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AN APPLE TREE FOR OSIP MANDELSTAM

Ah, there you are, Osip Mandelstam,
clawfoot in a treehouse,
with a notebook in which you transcribe
Homer's blind seas, the Gothic
architecture of butterflies.
And now you flash,
horizontal lightning,
barbed wire of light—
your body thrown
into a common grave,
no rites of burial,
before the ground was frozen,
somewhere between tree stumps—
crackle of snow on a winter morning,
dying back to the sleepy
rustle of wheat in the slow of noon.

Your eyes are unerasable archives.
The century burns around you,
the century of the hyena,
of the wolf,
of the little clerk
who writes down names,
then crosses some out.
The spastic laughter of machine guns,
then silence in a forest.
Come live in the apple tree
in front of my window.
What do you mean,
The frost smells like apples?
For you I want summer
and ripening light.
Don't think about the clouds
bloodied with sunset.