age” (1923) to illustrate the application of the poet’s poetics to his poetry.

Eliot’s interaction with the European culture enabled him to formulate his conception of a poet’s relation with tradition manifests itself in his celebrated essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919). In this essay, Eliot clarifies the two most important elements that should connect anyone who aims at becoming a poet. For Eliot, no one can hope to succeed as a poet unless he studies the works of the great dead masters. In this sense, Eliot maintains that “Tradition is a matter of a much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you [a poet] want it you must obtain it by great labor” (*The Sacred Wood*: 56). In the second place, Eliot believes that a poet’s talent, that is, his originality, is acknowledged only when the artist adds to the tradition because repetition is not art. At the same time, the poet’s work must be judged by the standards of the past in order to determine its artistic value. Thus, Eliot says:

No poet, no artist of any art has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his

appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You [a critic] cannot value him alone; you must set him for contrast and comparison among the dead. . . . To conform [that is, to repeat,] . . . would be for the new work not really to conform at all; it would not be new, and would therefore not be a work of art (*The Sacred Wood*: 56).

Eliot's views regarding a poet's interaction with tradition revolve around making use of that tradition that is "stealing" from it for the purpose of creating something new. In his essay "Philip Massinger," (1920) Eliot insists that "Immature poets imitate, mature poets steal." His position emanates from his firm belief that "theft is the very stuff of art" (Quoted by Cavanagh, 1995:74).

In addition to the issues of the apprenticeship, evaluation, and innovation in art, Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" contains his theory of impersonality. Interestingly enough, the Imagists derived their notions on impersonality from the fifteenth-century French poet François Villon; they admired him because he practiced restraint, avoided vague emotionalism, and rejected the subjective interference of the poet in his work. Villon was a favorite of both Pound and Eliot as they would return to him repeatedly in their poetry and prose (Cavanagh, 1995:28). They would also cite the argument of one of the important founders of Imagism, notably T. E. Hulme's reasons for "dethroning of the moon", that is, the abandonment of vague emotionalism, after Villon's fashion, as the very first instance of the kind of poetry they championed (Brown, 1973: 179).

Eliot's rebellion against his predecessors was as much encouraged by Hulme's "dethroning of the moon" (in the work of the belated Romantics) as it was the outcome of their mutual veneration of Villon's work. Eliot's reading of the works of Villon, Hulme, and the English Metaphysical poets furnished the basis for the formation of his *theory of impersonality*. Initially, Eliot developed this theory because he objected to the tendency of Romantic poets to project personality upon the external world that, in Eliot's opinion, leads to slopism (Schwartz, 1985:168). For Eliot, the Romantic poet detaches personality from the external reality and then fails to regain contact with that reality. As a result, an unbridgeable gap between subject and object prevents him from ever getting fully outside himself (Schwartz, 1985:168). As seen from Eliot's perspective, one should

understand a work of art not by searching for the subjective life of the author, but by analyzing the structure of the world that he has created. For this reason, Eliot attacked the subjective interference of William Wordsworth in literary texts by saying:

The process of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, continual extinction of personality. Poetry is not a turning loose of emotions but an escape from emotions; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality (*The Sacred Wood*: 56-7).

Eliot's perspective on authorial personality manifests how the issue of impersonality of the high modernist style interposed itself as an emotional barrier between the poet and the reader (Perkins, 1987: iv). It proposes that the continual extinction of personality allows the poet to produce more genuine works of art (*The Sacred Wood*: 57). As such, Eliot opposed the cult of personality because he believes that "only those who have personality and emotion know what it means to want to escape from these things" (*The Sacred Wood*: 57). For Eliot, any art with value should express "not personal emotion" but a "new art emotion." (*Selected Essays*: 57).

As expected, Eliot looked for appropriate solutions to the problem of the cult of personality in the European heritage. With the help of his theory of impersonality, Eliot was hoping to find an antidote for dealing with another serious flaw in English poetry that developed in English poetry after John Donne and his school of the Metaphysical poets. In his essay "The Metaphysical Poets," (1917) Eliot examines what he deems it to be "a dissociation of sensibility," which stands for a gradual regression in English poetry that displays a widening rift between intellect and sensation, thought and feeling (*Selected Essays*: 248). The Metaphysical poets, Eliot argues achieved a unified sensibility because they were able to maintain a balance and harmony between their thoughts and feelings through their use of extended metaphors, or conceits (*Selected Essays*: 248). For Eliot, "the thoughts and feelings of the Metaphysical poets were in harmony, but their successors thought and felt by fits unbalanced" (*Selected Essays*: 248). Ultimately, these observations inspired Eliot to develop his celebrated concept of the "objective correlative" that functions as an antidote for the dissociation of sensibility, while it enables Eliot to maintain aesthetic distance.

Eliot's "objective correlative" aims at maintaining aesthetic distance through investing sets of seemingly unrelated extended images with the poet's thoughts and feelings (*The Sacred Wood*: 100). Thus, in defining the concept Eliot says:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative," in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience are given, the emotion is immediately evoked (*The Sacred Wood*: 100; the emphasis is Eliot's).

Eliot's views on *objects* reveal one of the major doctrines of the Imagists that emphasizes concision of style, or saying what one means in the fewest and clearest words as he deems concentration to be the very essence of poetry (Perkins, 1976: 333-34). At the same time, being a poet who insists on the unity of sensibility and on maintaining aesthetic distance, Eliot considers the use of objects to be effective when the poet strikes the right balance between thoughts and feelings. Accordingly, Eliot's insistence on using the device of the "objective correlative" to offset vague emotionalism and the dissociation of sensibility did not mean that Eliot was demanding the abdication of intellect; on the contrary, Eliot demanded a unification of intellect and feeling (Schwartz, 1985:177). The device also enables a poet to offset vague emotionalism that Eliot opposed (Schwartz, 1985:168). He believed that the followers of Wordsworth attended to the external object for its own sake not because of association with passions specifically human, and they, therefore, Eliot believes, fail to rise above the commonplace (*Egoist*: 118). Furthermore, the device also added depth and complexity to Eliot's poetry and turned poems like *The Waste Land* into polyphonic, "readerly" texts. Finally, Eliot's "objective correlative" enabled him to engage his poetry in the praxis of life, unlike his predecessors who were withdrawn from it.

Obviously, Eliot could not tolerate the late Romantics because Romanticism stands for excess in any direction. In fact, Eliot disliked the literature that existed at the turn of the twentieth century because it splits up into two extremes, the Romantic escape from the world of fact, and the devotion of Realism to the brute fact; ironically

enough, both had sprung from the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Like other modernists, Eliot was a poet of sense not of sounds; he was a poet with a philosophy and a vision, and perhaps even a *vates* with a prophetic vision. For this reason, Eliot believed that a poet should find his vision embodied in a form and a suitable language. . . [whereby] the material [the poem's subject matter] is identified with its form" (*On Poetry and Poets*: 110). In this respect, the connection between the subject matter of Eliot's *The Waste Land* and its form best illustrates how Eliot used his objective correlative that he initially derived from Donne and his school of Metaphysical poets to engage his poetry in the praxis of life while he maintained aesthetic distance.

As the title of the poem suggests, *The Waste Land* evokes the Western hemisphere as a hellish place on earth, one that developed in the aftermath of World War I which had erupted as a major consequence of the spirit of crass materialism that had accompanied the process of secularization about two centuries ago. In this respect, the language Eliot deploys to describe social interaction abounds in images of pain and conflict (Schwartz, 1985:186). Wherever Tiresias turns in the poem's five sections, he sees nothing but the torment and the anguish of people who have lost the ability to love, to communicate, or even enjoy the simple pleasures of life as well as the destruction that the War had left behind. They even walk mechanically, robot-like, and non recognizes Christ; few, or perhaps none, are aware of the vast desert growing nearby as a consequence of their deadness in life. All this is illustrated in the final stanza of the poem's opening section entitled "The Burial of the Dead". After roaming the newly developed wasteland, Tiresias feels shocked with what he sees; he describes his impressions by saying:

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
.....
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him
crying: 'Stetson!
'You who were with me in the ships at
Mylae!'
That corpse you planted last year in your
garden,

Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom again this year?
 'Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
 Or with its nails it'll dig it up again! (*Selected Poems*: 53)

As seen from the above quotation, the stanza consists of a series of images that evoke a hellish place similar to Dante's *Inferno*, on which, in fact, Eliot based his description of the robot-like and dead-in-life Londoners, (the representatives of Westerners) who walk watch their feet as they walk and sigh in grief over the ones lost in the war. Stetson, on the other hand represents the spiritual bankruptcy of the inhabitants of this waste land for he has buried the corpse that represents Jesus and refuses to allow its resurrection, metaphorically speaking. Stetson has participated in the modern Mylae in the sense that both the Punic wars that took place between ancient Rome and Carthage were fought, like the First World War, over economic benefits within the framework of colonial rivalry and colonial expansion. All this evolves from the poem through Eliot's use of images juxtaposed next to each other in a seemingly haphazard manner.

Because Eliot insisted on maintaining an aesthetic distance, the quoted stanza manifests his manner of leaving it to the reader to rearrange the chronology of the poem's situations and to discern the connection among its varied images. The images themselves are for the most part situations that evoke particular responses. As C. K. Stead explains, *The Waste Land* is composed of a series of projections of 'states of feelings' that have no fixed center because their common origin is in the depths of one man's mind, Tiresias (150). The poem traces in its rhythms, in its music, and the sequence of its images the events of that mind at a particular time and in relation to a particular set of external circumstances of which we can know very little (Stead: 150). However, it is the feeling not the experience which is the subject of the poem (Stead: 151). Ultimately, the images add up to an extended metaphor of a modern waste land. The fragmented form of the text functions as a commentary on its subject matter in that the fragmentation becomes a metaphor for the chaos that pervades the world of the poem, both within and without the poem. In this respect, it should be noted that Eliot's use of multiple speakers, as in the quoted stanza, also contributes to the fragmentation of the poem's form. In this way, the poem's

fragmentation represents the anarchy in the waste land, and by analogy, it enables Eliot to portray the anarchy in the Western hemisphere in the aftermath of the War. As such, the poem succeeds in portraying its subject matter without any interference from Eliot himself. Accordingly, Eliot's intense reliance on the European heritage, particularly in *The Waste Land*, enabled him to write a masterpiece. With this in mind, we now turn to the examination of Mandelstam's relation with the European tradition to compare it to Eliot's use of the same tradition.

The similarities between the works of Mandelstam and Eliot have more than a plausible explanation: modern literature developed in the shadow of the First World War, and for the Russian artists, one has to add the experience of the October Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War that followed it. Accordingly, the poetry of Mandelstam and Eliot, like all modern literature, sustains the critical notion that the early twentieth-century culture was a culture born out of crisis and catastrophe (Cavanagh, 1995:4). As such, the similarities between Mandelstam's Acmeism and Eliot's Imagism support the critical contention that modernist art defies national and linguistic boundaries (Cavanagh, 1995:5). In this respect, the disappearance of such boundaries denote that the modern artists shared an awareness that they were living in rapidly changing times. This was accompanied by a feeling that the winds of change were destructive, and they forced the artists to live in an age that portended the ushering of a new but an incomprehensible one.

The sense of an ending was not confined to one country or one continent alone as The First World War had played a major role in spreading that foreboding sense. The War did touch the lives of millions, and few escaped its scars, physical and otherwise, unscathed. Nowadays, it has become almost a truism to speak of the second decade of the twentieth century as one of the bloodiest periods in human history. In Russia, the outbreak of the October Revolution in 1917, in the aftermath of the failed uprising of 1905, took the world by surprise. Many believed that the Russians would finally find some respite from bloodshed. However, even though the Revolution ended Russian participation in the War, they had to deal with its upheavals and with the Civil War that followed it.

The Revolution was catastrophic for the country in general and for the Russian intellectuals in particular. It was ironic that the Revolution, that had erupted to improve the quality of Russian life, accused the

intellectuals, who traditionally defended the causes of freedom and justice, of being subversive arch enemies of its goals, and, subsequently, they became its first victims. According to Peter France, few Russian artists survived the Revolution unscathed: the poets Vladimir Mayakovsky and Mariana Tsvetaeva committed suicide to escape their harsh realities; Anna Akhmatova's husband was shot, and both Isaac Babel and Mandelstam died in prison camps after suffering from years of political exile. Those who survived the Revolution, like Boris Pasternak, the author of *Doctor Zhivago* (1954:30), kept a very low profile and had to remain silent for a long time to avoid persecution. These rapid changes in Russia made an artist like Mandelstam join the modernist chorus that mourned not just of past times but of time itself as the earlier generations had understood it (Cavanagh, 1995:5). This perhaps explains what prompted Mandelstam to maintain that the modern artist has been "excommunicated from history" (Quoted by Cavanagh, 1995:5).

Despite the onslaught against Russian intellectuals, they never abandoned their duties as artists. The Russian intellectuals realized that they were facing an unprecedented disaster that virtually threatened the survival of the Russian cultural heritage. In this respect, Acmeism was not political in its outset (France, 1982:28). However, the concerns of the writers arise from their experiences, and the Russian identity was being challenged. For this reason, Acmeist poets could remain aloof; they had to energize themselves to assure the continuity of Russian culture (Avins, 1983:27), where the rise of Acmeism during the troubled years that preceded the storm is a case in point.

The term "Acmeism" was first coined by Gumilyov in 1912. The founders of the movement included Mandelstam himself. They announced the formal establishment of their movement, as a closed circle of poets, friends who shared a consciously prescribed poetics, a movement with a name, manifestoes, and a journal in the year 1913, after the first publication of their journal *Apollon* appeared in March, 1913 (Harris, 1988:18). Together with other Acmeists, Gumilyov launched an aesthetic opposition to the second generation of Symbolists (Harris, 1988:18). The Russian Symbolist movement itself had its origins in the French Symbolism of Baudelaire and his followers. It had entered Russia at the hands of two of its leading adherents, Valery Bryusov and Andrey Bely who edited the literary journal *Scales*

from 1904-1909. Both poets belonged to the older generation of Symbolists. They embraced the French Symbolists' credo that poetry was autonomous and hence an end in itself, and that the poet's task was to perfect his craft (Harris, 1988: 13; 14). In contrast to the older generation, the second generation under the leadership of Aleksander Blok asserted their views that poetry and art served as exclusive instruments for the attainment of religious, mystical, and metaphysical experience (Harris, 1988:13-15). This denotes that the new generation of Symbolists believed that art was not so much an end in itself as part of a religious or mystical quest (France, 1982:28).

The basic difference between the Symbolists and the Acmeists lies in what each group emphasizes. The Acmeists felt that the abstract philosophical interests of the Symbolists should be replaced by more pragmatic issues (France, 1982:28) instead of using poetry to explore mystical experiences (Harris, 1988:20). In fact, Symbolism in Russia began to dwindle around the year 1910 after having dominated the literary scene since the turn of the century. Symbolism had outlived its times and purposes in Russia as socio-political unrest were gathering momentum, and it was a matter of time before it exploded as a full-fledged revolution. In other words, Symbolism with its penchant for withdrawal from the public life would not fit the requirements of the new age. Led by Gumilyov, Acmeism began to be recognized as a literary movement that challenged the hegemony of Symbolism (France, 1982:28). For the Acmeists, poetry should focus on actual human experiences. Accordingly, they demanded a new kind of poetry that stood for this-worldliness, for the craftsman-like constructive principle against the dissolution of boundaries in mystical experiences (France, 1982:28). As a poet who sought for inspiration and innovation in the *akma*, that is in world literature, Gumilyov cited as his literary models great European masters such as Rabelais, François Villon, and Theophile Gautier as artists who best expressed man in his inner world, man in his physical delights and powers, man's capacity for life, and man's need to express his experience in an artistic form (Harris, 1988: 20).

While the Acmeists broke away from the conventions of the Russian Symbolists to be clearer and more pragmatic, they simultaneously looked for means of innovation in the works of the great European masters. The Acmeists were very serious about maintaining ties with the European heritage. Their position originated in

the view that they are poets rooted in history, that they build on the legacy handed to them by the previous masters, and , that they are indebted to those who preceded them. As such, they believed that they represent the crowning achievement of a long and venerable tradition, and the history they inherit is presumably the one that begins like the name of their movement, in ancient Greece (Cavanagh, 1995:61). In this respect, Acmeism itself provided Mandelstam with inspiration and a venue of action for implementing remedial action that would secure Russian cultural continuity while it simultaneously deals with improving the Russian public reading taste. Hence, the solution to all the problems lay in what Acmeism stood for: the poets of the movement were of the conviction that Russia is more than connected to the West; through its language, Russia had internalized the roots of Western culture (Avins, 1983:24). As such, the adherents to the movement referred to themselves as Acmeists because *akma* signifies their connection and their allegiance to the best that European culture could offer. Therefore, as a literary movement that emphasized strong bonds with the West, it inspired Mandelstam to turn to the European cultural heritage to ensure the continuity of Russian culture.

Where Mandelstam himself is concerned, his success as a poet illustrates the view that modern literature grew out of chaos and catastrophe. It also shows that Mandelstam owes a lot to the European tradition: as a poet who belonged to the generation of artists who experienced the trepidations of the War, the Revolution, and the Civil War, Mandelstam faced the difficulties of the age with courage, determination, and vision. The originality of his work and his dedication to his social mission as an artist reflects the fact that he understood the urgency of the moment. For that reason, he worked diligently to avert a national cultural disaster.

Even though Mandelstam's early poetry reflects a profound consciousness of Symbolism and its conflicting traditions, his poetic collection *Stone* manifests a break away from the conventions of that movement (Harris, 1988:13). Mandelstam opposed the Symbolists because he disapproved their authorial intervention in their poems and disliked the vagueness of their mystical experience. Instead, Mandelstam demanded poetic autonomy and aesthetic distance. Besides, Mandelstam believed that poetry should portray actual experiences and everyday concerns. The notion itself has its counterpart in Eliot's work. Furthermore, Mandelstam reiterates Eliot's

objection to the cult of personality on the basis that poets who interfere in their texts "neglect the most interesting process in poetry- the growth of the poetic personality" (CCPL: 157). To achieve his purposes, Mandelstam denounced the Symbolists just as Eliot discarded the belated Romantics, because like Eliot, he was looking for innovation in the European tradition. Accordingly, Mandelstam resembles Eliot and numerous other modern artists in that he maintained a dialectical and a paradoxical relationship with the past. As Matei Calinescu explains, the modern artist "found himself torn between his urge to cut himself from the past- to become 'modern'- and his dream to found a new tradition recognizable as such by the future" (Quoted by Cavanagh, 1995:5).

Given Mandelstam's determination to rely on world culture in reviving Russian literature, it is obvious that Mandelstam regarded such dependence as something inevitable. In fact, Gregory Freidin comments on Mandelstam position *vis à vis* world culture by saying that

only a cultural orphan growing up in the revolutionary years could possess such an insatiable need for a continuous construction of a gigantic vision of culture meant to compensate for the impossibility of belonging to a single place (1978: 436).

One understands from Mandelstam's prose works why he insists on reviving the dead poets. In "The Word and Culture" (1921) Mandelstam says: "I want Ovid, Pushkin, and Catallus to live once again, and I am not satisfied with the historical Ovid, [Alexander] Pushkin and Catallus" (CCPL: 113). Mandelstam wants to revive them because they will enable him to invent a new kind of poetry since he works from the vantage point, as he states in "The Nature of the Word," that the "moving force of Acmeism in the sense of its active love of literature, with all its difficult ties and burdens, is extraordinary; and the key to this active love was precisely a change in taste" (CCPL: 131). At the same time, Mandelstam cites Pushkin because Pushkin's relation with the European tradition will strengthen his argument. This is because Pushkin jokingly referred to himself as "the minister of foreign affairs" owing to his reliance on European tradition for innovation. In fact, Pushkin is considered the heir of all the national

literatures of Europe, and he is the embodiment of all the culture accumulated by man in the past. Besides, antiquity is represented in Pushkin's work by translations from Anacreon, Xenophon, Horace, Catullus, and others (Zhirmunski:156). This explains why Mandelstam pays Pushkin tribute in his essay "Pushkin and Scriabin" (1920).

The reliance of Mandelstam on the European tradition allowed him to introduce new and formidable modes of poetic expression. In fact, when asked to define Acmeism, Mandelstam replied that Acmeism is "a longing for world culture" (Quoted by Brown, 1973:136). Such a definition indicates total satisfaction with acquiring inspiration from the masters of world culture. At the same time, being an Acmeist, Mandelstam was quite keen on clarifying his literary genealogy. The clarification was important for him in *two ways*. In the first place, by establishing ties with the West, Mandelstam could use that heritage *for the innovation of* Russian literature and create his own tradition as Eliot was doing at the time. In the second place, maintaining those ties with the West provided Russia with an important *source of cultural continuity and change*, following the upheavals that threatened it in the aftermath of the Revolution and the civil war (Freidin, 1978: 422).

As far as the issue of literary innovations are concerned, Mandelstam had based his literary connections with the West on his concept of *invention and remembrance* that appears in his essay "Literary Moscow" (CCPL: 145-49), published in 1912. Mandelstam's position *vis-à-vis* poets and tradition resembles Eliot's views on the same issue: Mandelstam echoes Eliot in insisting that a poet is a reader (that is a student) of tradition whose knowledge of his genealogy helps him in establishing his own literary tradition. Within this context, it is interesting to find out that both Eliot and Mandelstam agree that cultural theft forms one of the sources of constructing new and vibrant literary traditions.

Mandelstam's concept of *invention and remembrance* revolves around his conviction that no one can succeed as a poet unless he becomes fully aware of his literary ancestry and origins (CCPL: 133). Such knowledge is crucial for the development of any given poet, Mandelstam insists, because he identifies each poet as a reader in a tradition, whereby his knowledge of the tradition and of his literary genealogy helps him in creating original works of art through adding to that

tradition. On the other hand, Mandelstam's concept of *invention and remembrance* places him at the very heart of a modernist art preoccupied with what Guillaume Appollinaire calls "the modern debate between tradition and invention" (Quoted by Cavanagh, 1995:8) which Renato Poggioli identifies as the modernists' reliance on a self-consciously "anti-traditional tradition" (Quoted by Cavanagh, 1995:8).

Poggioli's comments on modernist artists suggest that Mandelstam's attachment to "world culture" nowhere denotes that his work revives the European and the Russian traditions with the mere intention of repeating the past (Cavanagh: 8). On the contrary, Mandelstam's critical essays clarify that he uses the tradition as a springboard for innovation. In "The Word and Culture" (1921), Mandelstam insists that "classical poetry is the poetry of Revolution," (CCPL:116) whereby his term revolution signifies radical change, or innovation, which becomes something reminiscent of the European Renaissance in the aftermath of the opening of the classical heritage to Medieval Europe. For this reason, Mandelstam insists in his "Literary Moscow" that "Invention and remembrance go hand in hand in poetry [because]. . . [to] remember also means to invent and the one who remembers is also an inventor" (CCPL: 146). Accordingly, the poet of *Stone* cannot be born until he has acquired a rich tradition to replace the inappropriate past with which his "fathers' have burdened him. Thus, a poet can spur the needs of his creativity by resorting to the past because the past provides the inventive outsider with his home in history (Cavanagh, 1995:99). The past can also *liberate* Russian culture *from the tyranny of sequence and succession*. Mandelstam, therefore, turned to world culture because he could take from it what he desired and then create from it a new history, a new lineage, a new community that exists in defiance of time and space (Cavanagh, 1995:19; emphasis mine).

Where the issue of poetic restraint or, to quote Eliot, impersonality, is concerned, Mandelstam again resembles Eliot in that he resolved the issue through seeking inspiration from the European heritage. Mandelstam had denounced a whole generation of Symbolists who had suffered from what our poet deems it to be the "hypertrophy of the creative 'I'" [that ultimately neglected] the most interesting process in poetry- the growth of the poetic personality" (CCPL: 157). For this reason, Mandelstam maintains in his essay "The Nineteenth Century" (1922) that he salutes "the

catastrophic collapse of biography” in twentieth-century literature (CCPL: 144). In fact, Clarence Brown (1967:185) asserts that the turning point in Mandelstam career as a poet occurred with the discovery of Villon’s work. Mandelstam had in fact made Villon the patron saint of Acmeism before Gumilyov conferred the title on him officially in his manifesto of 1913 (Brown, 1967:186). He joined the Acmeists in their veneration of Villon because of Villon’s position towards the poetic conventions of his age. Thus, in his essay “François Villon,” (1910) Mandelstam pays tribute to Villon because he maintained aesthetic distance; he deems Villon a modern Acmeist because he had revolted against “artificial, hot house poetry” (CCPL: 151). Mandelstam also clarifies how Villon had irreversibly excluded from his poetic diction “the moon and other neutral objects in revolt against the powerful rhetorical school which one might with full justice regard as the Symbolism of the XVth century” (CCPL: 153). Likewise, in his essay “The Morning of Acmeism,” (1913) Mandelstam denounced the vagueness of poetic mystical experiences by saying that to build, that is to write poetry, “means to fight against emptiness, to hypnotize space” (CCPL: 63). Accordingly, Mandelstam’s particular initiation as a poet seems to have occurred when he learnt restraint and discarded vague and neutral notions, like expelling the *moon* from his poetry in favor of tangible delights (Brown, 1973:179). For Mandelstam, therefore, the nobility of poets emanates from, “the nobility conferred upon every man by his [the poet’s] participation in the larger enterprise of humanity” (CCPL: 64). Therefore, to understand how Mandelstam benefited from the European tradition to create his own literary tradition, the study now turns to the examination of Mandelstam use of that tradition to create his literary innovations.

As a poet who rebelled against the conventions of Symbolism, Mandelstam used, like other Acmeists, irony, successions of visual and psychological images, and the poetic mask as literary devices for maintaining objectivity (Harris, 1988:21). As far as imagery is concerned, Mandelstam’s poetry gained in depth and complexity when he “ousted” the moon and began using the device of the gradual breaking up of one image out of another by a process of association (Brown, 1973:179). The images enabled him to express his thoughts without interfering in the poem. The same applies to the use of the poetic mask. Both devices register his breakaway from the Symbolists. To offset the vagueness of the

Symbolists, Mandelstam maintained that a poem “should stand like the work of the builder’s art, its structure clear, its central form distinguishable from the elaborations upon it” (Brown, 1973:183). For Mandelstam, the world without objects is a terrifying place, equivalent to death (Brown, 1973: 181). That is why he needs to fill the void. For this reason, in “The Morning of Acmeism,” Mandelstam explained the reasons that had prompted him to discard the literary conventions of the Symbolists by saying that

talk about art [should] be marked by great restraint. The huge majority of people are drawn to a work of art insofar as they can detect in it the artist’s world view. For the artist, however, a world view is a tool and an instrument, like a hammer in the hands of a stone mason, and the only thing that is real is the work itself (CCPL: 62).

Mandelstam’s observations reiterate his view that a poet should “hypnotize space by building in such a way that he can fight against emptiness,” whereby “emptiness” stands for the vague mysticism of the Symbolists. Mandelstam’s observations imply that the poet has to construct his poem from a variety of devices, the way the mason builds a house from a variety of materials. In this respect, Mandelstam’s essay “The Morning of Acmeism” may be considered a companion piece to his poetic collection of *Stone*. Within the context of the essay, a stone “is the raw material of the unformed self on which Mandelstam as a craftsman set to war . . . and which submits itself to progressive reshaping” (Cavanagh, 1995:33). In this way, a mason fills the space with stones to build houses, while a poet like Mandelstam uses the architectural metaphor to express his conviction that poetry should reflect tangible experiences with which the reader can identify rather than fill the space with vague and incomprehensible mystical experiences that few or perhaps none can grasp.

The differences that distinguish the poet from the Symbolists manifest themselves in his poems, beginning with *Stone*; Mandelstam’s poem “The Age” best illustrates his poetic innovations in terms of presenting actual day to day experiences and maintaining aesthetic distance by relying on an ironic point of view and evoking the experience in a succession of images. Needless to say, all these poetic devices have their

counterparts in Eliot's poetry. As the poem's title suggests, Mandelstam's "The Age" constitutes an artistic commentary on the previous century. The poem's lines are arranged in stanzas reminiscent of the more public and oratorical ode of Russia's classical period, only to suggest the virtual impossibility of continuing this tradition (France, 1982:116). It is a clear and bold public statement on post-Revolutionary Russia. As such, it is rather surprising that the poem first appeared in a Soviet newspaper (France, 1982:116). In the poem, Mandelstam portrays the age as a dying era about to usher a new but a mysterious one. The idea is to portray the twentieth century as a lost one (Roklina, 2000:110). For this reason, the central image of the poem is that of the age as a vertebrate dying animal.

Calling the age a "wild beast," Mandelstam gave it the physical attributes of some kind of animal- pupils, vertebrae, backbone, paws (Broyde, 1975:104). He is also endowed with certain human traits like being cruel and weak, pitiful and beautiful, with a senseless smile (Harris, 1988:75). Addressing it for the most part with pity, he imagined himself at its bedside looking into its eyes. Thus, the speaker comments on the age in the poem's first two stanzas by saying:

My age, wild beast, who dare
Deep into your pupils stare,
And even use his blood to weld
Two centuries' spinal cords in one?
A jet of building blood springs
Through the threat from earthly things
But the sluggard merely sways
On the brink of these new days.

A creature, as long as life persists,
Must bear its backbone and exist,
And a wave rolls and plays
Down the invisible vertebrae.
Like a child's soft cartilage,
The era of the infant earth,
Life's brainpan has been offered up,
Like a sacrificial lamb (50 *Poems*: 56).

By portraying the age as a dying beast with a broken back, Mandelstam could use the image to highlight his anxieties particularly what concerns the loss of continuity from one century to the next. This is because the recurrent metaphor of the backbone in Mandelstam's

poetry stands for cultural and social health (France, 1982:117).

The poem may seem apocalyptic in that it laments the past and fears the next coming age. As Peter France (1982:117) explains, it seemed that to Mandelstam that all he called by the general name of "the nineteenth century" had come to an end, collapsing, broken-backed under its weight. Like many of his contemporaries, Mandelstam did not have a high opinion of the previous century because real cultural values, will and character had been sapped through a belief in determinism, secularization and inevitable progress, as manifested in his essay "The Nineteenth Century," published in 1921, two years before "The Age" (CCPL: 138-44). By contrast, the twentieth century showed signs of being a fearful age that gives little cause for hope (France, 1982:117). This explains why Mandelstam associates the age with images of bloodshed and sacrifice that evoke the atrocities of the Revolution and the civil war that followed it, for the speaker closes the poem in the fifth stanza by saying:

A jet of building blood springs forth
Through the throat from the things of earth
And like a feverish fish it flails
The warm gravel of the seas ashore.
And from a net of flying birds,
Off the blue soaking blocks and shards
Apathy streams, indifferences pour
On the fatal wound of yours (50 *Poems*: 57).

The final stanza of the poem suggests that the backbone of Russian culture has been irreversibly severed, and the historical culture is finished (France, 1982:118). Thus, the recurring image of the age as a dying creature implies that Mandelstam was familiar with the widespread notion of culture as an organism that goes through a predictable course of birth, growth, maturity and death. It is a concept that a wide range of thinkers like Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) had expressed that others promoted across Europe (Broyde, 1975:106).

Despite the poem's apparent pessimism, it has sufficient textual evidence that the situation is hopeful, especially when the speaker uses traditional images from nature that represent a better life, and says: "And once again the buds will swell/ And nature will explode in green . . ." (CCPL: 56). On the other hand, the image of

the “sacrificial lamb” quoted in the third stanza forms an important element in Acmeist poetry that pertains to the social function of poets. The evocation of the poet as a sacrificial lamb in “The Age” reflects that Mandelstam embraces the Acmeist ethical principle *vis-à-vis* the notion of the poet’s self-sacrifice in subversive times for the preservation of cultural memory (Harris, 1988:74). The poem’s opening stanza affirms the moral responsibility of the poet towards his age; thus, in order to understand the age, someone has to look into its pupils, which are a synecdoche, for the eyes are traditionally understood to be the mirror of the soul (Broyde, 1975:107). However, the act of looking into the eyes of the beast suggests the tragic relationship between the poet and his epoch, (Broyde, 1975:107) because the beast remains a perilous one, even if it lies on its deathbed. Accordingly, in such circumstances, the one who looks into the eyes of the age-beast should also be able to glue the vertebrae of two centuries with his blood (Broyde, 1975:107). Thus, the speaker in the poem describes the poet’s task in the fourth stanza by saying:

To rip the very age from bondage
 And with it found a newer world,
 The intertwining joints of days
 Need binding by the music of the flute.
 It is the age that shakes the wave
 With human longing, human grief,
 And the adder in the grass
 Breathes the age’s golden measure (50 Poems: 56).

Based on the concept that poetic creation can liberate a given age from its bondage, (Harris, 1988:75) the fourth stanza shows the poet, who is traditionally associated with the pastoral flute, to be the one capable of healing the age through his art; in other words, Mandelstam endowed poetry with healing powers for it can ensure cultural continuity in such times of turmoil (France, 1982:117). The poet is willing to risk his life to achieve the healing process of the culture that concerns him, even though he knew very well that the age is a cruel one, as suggested in the image of the wave that shakes the people. Undoubtedly, the waves represent the forces of history (because water is a stock symbol of life) that oppress the people and take total control over their lives. Thus, in times of terror, the poet should be the one to create harmony and unity, and cultural continuity, and the speaker in “The Age” addresses his times in the true spirit

of the poet as a synthesizer, and a *raznochinets* (Harris, 1988:58; the emphasis mine). Therefore, Mandelstam’s poem “The Age” is central to the concerns of this paper in yet another important way. It hints at the second significant relationship of Mandelstam with the European tradition as a means for dealing with the Russian cultural crisis in the aftermath of the War and the Revolution.

As an artist who cared for his country, Mandelstam recognized the urgency of the situation and the need to act swiftly and efficiently to save Russian culture from the threat of dissolution in those turbulent times. Mandelstam knew that the task of the poet in such a transitional period required developing the national culture in a way that also ensures the survival of Russian values intact (Avins, 1983:26). Mandelstam’s reliance on Western culture as a means for reviving Russian culture was not something that the poet did against his will as a result of the pressures of the age. On the contrary, Mandelstam firmly believed that Russian culture has its roots in the West. He felt that establishing a genealogy with the European cultural tradition could be the antidote of the ills of Russian culture; in other words, such ties with the West guarantee more than satisfying Mandelstam’s “passion for universality and harmony” (Freidin, 1978: 429).

Mandelstam saw himself as a *raznochinets*, that is, a poet as a social critic or reformer (Harris, 1988: 58-9). He also strongly believed in the social function and the social role of a poet because he maintained in his essay 1922, “On the Nature of the Word” that “Acmeism is a social and a literary phenomenon in Russian history,” and proceeds to say that the objective of its poetry is to “educate not merely ‘citizens’ but “Men” (CCPL:131). Mandelstam position regarding his social objectives as an Acmeist distinctly reveals that he wanted to expand the social function of poetry to include all men because he believed in the universality of mankind’s destiny (Freidin, 1978: 424; 429). As Carol Avins (1983: 26-27) contends, the task of the poet in such transitional periods (as that of post-Revolutionary Russia) in the history of a nation is to develop culture in a way that ensures its continuity. The writer should activate Russian literature’s broad roots- roots sunk deep in the past it shares with Western literature as a whole. In this way, Mandelstam makes a connection between creating literature and creating the future (Avins, 1983: 26-7). On the other hand, through identifying with European writers, Mandelstam gains awareness of the bonds between art

and history, between aesthetic and intellectual values (Harris, 1988: 58-9). His autobiography *The Noise of Time* (1925) confirms the power of art as a challenge to history and time, for the mature writer must judge the past by confronting it with the challenge of his own temporality (Harris, 1988: 58-9). Within this context, it becomes clear why the poetry of Mandelstam keeps going back to the theme of the poet's destiny as the bard of Russian cultural history, preserver of cultural continuity, indeed as the bard of transition from the tranquility of the nineteenth century to the challenges of the twentieth century (Harris, 1988:59). As his essay "Badger Hole" (1921) suggests, Mandelstam affirmed the role of poetry in the survival of human values (CCPL: 133-37), and has accepted the challenges involved in executing that role. Mandelstam was fully aware that "Poetic culture arises from the attempt to avert catastrophe" (CCPL: 127).

Where question of introducing "change in taste," or "invention" through cultural exchanges is concerned, Mandelstam insisted, time and again, that they are useful to a national literature if the artists know how to use them. In his essay "François Villon," Mandelstam alerted his Russian readers to the benefits of the European tradition in the aftermath of the Revolution: he showed them that many poets had pursued that path without harming their national literature. He cited the similar endeavors of the fifteenth century French poet Villon as a case in point. Thus, in describing the process of cultural exchange in the same essay Mandelstam says:

The present moment can bear the pressure of centuries and preserve its integrity, remain the same "now." One needs only to know how to pull it out of the soil of time without harming its roots; otherwise it will wither. Villon knew how to do this . . . (CCPL: 59).

For Mandelstam, cultural exchanges function as "explosions" that generate new forms. Thus, in his essay "Conversations about Dante" (1923), Mandelstam said:

Homer was an explosion that nurtured with its energy the whole of the classical world. He was the Sun of antiquity. Virgil was the Sun of the Middle Ages, Dante the Sun of modern times. Each sun at its inception contained the potential that literature would subsequently develop

(CCPL: 420).

The view that cultural exchanges function as explosions that revive a national literature also manifest itself in the two titles of Mandelstam's poetic collections *Stone* and *Tristia*. *Stone* is a metaphor of historical explosion and energy whereby in culture the poet is such a stone (Freidin, 1978: 432). The concept manifests itself in such Mandelstam's architectural poems as "Hagia Sophia" (1912) that appeared in *Stone* (*50 Poems*: 33).

Hagia Sophia is the name of the Byzantine cathedral in Istanbul. It is one of the finest models of Byzantine architecture, built for Emperor Justinian I (A.D. 527-63). The poem illustrates Mandelstam's Acmeist theories in terms of cultural exchanges while it pays tribute to Justinian for having ordained the execution of such a monumental work. Mandelstam paid tribute to Emperor Justinian's theft of the columns of a pagan temple for the construction of Hagia Sophia. In other words, the poem's focal point is the theft of pagan columns to build Hagia Sophia for Justinian's architects made use of a pagan temple dedicated to the goddess Diana. In this way, the theft of the stones of the pagan temple represents the benefits of cultural exchanges. At the same time, the issue of encouraging theft for innovation echoes Eliot's views on the same issue. Thus, Mandelstam's position manifests itself in the poem; the speaker in "Hagia Sophia" opens the poem by praising the Cathedral's magnificence and then moves on to describing the process of its construction by saying:

Hagia Sophia: it was at this place
The Lord ordained that peoples and Caesar's
halt.
Your dome is. In a witness's phrase,
As if hung by a chain from heaven's vault.

And when Ephesian Diana allowed the looting
Of a hundred and seven green marble columns
For alien gods, it proved for ages yet to come
A monument to Justinian.

But what was it your generous builder meant
When he laid down apses and exedra,
As great spirit in his intent,
Indicating to them east and west?

.....

And the wisdom of his [Justinian's]

hemispherical dome
 Shall outlive peoples, outlast the ages still to
 come,
 While the full-voiced sobbing of the Seraphim
 Shall not let its darkened gilding dim (50
Poems: 33).

As the poem suggests, Hagia Sophia, which rose from the stones of Diana's temple, represent Mandelstam's literary genealogy while it simultaneously functions as an extended metaphor of Mandelstam's relation with the Western tradition. The same applies to his second architectural poem "Nôtre Dame" (1912) that also appeared in *Stone* (Osip Mandelstam, 1980: 33), for France's famous cathedral also represents the European cultural heritage. Within that context, Mandelstam clarifies that Nôtre Dame is not only a point of entry into the tradition but a point of departure from it as well. After entering Nôtre Dame, he must take the Church into himself and recreate continually as he wanders into history's labyrinths (Cavanagh, 1995:102). This is what Nancy Pollack meant when she stated that Mandelstam's "fidelity to the tradition entails the revision of the work of the past" (6; 9).

Where the collection of *Tristia* is concerned, its title suggests that the poems in the collection register Mandelstam's response to World War I and the Revolution. The scholarship on Mandelstam's work recognizes his essay "On the Nature of the Word" as a companion piece to *Tristia* because both were meant "to demonstrate the central formative function of poetry in a society sailing into unknown waters. . . (Freidin, 1987: 177). Accordingly, Mandelstam's title *Tristia* implies that the solution to the Russian cultural crisis would be the European heritage.

Like the architectural poems, *Tristia* implies that the poet makes claims of a genealogy that goes back to Classical times because the title pays tribute to Ovid and connects Mandelstam's work to Ovid's work through borrowing the title of one of his books (that Ovid had written in exile) (Roklina, 2000:97). In this way, Mandelstam, who had also experienced exile, establishes a parallel between Ovid's separation from his culture and the oblivion of the humanistic heritage in Bolshevik Russia (Roklina, 2000:97).

Given the preceding observations on cultural origins, the implications of a Western cultural genealogy in the aforesaid titles reflect Mandelstam's conviction that

Russian culture is rooted in the Western heritage. He compared the way Acmeists expanded the literary boundaries of Russian literature by comparing their endeavors to previous successful attempts in other national literatures. Thus, in his essay "On the Nature of the Word," Mandelstam once again hammers on the issue of *remembrance*, that is, the rediscovery of the great masters, for the double purpose of achieving *invention* and serving the cause of the national culture. He illustrated the process and the importance of cultural exchanges by saying:

The wind of Acmeism turned the pages of the Classicists and the Romantics, opening them to just that page which most appealed to the age. Racine was opened to *Phèdre*, Hoffman to *The Separation Brothers*, Chérnier's Iambs were discovered only with Homer's *Illiad* (CCPL: 131).

Despite Mandelstam's painstaking efforts to make "a connection between creating literature and creating the future," as Avins (1983:27) puts it, Mandelstam fully realized that his mission will fail unless he wins the Sloavophiles to his side. For sometime, the Russian society had been aware of the debate between the Russian pro-Westerners and their opponents, the Slavophiles who opposed Westernization because they felt that it threatens Russian identity. Since the issue was not resolved yet, Mandelstam, as a supporter of Westernization, had to convince his countrymen that the process would not interfere with their national identity (because their cultural roots, in effect, go back to Classical times through the Christianity and the Russian language) before explaining the benefits of the process. One of the strategies that Mandelstam used to reach his goal appears in the opening of his essay "On the Nature of the Word." In the essay, Mandelstam argues that the outcome of his long search for an answer to the question, as to whether Russian literature is a unified whole or not, and if it is, what is it that unites it, was entirely unsatisfactory (CCPL:117). Mandelstam then proceeds to affirm that the unifying element of Russian literature is the language; paradoxically enough, Russian itself has its roots in the Classical languages, Mandelstam maintains, because "Russian is a Hellenistic language" (CCPL: 120). Once Mandelstam establishes the connection between Russia and Hellenism through its language (Avins, 1983:24), it

becomes easier to convince the Slavophiles about the benefits of Westernization. The alternative, for Mandelstam, would be for Russia to continue suffering from the consequences of its isolation.

Mandelstam had frequently lamented the impact of Russia's isolation in his literary essays, where his essays "The Nineteenth Century" and "Humanism and the Present" (1923) are cases in point. Both essays illustrate his anxieties regarding the Russian cultural crisis. In "The Nineteenth Century," Mandelstam warns his countrymen against "the separation of culture and state" and the process of secularization that the new age has ushered (CCPL: 113), in addition to defending Westernization. To clarify his position, Mandelstam blames such intellectuals as André Bely, the father of Russian Symbolism, for encouraging Russian cultural isolation. Accordingly, in "The Nature of the Word," Mandelstam attacked Bely by saying:

André Bely . . . is an unhealthy and negative phenomenon in the life of the Russian language simply because he unsparingly and unceremoniously hounds the word, forcing it to conform to the temperament of his own speculative thought. . . . The fundamental sin of writers like Bely is disrespect for the Hellenistic nature of the word, an unsparing exploitation of the word for personal intuitive ends (CCPL: 121).

Mandelstam's remarks about Bely's abuse of poetic language imply that a poet learns much from turning to the Mediterranean culture rather than restricting his poetic education to his immediate predecessors. To add credibility and further support for his Westernization project, Mandelstam uses the cases of venerated Russian poets like Pushkin who relied on the Western tradition for innovation as well as on the arguments of respectable Russian intellectuals who had supported Russian Westernization. In his essay "Peter Chaadaev," (1915) Mandelstam evokes the argument of the nineteenth-century Russian thinker Chaadaev who supported Russian Westernization on the grounds that Europe was moving forward while Russia was lagging behind it (CCPL: 83-89). Mandelstam hoped that his arguments would eventually win the Slavophiles to his side. To win their consent, Mandelstam used an almost apocalyptic rhetoric that aims at shocking his opponents out of their

complacency by clarifying the "abysmal" condition of the Russian culture. In his "Pushkin and Scriabin," Mandelstam lamented the shocking status of Russians because "the fragile reckoning of the years of our [Mandelstam's] era has been lost" (CCPL: 91), while the modern artist has been "cut off from universal unity [and] excommunicated from history" (CCPL: 84). What is worse for Mandelstam is not just the state of "lawlessness" but the destruction it has caused; thus, in his essay "On the Nature of the Word," the poet laments it by saying: "We [the Russians] have no Acropolis. Even our culture is wandering and not finding its walls" (CCPL: 126). For this reason, they should turn to the European cultural heritage because it can provide Russians with their needs in these difficult times by comparing the needs of Russians to domestic tools and utensils, Mandelstam continues to explain the benefits of his point by saying:

Hellenism is an earthenware pot, oven tongs, a milk jug, kitchen utensils; it is anything which surrounds the body. Hellenism is the warmth of the hearth experienced as something sacred; . . . [it] is the conscious surrounding of man with domestic utensils instead of impersonal objects; the transformation of impersonal objects into domestic objects, and the humanizing and warming of the surrounding world with the most delicate teleological warmth (CCPL:127-8).

Mandelstam's observations on the nature of Hellenism aim at putting the minds of his opponents at ease that Westernization cannot harm Russian identity. Ultimately, Mandelstam is of the conviction that literary energy carried out through cultural exchanges with the West is capable of reviving Russian culture. Using the plough as a metaphor for the positive impact of poetry on culture, Mandelstam said in "The Word and Culture" that

Poetry is the plough that turns up time in such a way that the abyssal strata of time, its black earth, appear on the surface. There are epochs, however, when mankind not satisfied with the present, yearning like the ploughman for the abyssal strata of time, thirsts for the virgin soil of time. *Revolution in art inevitably leads to Classicism* (CCPL: 117; the emphasis is mine).

Mandelstam's essays reveal the mind of an energetic intellectual deeply involved in serving the cause of his national literature and the Russian culture as a whole. The essays also reveal that Mandelstam used different approaches and strategies to persuade the opponents of Russian Westernization to join his camp. In this respect, it seems as if Mandelstam lost his patience with his opponents for refusing to listen to his arguments; perhaps this explains why Mandelstam retorted angrily saying that there was no point in holding onto Russian isolation from the West for the very simple reason that the differences that divide Russia from its neighbors had been washed away by the shipwreck of the modern age (CCPL: 144). Therefore, if Mandelstam's warnings against the negative impact of the War and the Revolution did not succeed in winning his opponents to his camp, perhaps the awareness of the dissolution of "boundaries" would.

To conclude, the preceding exposition has attempted to clarify the way the poets Mandelstam and Eliot utilized the European tradition to create their own unique ones. The study reveals that both Mandelstam and Eliot maintained a very paradoxical relationship with the past: just as Mandelstam rebelled against a generation of Russian Symbolist fathers to benefit from the much older masters, so did Eliot when he abandoned the conventions of the belated Romantic poets. At the same time, they used the European tradition to establish traditions of their own. Eliot's "objective correlative" proved to be an effective device for dealing with vague emotionalism and the dissociation of sensibility. The same applies to his theory of impersonality. Eliot responded dialectically to

the cult of personality (Schwartz, 1985:170). In fact, Eliot succeeded in its application through the use of multiple narrators because the use of images together with allusions to myths and other elements as well as the use of his "objective correlative." He proved to be a clever 'student' and an excellent 'borrower' of tradition, for whatever Eliot borrowed he made his own to the extent that his masterpiece *The Waste Land* has set such elevated standards that few poets can hope to match. Likewise, Mandelstam learnt how to practice poetic restraint and maintain aesthetic distance through resorting to Eliot's very same sources in the tradition, particularly Villon, who was one of the most influential mentors of Eliot. Ultimately, their mutual veneration of the European heritage was responsible for revealing their respective talents; that veneration manifests itself in Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" just as one detects it in Mandelstam's concept of "remembrance and invention."

Ultimately, the study has attempted to verify that modernism was more of a universal phenomenon that responded to specific circumstances and needs than the mere outcome of cross-cultural influences. Through their reliance on the same sources in the tradition, Mandelstam and Eliot helped the reader of such poems as "The Age" and *The Waste Land* to know more about him, the world that surrounds him, and how to interact with such a rapidly changing world. In this way, both poets fulfilled their obligations towards their readers for they were able to teach, as Mandelstam observed, men and not mere citizens.

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