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The Poetry of Anna Akhmatova

A Conquest of Time and Space

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SONIA KETCHIAN

THE POETRY OF ANNA AKHMATOVA: A CONQUEST OF TIME AND SPACE

Verse Translation by F. D. Reeve

"He conquered both time and space"
(Anna Akhmatova, "A Word on Pushkin")

"And away with time and away with space"
(Anna Akhmatova)

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Preface

The first segment of this book "came to me" in Widener Library in 1971 and was duly recorded, yet only upon completion of my Ph.D. dissertation on a different topic did I resume the study of Anna Akhmatova. While temporary interest in other topics would result in articles, the examination of Akhmatova's verse continued until it assumed the present form.

I am greatly indebted to Sam Driver for his insightful and meticulous reading of my manuscript and for his numerous fine suggestions and comments that have improved this study. I am also grateful to Anna Lisa Crone for her thoughtful reading of the first version of this manuscript (Parts 1–3). I have incorporated many valuable comments. Thanks are due to Lauren G. Leighton who edited my first articles on Akhmatova which form the core of this investigation. Appreciation is also due to the responsive participants of the Harvard Russian Research Center's Literary Seminar Series, to whom many of the present ideas were initially aired, and the fine people at the Russian Research Center and Widener Library for gracious help rendered.

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1. "A Unique Device for Axmatova's Tribute to Mandel'štam." *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 20, no. 4, 1976.
2. "Axmatova's 'Učitel'': Lessons Learned from Annenskij," *SEEJ*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1978.

3. "Imitation as Poetic Mode in Achmatova's 'Imitation from I. F. Annenskij,' " *Scando-Slavica*, vol. 25, 1979.
4. "Metempsychosis in the Verse of Anna Axmatova," *SEEJ*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1981.
5. "Symbiosis and Dichotomy in the Names of Anna Akhmatova," *Semiotics 1981*. Eds. John Deely and Margot Lenhart. New York: Plenum, 1983.

Introduction

Emerging in 1912 as a reaction to Symbolism in Russia, the Acmeist movement in poetry accentuated its position as a continuation of the best world literature through extensive use of literary correspondences, allusions and subtexts. The early poetry of Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966), written just before the drawing up of Acmeist stances and manifestoes by its founders, Nikolai Gumilev and Sergei Gorodetskii, in effect, served as a model for the divergences of the newest poetry from the dominant Symbolists. That the first collection of Akhmatova's verse *Evening* (*Vecher*, 1912) in developing prominent Romantic and Symbolist themes exemplified securement of past literary accomplishments with the novelties in doctrine of concreteness and clarity in composition, themes and imagery, was mostly overlooked by zealots of Acmeism and lovers of the poet's verse. Indeed, her poems were easily appreciated by the general public for their beauty and craftsmanship as well as for their pellucity and taut emotion. Still, had Akhmatova wanted to be totally comprehensible and transparent to her readers, she would have resorted to a different genre, such as confessions, expository prose or even letters, which she avoided writing. Instead she created verse which, as she later implied, must always contain an element of mystery. Accordingly, for the sophisticated reader, mystery and unusual intricacy were incorporated on a covert level through three main avenues: through the understated omnipresence of fire thematics, the device of metempsychosis for the poet's speaker and the device of intertextuality: allusion, correspondences and subtexts. These are the three leading principles which underlie Akhmatova's creative ethos in her seven collections of verse and in her numerous long poems. As a result of her personal unique interweaving of the three principles, her entire artistic output acquires a unity and perfect pattern found only in great literature. The understanding of the unity and design leads to the unraveling of the mysteries inherent in Akhmatova's verse. It will be the objective of this study to illuminate in three parts the pattern of the interwoven principles, never before investigated in scholarship, on the backdrop of

Akhmatova's entire poetic *oeuvre*. An appended fourth part, treating the interconnection between the title of each given collection of poetry with its contents as well as the thematic and structural interdependence on one another of the seven collections, will conclude the investigation.

The first topic of discussion—the theme of fire—will show why for the lyricist Akhmatova fire comprises the basis of her poetic world, being present in life, love and art in a philosophical sense. In fact, in order to create poetry, the poet as a person must initially participate in the ebb and flow of life and love. Thereafter, in her capacity of poet she must transmute the essence of her experiences on the basis of existing literary tradition with the aid of her Muse into artistic impressions and emotions as reflected through her eyes and voice as poetic speaker. The fire of love for a beloved man, experienced by the private person Anna Gorenko (the poet's maiden name), evolves into grief—an inevitable stage for all love. To attenuate her misery and to immortalize the events and individuals, the poet Anna Akhmatova, in contrast to ordinary mortals, worships her Muse. In the process of adulation the supplications of Akhmatova the poet transform into a song, which becomes a lyric pronounced by the persona who happens to be also a poet. The unusual dichotomy between Anna Gorenko the person and Anna Akhmatova the poet that is mirrored in her persona as a person and a poet derives its genesis from Akhmatova's awareness of the dual implications in the Russian words *goret'* (to burn) and *gore* (grief) inherent in the root of her inherited family name, Gorenko, and the laudatory and sighing aspects of her adopted pseudonym, Akhmatova.

The second principle in the verse shows that the dramatic style and content of Akhmatova's poetry boasts an omnipresent variable persona, herself often a poet. In order to substantiate rich experiences and broad knowledge Akhmatova introduces in certain poems a firsthand, eyewitness familiarity for her speaker with bygone ages, with various people and with other, nonhuman forms of life, through elements of metempsychosis. An examination of three stages in intensity will comprise part two of this study.

Finally, this investigation will focus on the use of the immense legacy available to the poet through artistic imitation of her masters and through stylized interpolations from other writers. In composing verse, the esthetic product of her quintessential life experiences, Akhmatova adds depth and artistic magnitude in structure, semantics and

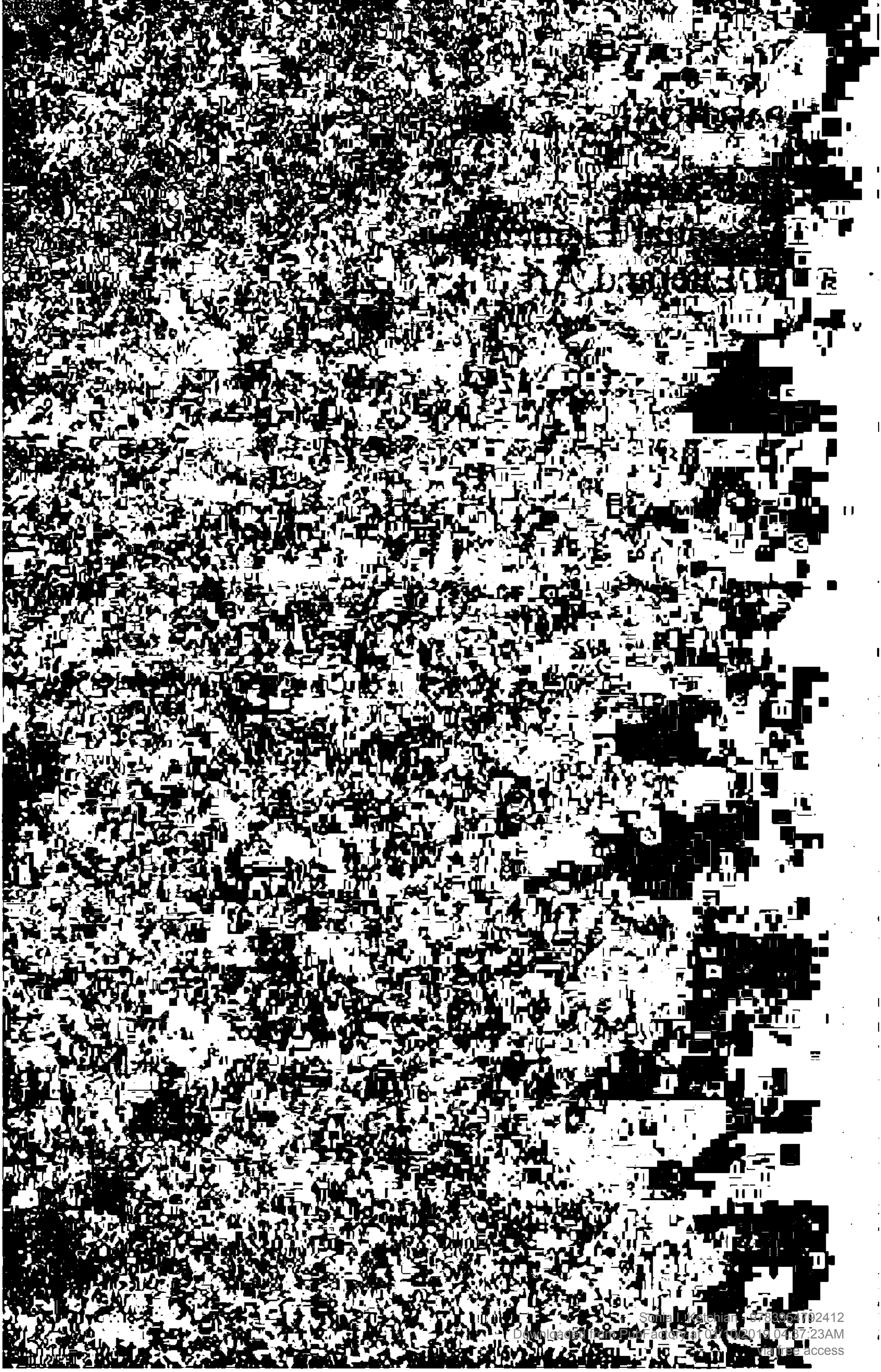
thematics, all the while observing an Acmeist paucity of words and compactness of form through intertextuality: the incorporation of literary allusions, correspondences and subtexts. In some of her later works the reverberation assumes the form of references from two different writers, one of whom has previously been influenced by the other. Clearly, for the poet Akhmatova, poetry does not spring up in an imaginative void nor exclusively from life but largely from man's vast literary and cultural heritage. The incorporation of this literary wealth into her verse ensures in part its excellence, its adherence to Acmeism and its aura of mystery.

For the persona the intimate acquaintance with former times and people constitutes a thematic parallel with the poet's structural incorporation into her succinct work of literatures from many ages and various lands. It must be stressed, however, that the poet's knowledge of literature and the persona's familiarity with many lives do not in themselves constitute literature. Rather, a rigorous multilevel and multiaspectual relationship must be secured among the poet, the persona and the Muse, just as all three principles—the pervasion of fire imagery, the persona's participation in metempsychosis and the poet's use of allusions—must function in unison to embrace and to enhance the very foundation for the creative ethos of Akhmatova, through which she conquers time, both past and future, as well as the confining space in which she lives, both literally and figuratively.

Again, the individual poems, touching and beautiful on their own merit, brought their creator deserved recognition as a major voice in Russian literature. Yet Akhmatova infused her poetry with more than the obvious message. The present study, the first of its kind, goes beyond the investigation of separate pieces of verse to their intermeshing with one another in the creative output of Akhmatova to express the gist of her poetics, on the one hand, and with world literature and culture as important instruments, on the other. In this way, deeper illumination and better comprehension of the verse of a great poet will be achieved.

PART ONE

Fire as the Essential Element of Life and Art



CHAPTER ONE

The Traditional Outlook on Fire in Literature

The poems of Anna Akhmatova, like much twentieth-century poetry, cannot be read in isolation, if one wants to comprehend them fully. Only in context with related poems, advancing similar and contiguous themes and imagery, can her verse fully transmit the totality of her poetic message. Into this category fall poems with prominent fire imagery. Many in number, these poems feature fire imagery in multifarious manifestations, beginning with the third collection of verse, *White Flock* (*Belaia staia*, 1917). Indeed, whereas the device of multiple subtexts penetrates the core of the poet's cultural heritage and metempsychosis for the persona parallels variegated experiences throughout the ages and accounts for her vast knowledge, fire imagery constitutes the essence of life, of both physical and spiritual life, as well as of the poetry. It coheres ingeniously the persona and the poet. All this will become clearer in the process of the present examination, but first a purview of how Akhmatova employs fire imagery in the traditional and established sense will better demarcate her unique contribution to its subsequent development. The immediate objective here is not to instance every occurrence of fire imagery, which would turn this study into a catalog without providing sufficient insight into the use and the purpose of the poet. Rather, the objective is to group related imagery and to arrange the groups in the order of their intensification and propagation, following an enumerative survey of examples where Akhmatova adheres to traditional usage of fire in literature. Such an examination will better elucidate the meaning of the imagery in the broader context of Akhmatova's thematics. Ultimately, it will render the verse more lucid beyond the obvious top level of the individual poems, for which this poet gained fame and recognition.

To be sure, fire with its numerous conceptual derivatives figures prominently in Akhmatova.[1] So frequent is the appearance of the theme that the various images representing it cannot be construed as

a chance infatuation of the poet. Nor can the images be dismissed as merely a traditional theme used for ornamentation. Obviously, fire is employed at times in a traditional sense, particularly in early Akhmatova. In this role, it exemplifies the element fire, or it connotes the fervor of love, as in the lyric "My night is a delirium over you" (#486). Fire consumes the persona. Admittedly, the increasing frequency of fire usage and of its various metamorphoses, beginning with *White Flock,* suggests an intricately executed design on the part of the poet. The resulting contribution to the development of fire imagery becomes original for this writer, while the novel qualities attributed to fire assume interesting functions. In *White Flock* the epigraph from the poem by the Symbolist poet Innokentii Annenskii "Dear One," which reads, "I burn, and at night the road is light," holds the key to a cardinal function of fire. The line adds a greater profundity by underscoring internal fire and its emitted light. This fire induces changes in life and love in the direction of creation and the light that it casts for others. Fire seems to be present everywhere and in all emotions in Akhmatova—in life, love, grief, worship and creation. Omnipresent fire acquires a philosophical depth that in its awesomeness tends toward the belief of primitive man as well as the Gnostic perception of fire and light. Hans Jonas in his book, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity,* maintains that in the Gnostic view fire is inherent to all elements (earth, water, air) as death and corruption.[2] Indeed, at times fire has strongly destructive force in Akhmatova besides its more usual constructive power. Fire has always been truly awesome to primitive and early man. The later Gnostics believed that fire was inherent to all elements, earth, water and air. They held that the elements of matter were derived from the successive emotions through which the Sophia passed in her suffering (189). On the other hand, the Stoics took Heraclitus' position on fire and developed it in their cosmology. They averred, "This warm and fiery essence is so poured out in all nature that it inheres the power of procreation and the cause of becoming." To their mind, it is a "rational fire," "the fiery Mind of the universe," the most truly divine element in the cosmos.[3] Importantly for Akhmatova, because the Tatars worshiped fire, as demonstrated by the historian George Vernadsky in his book, *The Mongols and Russia,* prominent fire imagery becomes a means for paying tribute in verse to her own Tatar ancestry.[4]

Understandably, in the early poetry of Akhmatova fire figures in

its literal sense, especially in the first two collections, *Evening* (*Vecher,* 1912) and *Rosary* (*Chetki,* 1914). However, increasingly, fire used literally sets the stage for reference to its qualities as a symbol of love and passion. If love is fire and vice versa and if love is one of the principal themes of lyric verse, then fire paves the way for poetic creation by virtue of love's prominence as a poetic theme. Love dominates the early poems of Akhmatova in a waning, concluding state—close to the brink of sorrow. And insofar as each poem or group of poems treats a new love in its ensuing grief, which is converted into the given poem, the state of love (or prelove yearning)—grief—song or poem displays a cyclicity in events for the persona.

To be sure, love as fire has been employed in poetry throughout the ages, and Akhmatova's utilization is merely a tribute to tradition. Accordingly, combining literal and figurative usage in the poem "And the boy who is playing the bagpipes" (#5), she depicts a scene with fire in the distance: "And in the distant field a distant fire." This diminutive fire develops into a fullblown fire as in love (the form *ogonek* is replaced by *ogon'*), by the descriptive image of Cupid, the "merry winged god." The device of roundabout description, periphrasis, in lieu of a specific word or name is favored by Akhmatova, as shown through another example in Sam Driver's insightful article.[5] Insisting on physical coldness, the poet's speaker refers to Cupid as a means of stressing her desire for love:

О, только дайте греться у огня!
Мне холодно . Крылатый иль бескрылый,
Веселый бог не посетит меня.

O let me get warm beside the fire;
I'm cold. Whether he has wings or not,
The god of love won't match my desire.

Similarly, in the lyric "After the wind and the cold it was" (#63) the gratification of warming oneself by the fire in winter "(it was) pleasant to warm myself by the fire" gains augmentation through immediate succession of the stolen heart image. The love overshadowing the transient literal meaning imparts dual significance. Further, in the poem "We will not drink from one glass" (#69) the bonfire becomes tantamount to love for a specific man. Hence his voice resounds in her verse. Regrettably, the respective duties of the persona and this man separate them despite their love for each other: "Oh, there is a bonfire, which neither oblivion / Nor fear dare touch."

Moreover, fire can direct the beloved to the speaker even in his dream in the lyric "Dream" (#177). On the other hand, in the verse "There is in the closeness of people a sacred boundary" (#127) searing happiness (*ognennoe schast'e*) generates and emits its own radiance, and hence happiness, in a love of the highest order without excluding love between the sexes; it is romantic, sacrificial and beautiful.

И дружба здесь бессильна, и года
Высокого и огненного счастья,
Когда душа свободна и чужда
Медлительной истоме сладострастья.

So, friendship has no power, nor do years
Of white-hot and utter happiness,
When the soul is footloose and taking no part
In the sweet and long delights of love.

In lieu of a bonfire, the persona may allude to the sun as a source of warmth and light, comparable to love. In the poem "The memory of the sun dims in my heart" (#8) she describes the onset of early winter with snow and freezing canals as being concurrent with or mirroring her dejected state since failing to become the addressee's wife. The reiteration of the opening line: "The memory of the sun dims in my heart" decidedly assumes a figurative meaning of heat and light from a source that for the speaker resembles the sun. It is conceivably an allusion to their love. Furthermore, darkness and the advent of winter take on figurative connotation: ice, snow and cold subsume the lack of love. In order to live and, for a warmblooded organism, to function and to continue life processes, heat and light must be available. Their absence incurs death, as illustrated by Kees Verheul in *The Theme of Time in the Poetry of Anna Axmatova* through a study of the death implications of snow imagery in Akhmatova.[6] The notion that notwithstanding a lack of love or as a direct reaction to its loss, life may be sustained through the power of creative fire, becomes explicit and even prominent in the later poetry, which could explain the fact of the persona singing of her love after the event. Conceivably, love diminishes because the persona transmits the fire of love into creative force. To put it concretely, quite unconsciously, even during the peak of romantic ardor, the poetic being in the speaker begins observing the relationship and channeling energy in the direction of future artistic creativity. In fact, this could explain

the negative outcome of all her loves regardless of whether she or he terminates the relationship. In other words, the persona may be unwittingly transmitting rejection signals to the lover, which are not apparent to herself and therefore fail to be reflected overtly in the verse. Such a situation evokes the lines of Hamlet: "There lies within the very flame of love / A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it" (IV.7).

The internal burning can be unpleasant for the speaker later in recollecting the painful past as in the verse "Inscription on a Book" (#568):

Из-под каких развалин говорю,
Из-под какого я кричу обвала,
Как в негашенной извести горю
Под сводами зловонного подвала.

I speak as from under ruins,
Shriek as from under cold stones;
As if in quicklime. I'm burning
In the stinking cellar-tomb.

The speaker's difficulty is conveyed through the simile of burning as in quicklime, a substance which inflicts an acid burn leaving scars. Hence memory, too, can be scarred. The root *val* in three key words in proximity cements the picture of collapse and destruction—*razvaliny* "ruins," *obval* "avalanche" and *podval* "basement." The word "basement" evokes Gumilev's and her poems "The Basement of Memory" (#324) with their uneasiness in recollecting, for all the speaker's bravado. A "malodorous basement" conceivably indicates the presence of quicklime there as well. In pretending to be soundless winter, the persona will relinquish all signs of life.

The sun, which warms all life, can assume a more direct role as in the lyric "High in the sky a cloud loomed gray" (#9). In it, similar to the poem "The memory of the sun dims in my heart," an object is spread out in the sky, thereby obstructing the sun from the persona. Here it is a willow, whose leafy crown is semipenetrable elsewhere (A penetrable fan), while in the former poem it was a cloud in the form of a squirrel pelt, which bespeaks death for the animal. Death from the heat of the sun for the mythical Snowmaiden, mentioned as Snegurka, contrasts to "my hands were growing cold" under the handmuff from the lack of love. At the same time, the situation reverberates Akhmatova's personal battle with tuberculosis, the disease whose

victims generally die in the spring: "So what if I die with the last white blizzard." A remotely comparable image of consumption is contained in the words—"And so I am thawing"—from the poem "My imagination is obedient to me" (#69), where the speaker is wasting from love as would a burning candle or a thawing Snowmaiden. In the verse "We are not in the woods, enough holloing" (#140) tuberculosis precipitates "evening fever"; while elsewhere a creative fever often grips the persona at night. Fever in the piece "Prayer" (#162) is connected with the grief of the persona and with her gift of song. Evocative of a surrogate sun, the bonfire at night, like the light in the latter poem, beckons the persona home in the poem "A dark blue evening. The winds have gently fallen" (#18). Correspondingly, in the verse "My husband whipped me with a patterned" (#21) as the persona sits with a light by the window in anticipation of her lover, the sun's rays disclose the fact of the unused bed. In the distance rustlers build a fire in the poem "Here everything is the same, the same as previously" (#81). The metaphor of the window, an eye on the world outside, will be an important link with other eye imagery in some poems. Again, the distant fire mirrors her unspecified love: "And predicting imminent bad weather / Low spreads the smoke." The image of *blizkoe nenast'e* probably symbolizes a love crisis, whereas the hanging smoke could stand for the residue of their passing love. Later in Akhmatova smoke will carry the remainder of the lyrical ego's poems to the addressee. The landscape enforces the faltering love in the image of "the fires quiver," which refers literally to town lights in the distance.

Fire imagery, then, plays a supporting role in many poems of Akhmatova. The fire can be localized in the heart as in the poem "Funeral" (#43) with its lines "As if a dark heart / Burns with a scarlet fire." In such an event it serves as a prerequisite for creative fire, as in the poem "Imitation from I. F. Annenskii" (#40), where the speaker purports that "the heart is of fire." Moreover, the persona wearing a talisman bespeaks love. In the lyric "A dark blue evening. The winds have gently fallen" warmth transmits passion through the smouldering of the speaker's palm at the touch of the addressee in the concealed fire of the white gillyflowers. Here the whitehot heat from the fire of passion is stronger than red heat. Another poem, "And when we cursed each other" (#52), will advance the motif of whitehot passion: "in a whitehot passion." In the lyric "Don't you crumple my letter, dear" (#92) the notion of "fiery embrace" desig-

nates the fire to a specific manifestation and, finally, in the poem "Your palms are burning" (#110) the palms of the addressee's hand are hot to the touch. Importantly, a scorching delirium can lead to a meeting in the lyric "To fall seriously ill, in a burning delirium" (#257). Love can burn in the chemical sense of consuming and transforming in the poem "Oh no, it was not you I loved" (#219) through the line: "Scorched by a delightful fire." Smoke represents a side effect here: obviously, as an aftermath leading to sorrow, love generates fumes. The highest incandescence of a source of fire turns white and, subsequently, radiates light with rays. It can emit light in darkness in the literal sense, or it can provide the incandescent state of love.

Eyes, aside from being a beautiful organ of sight, through their expressiveness are construed by people as a mirror of the mind and of the emotions. In Akhmatova they are connected with fire. For example, in the poem "The boy said to me, 'How painful it is!" (#76), the boy's eyes radiate a blinding light, if construed figuratively, a dazzling, very bright and beautiful shine, in the literal meaning: "the pupils of his dazzling eyes." Even nuances are discernable in the poem "Slander" (#286), where the apt description renders the shades: "Reflections of slander burn in all eyes / Now like betrayal, now like innocent fear." Moreover, the color of eyes is of prime interest to Akhmatova's speaker. For if eyes can shine and radiate like a light source, then those of the pervasive colors in her poems, gray and blue, would emit more light than eyes of a darker color. Interestingly, in the lyric "Long he walked across fields and villages" (#179) eyes are depicted as gray stars marking the way as stars do for travelers by land and for navigators at sea in particular. Again, in the poem "The city has vanished, of the last house" (#199) the color blue is associated with fire and hence with light in the phrase "His eyes shone blue like stars." The lighting aspect of stars is paramount here. Gertrude Jobes enters the symbolism of stars as follows in her *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols*:

> From the Sanskrit, meaning disperser or strewer of light. Achievement; angel; *dispeller of darkness*; divine *eye* or will; exalted being; fate ruler; forecaster; *guidance*; *heavenly fire*; *flower* or *light*; *hope*; immortality, infinity, knowledge of past, present, and future [my emphasis—S.K.].[7]

Particularly pertinent are the italicized definitions which serve to demonstrate the interconnection between the motifs of stars, eyes, light,

fire and flowers. The symbolism of knowledge of the past, present and future connects fire thematics with metempsychosis in yet another way. As if in fulfillment of Jobes's definition, in the poem "To wake up at daybreak" (#208) the lover performs the role of the speaker's guiding star: "With him who has become my star." Indeed, eyes become stars in the poem "Your palms are burning" (#110) or else another kind of light source in the lines: "Strongest of all on earth / Are the rays of calm eyes." Like most traditional fire imagery and fire motifs, eyes as stars are not new to literature. Among the many sources for Akhmatova, foremost is the famous comparison of Juliet's eyes to stars by Romeo:

> The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
> As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
> Would through the airy region stream so bright
> That buds would sing and think it were not night (II.2)

A further instance of eyes as fire and light in Akhmatova's verse is featured in the poem "I do not know whether you are alive or dead" (#181), where the persona singles out "and the blue fire of my eyes." It corroborates the above-mentioned lyrics "Long he went across fields and villages" and "It was stifling from the burning light" (#57), where the source of stifling is actually left unspecified. Albeit the light could emanate from a lamp, the following, contiguous line brings into sharper focus the possibility of the man's passion: "And his glances are like rays." The force of light and fire generated by two pairs of eyes meeting, that is from the eyes of one person to the other, doubles the potency in the poem "Oh, life without a tomorrow (#274): "But if our eyes meet / In the fire will melt granite." Through the pain of first unrequited love the innocent lad of the early poems undergoes changes in the poem "The boy said to me, 'How painful it is!' " (#76); these the persona observes in detail: "The pupils of the dazzling eyes / Have dimmed and, it seems, have grown narrower." Loving eyes, while still harboring hope, blind the persona with their dazzling light. In the piece "The first ray is God's blessing" (#192) a ray is a form of communication over the distance, and the context shows that the persona has transmuted herself into the ray: "I caress him like a morning ray." In the lyric "In a Dream" (#423) from the cycle "The Sweetbrier Blooms" the beloved man extends greetings at midnight, the time of magic, by means of the stars. Moreover, in two other poems from the same cycle stars, in serving as conduits between the

persona and her distant addressee, overcome the limitations of space. The pertinent lines from the poem "You have imagined me. There is no such woman on earth" (#428) read: "And you came to me as if led by a star," while in the piece "In the Cracked Mirror" (#429) the persona avers: "Irrevocable words / I listened to on that starry night." Additionally, rays, separated or at a great distance from their source, can transmit post-amatory grief to the persona in the poem "The pencil box and books were strapped" (#94): "And on my life, like an imperishable ray, / Sadness lay." Thus fire as a bonfire not only signals and heats but also emits light as do celestial stars, our sun, the star which Akhmatova's speaker distinguishes from stars in the folk tradition, and their rays. An intense inner emotion can erupt as a searing fever, which in the persona fosters talent: "fever—the gift of song."

For the persona the memory of love is sustained through its smoke—the residue from the life of love—in the lyric "You are heavy, memory of love" (#118). It opens with the lines:

> Тяжела ты, любовная память!
> Мне в дыму твоем петь и гореть,
> А другим—это только пламя,
> Чтоб остывшую душу греть.
>
> Чтоб греть пресыщенное тело,
> Им надобны слезы мои . . .
>
> How heavy you are, memory of love!
> I keep singing and burning in your haze;
> But others see it as no more than a flame
> For warming a cold-stiffened heart.
>
> For warming a body that's had more than enough
> They have to have my tears . . .

Only in a poetic soul will the memories of erstwhile consuming love be concentrated, as it were, in the smoke, which constitutes part of the fire and is most dense as its aftermath. Smoke precipitates the persona's creative powers. It also makes her eyes tear. Grief embodied in her tears contributes toward the birth of verse. In this poem poison (*otrava*) renders her poetic self silent, unlike the poison of poetic creation elsewhere in her poetry. Indeed, each unhappy or fruitless episode in a given love of the poetic persona engenders conditions conducive to creation, as in the poem "I stopped smiling" (#123), in which she purports: "There became one less hope, / There will be

one more song." The speaker, it seems, is able to compose only in the wake of love's exuberance. Misery prompts her to sing and to create for the appreciation of others and, conceivably, as a kind of revenge against her lover. At times denunciation awaits her efforts. In the poem "No, prince, I am not the one" (#182) an inadvertent yoking of misfortune and her trade points ambivalently to the grief that perpetuates her poetic craft: "Loudly I call to misfortune: / Such is my trade." Anything is preferable to silence and to not enunciating one's sorrow as shown by the speaker in a continuation of this topic in the lyric "I stopped smiling":

И эту песню я невольно
Отдам не смех и поруганье,
Затем что нестерпимо больно
Душе любовное молчание.

Against my will, I'll yield this song
To mockery and curses,
Because my soul can't stand the pain
Of love's silences.

Grief is short-lived in the conclusion to the quatrain "Gold rusts and steel decays" (#392) from the cycle "A String of Quatrains": "Most durable of all on earth is sorrow / And most lasting is the regal word." The reaction of Akhmatova to grief and her treatment of it can be compared with her persona's later advice in the quatrain "Vow" (#352) from the cycle "Wind of War": "Let her recast her pain into strength." This dictum paraphrases the poetic ethos of Akhmatova and delineates the story of her life as well as the fiery transformations of her personas. No matter what aspect of poetic creation the persona reveals, grief remains at the core of the process. For example in the poem "The Creative Process" (#333), placed first in the cycle "Secrets of the Craft," the poet instances her nocturnal process of composition. Obviously, sensitization in humans reaches its apogee at night, and in the poet specifically—one who is able to perceive movement hidden from ordinary mortals: "One can hear how in the forest grass grows." The indispensable ingredient for the persona's poems, grief or misfortune, becomes more tangible through an extended metaphor, which bestows on it the form of a human carrying belongings. The words "along the earth goes misfortune with her knapsack" conjure up the image of Misery-Luckless-Plight from seventeenth-century Russian literature. In the second poem of this cycle

"I have no use for odic hosts" (#334) the final line was originally more explicit concerning the throes of creation. It used to read: "And the verse already resounds, full of life, gentle, / For your joy and my torment" in lieu of the currently more optimistic lines: "And the poem already resounds, full of life, gentle, / For your joy and mine."[8] Only a fraction of doubt can be raised in the syncopated line of the final version, a device that should alert the reader.

Thus in this overview of fire in the literary tradition, fire figured in its broad sense of a primordial element with heat emanating from it. Fire likewise denotes the sun and its light which, like fire itself, enables man and creatures to see and to perceive emotions or concepts in the figurative sense. Fire assumes various nuances and numerous shapes, but the gist remains the same. Just as fire transforms the object with which it comes into direct contact (wood to ashes, for instance) or, speaking in chemical terms, just as it transforms certain chemical elements into new substances, often by merely lending its heat to the process of chemical reaction, so is it frequently used in Akhmatova. The burning in verse can be tangible or even chemical to the extent that a "chemical" simile is required to convey the qualities: "As in quicklime I burn."

Fire, furthermore, transmutes, as in the example already cited from the poem "Vow": "recast pain into strength." The transformation carried out by fire can destroy and diminish the object visibly or can set it aglow through the light-producing capacity of high temperatures. Certain forms of metamorphoses of objects lead to birth, to regeneration after death, or to consumption of objects by fire. Figuratively speaking, fire, or searing emotion, transmutes the experience into art through the talent of the unusual persona. Like the sun, fire regenerates living things and even gives birth in folklore and art. Examples of this phenomenon are the mythical bird, the Phoenix, and Vahakn, a god of the Armenian Pantheon, who, like the Hindu god Agni, god of fire and lightning, was born from a reed. Agni, whose name derives from the Sanskrit word for fire, is the second divinity after Indra in the Vedas. Agni is the messenger of the gods between the heavens and the earth, a role frequently professed by poets.[9] In a comparable vein, Vahakn, the son of the heavens and the earth, the purple sea (which denotes the sky) and the reed, is born during a thunderstorm.[10] His progenitor is the Hindu god Indra. Lightning heralds the birth of the divinity, as it probably did for life on earth. Indeed, some scientists maintain that life on earth began

through the interaction of a lightning bolt with amino acids.[20] The fifth-century historian, Moses of Khorene has preserved in his *History of the Armenians* an excerpt from a pagan Armenian song. In the translation by Robert Thomson it reads:

> Heaven was in travail, earth was in travail, the purple sea was also in travail; in the sea travail also gripped the red reed. From the tube of the reed came forth smoke, from the tube of the reed came forth flame. From the flame a redheaded young boy ran out. He had fire for hair and had flame for beard, and his eyes were suns (123).

Similarly, Akhmatova's poem is conceived prior to a thunderstorm with lightning—"prethunderstorm silence"—thereby eliciting a parallel with the two births. While the use of this imagery can stem from various sources from which Akhmatova concocted her own personal version, one source could be the verse of the celebrated Armenian poet, Avetik Isahakian (1875–1957), some of whose poems have been translated by her into Russian.[11]

Music can be conflagrant as well for Akhmatova as in the poem "Music" (#452), where the persona states: "In it something miraculous burns"; and, consequently, it can serve inspirational purposes as a fiery force and as a source of sparkle: "its edges become faceted." The melody refreshes like the first thunderstorm; the comparison again brings out an aspect of fire. Apparently, music is a medium or conduit for creating verse and, consequently, of a song consisting of melody and lyrics. In the poem "Summer Garden" (#454) the rhythm of recollection could likewise constitute an alternate form of music, which is the source of light mysteriously concealed in fiery gems; the persona sums up the reminiscences: "And everything burns as if mother-of-pearl and jasper, / But the source of the light is mysteriously concealed." Elsewhere, in the lyric "Bezhetsk" (#439), the stars and the moon are metaphorized as gems: "diamond Russian nights." Furthermore, in the poem "From the Cycle 'Tashkentian Pages' " (#463) other celestial light assumes the form of gems: "the moon like a diamond felucca."[12] Not only do gems reflect light in Akhmatova's imagery, but darkness can, contrary to science, illuminate in its utter lack of light. Indeed, in this same poem, where "An ominous darkness shone for us," darkness can sing, just as silence does elsewhere for the persona. In the poem "In a tongue-tied manner glorifying me" (#246) the connection between love and light is intimated: "Why did I not become a love star?" Fire also precipitates

recollections in the lyric "The Last Letter" (#504). Importantly, in the quatrain "Caucasian" (#532) the lines "Ten years and a year your girlfriend / Did not hear how a thunderstorm sings" the thunderstorm and its lightning are yoked to song, which in Akhmatova's poetics constitutes an incipient stage of verse. It will be recalled that in nature thunder is the movement of sound waves, as is music, hence they are the same phenomenon and both serve as conduits. Such is the stage that precedes the actual commitment of song to paper, the ultimate shape of which is verse.

The source for fire as a component in birth and worship is believed to stem from Persian and Hindu religions as well as from mythology. Indeed, the Zoroastrian religion, dominant in Persia from the first centuries of the first millennium, is still practised by some Iranians. According to Maneckji Dhalla in his *History of Zoroastrianism*, Zoroaster "found the cult of fire already established in Iran. He purified its archaic form and incorporated it into his new system. Of all the elements he raised fire, or light, to a place of the highest distinction in his faith" (36). To be sure, this religion with its strong dualism wielded considerable influence on Judaism, Early Christianity and Gnosticism. *The Philosophical Encyclopedia* illuminates the contrast between good and evil according to Zoroastrianism in the following way: "Most characteristic of the philosophical system of Z. is dualism, expressed in the opposition of two eternal abstract principles—good (light) and evil (darkness)."[13] Obviously, implications of happy love and poetry as light are rampant in the verse of Akhmatova. Further, Dhalla's interpretation of the supreme godhead of Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda, is indicative of Akhmatova's attitude toward using fire imagery and its derivatives in many of her poems. Dhalla expounds:

> Ahura Mazda is eternal light, his very nature is light. He lives in the everlasting lights of the highest heaven. Light in its various manifestations, whether as the fire of the hearth on earth, or the fiery substance in the bowels of the earth, or as the genial glow of the sun in the azure vault of heaven, or the silver sheen of the crescent moon in the sky, or the flickering brilliancy of the stars in the firmament, or even in the form of the lifegiving energy distributed in the entire creation, is emblematic of Mazda. As a symbol of sublimity, grandeur, purity, fire is unequalled. The glow of fire is emblematic of righteousness (63).

Coincidentally, in his book *Mayakovsky: A Poet in Revolution*, Edward J. Brown notes that the study of Zoroastrianism was wide-

spread among Russian intellectuals just prior to the First World War.[14] It is conceivable that reading and discussions during Akhmatova's life with her first husband Gumilev and with the Assyrologist Shileiko, her second husband, contributed toward sufficient imbuement with this religion to transpose aspects of it into her verse.

An ardent heart serves as a prerequisite for experiencing strong emotions, for keen perception and for the ability to create. It will be seen in Chapter Nine that in the poem "Imitation from I. F. Annenskii" Akhmatova shows that the provenance for "the heart of fire" is the verse of Annenskii. Correspondingly, in Akhmatova's poem "Funeral" (#43) the masculine ego asserts that the beloved woman adored light: "And (she) loves sunlight." A church constructed over her grave will bring light: "As if the dark heart / Burns with scarlet fire."

The presong state, as mentioned above, is a "prethunderstorm quietude" in the lyric "Ah! It's you again! not as an enamoured lad" (#121). Elsewhere silence will speak to the poet's creating self. The concepts of "thunderstorm" and "lightning," as in the birth of the god Vahakn, constitute a parallel to the birth of poetry. In a presong state the words of song fly, an image which evokes the picture of birds in the piece "They are flying, they are still on the road" (#124): "And I am already in presong anxiety / And colder than ice are my lips." The degree of similarity in the simile where the comparison contains an adverb is expressed by the comparative degree, a frequent occurrence in Akhmatova. As in the verse "I stopped smiling" (#123), the frigid wind and the freezing lips of the poet's speaker will shape the verse. Conversely, wind of a higher temperature can inflame her consciousness before the creative process: "Already with a fragrant scorching wind / My consciousness is singed." Neither image of the wind contradicts the other due to the juxtaposition of opposites, demonstrated earlier in the image of the "cold flame."

In the piece "Seaside Victory Park" (#411) the image "years reduced to ashes by war" depicts fire imagery in one of its most abstract manifestations, as the torching and ravaging of time and hence of life, to reduce it to ashes that will regenerate more life under propitious circumstances. On the literal level, this metaphor draws attention to the arson and bombing of those war years. Time is burned figuratively through a hackneyed metaphor in the lyric "You demand my poems bluntly (#432): "We are burning the days of an unrealizable life." The poem "In lieu of a festive congratulation" (#420) prepares for

the following verse, namely "A Burned Notebook" (#421), with its "smell of smouldering" and "aftertaste of smoke." In the poem "Let someone still be vacationing in the south" (#430) from the same cycle, "blessed memory" equals "*cold*, pure, light *flame* / Of my victory over fate" [emphasis added]. Clearly, for Akhmatova, lover of oxymorons, fire can have cold aspects. Although oxymorons in the *oeuvre* of Akhmatova have been singled out by scholars, the objective of this device has been overlooked in scholarship. A future investigation should uncover substantive information.[15]

Fire, then, in religion as in the verse of Akhmatova must frequently be construed in the broader framework of light emanating from heavenly bodies and the burning substance during chemical reactions between substances. Importantly, it generates new life forms and can therefore serve as the progenitor, in its various shapes, of art and poetry in particular. At times, as with the ravages of war, fire can have negative force, which only unflinching willpower, determination and courage can overcome.

CHAPTER TWO

Fire as a Vehicle for Art

In the previous chapter it was seen that the fire of love turns into searing grief, which soon smoulders causing eyes to tear from its smoke. At this point the poet's speaker invokes her Muse through prayer. Worship at the fiery, that is passionate, for life as well as love, altar of the Muse—a Greek divinity—fosters verse; therefore, creating verse becomes tantamount to performing religious rites. Ultimately, the rites pave the way for poetry. Thus religious imagery is often connected bilaterally with the creation of verse. The poem, which habitually opened Akhmatova's first collection of verse, *Evening*, "I pray to the window ray" (#47), could sound like coincidental praying to a ray of light from the sun, were it not for confirmatory imagery that follows in the later volumes.[16] Within the religious context, images of fire frequently coexist with subtle and even overt indications of pagan fire worship. The worshiped deity emerges as the Muse, a Greek divinity. Not mere religious fervor, the adulation is, conversely, a prerequisite for the persona to create poetry. The speaker is quite frank about the fact that the prayers are verbalized as poems, or initially as songs, in the lyric "Oh, that was a cool day" (#125). In it the external fire of the sunset through the simile in the third line, "The sunset lay like a crimson bonfire," assumes dual imagery, which, in turn, paves the way for the perorating line concerning the prayer on her lips: "All his life he will hang on to my verse / The prayer of my arrogant lips." The image of catching and holding on to will later receive concretization in the image of poems, or songs, as birds. Put simply, the poem is externalized and given form with her lips. A poem obviously has to be pronounced through audible words to acquire life and demarcation from the prayer of unspoken words, which is the individual pronouncement of what transpires in the mind. Curiously, in ancient Rome there was a belief that intimate prayers had to be spoken aloud, a mandatory act for the prayers to be answered.[17] And the answer to the prayers of Akhmatova's persona is the emergence of verse, the ultimate form. But in the interim the prayer metamorphoses into a song and only through

stages into the finished poem, an entity of its own, that can be recited independently of the poet. The usual pattern in its development of life and emotion into art is love-fire-grief-(smoke from fire)-(cold) wind or tears-birds-prayer-song-verse-notebook. The notebooks precede publication and can indicate cycles of verse and narrative poems, and not necessarily one of the seven collections of verse. Certain secondary links in the evolutionary chain can be absent at times, such as the bird or smoke.

The lyric "You will live without knowing misfortune" (#111) asserts that "For us, the blind and ignorant, / Bright is God's house." Blindness is construed as a figurative condition, as lacking the light of love, but not as being unable to perceive it, owing to the word *temnykh* (ignorant, dark), which is not used in the political sense of being illiterate or downtrodden. In the piece "Your palms burn" (#110) the addressee's eyes emit rays that reflect the joy of love with another. Given the lack of other things, the persona and, rarely, the addressee take refuge in religion: "for us altars burn." Elsewhere, the altars belong to a pagan diety, the Muse. Here it appears to be a Christian altar, albeit the plurality is unusual in the word *altari*. Significantly, in the edition of Akhmatova's works *Poems and Narratives in Verse* that appeared in the prestigious Poet's Library series, unlike the edition by Struve, this poem concludes the collection *Rosary,* immediately followed by the collection *White Flock.*[18] In the latter collection fire imagery becomes pervasive, beginning with its epigraph from the poet Annenskii: "I *burn,* and at night the road is *light*" [emphasis mine]. It already underscores burning and light. Correspondingly, in the poem "December 9, 1913" (#132) love illuminates even the gloomiest days.

In the piece "I prayed so hard: 'Quench' " (#126) consuming creative heat launches a thirst for the performance of songs in the words: "Quench my suppressed thirst for singing songs!" Unable to fly high, the earthly persona prepares for divine help through "smoke from the sacrifice."[19] She prays to the Lord for "heavenly fire," notably for inspiration and, possibly, in the form of lightning, which originally began life on earth, to touch "my wonderous muteness." Having prepared the way in the previous poem, the speaker now performs the adulation. Notwithstanding the concurrence at times of worship with sexual love for a man, it most frequently follows love and through the gift of creation compensates for the loss of happiness. Creation, in turn, immortalizes the romantic emotion. The persona can, there-

fore, easily aver, "And for a long time my lips / Have not been kissing but predicting." To be sure, a prophet serves the diety.

Recollections of previous searing love are partially preserved in its smoke as shown in the lyric "You are heavy, memory of love" (#118). The love ignites the speaker's creative fire. Importantly, the direct role of the Muse in the act of composition is compared in the poem "Muse" (#335) to a burning fever: "More roughly than a fever, it shakes me." Somehow the tears of the persona likewise seem to contribute toward poetry, probably, as a cooling and solidifying agent, imparting form to lyrics. The speaker describes the process in the piece "Song of a Song" (#115):

Она сначала обожжет,
Как ветерок студеный,
А после в сердце упадет
Одной слезой соленой.

At first it scorches
Like a chilling wind,
Then falls in the heart
As a salt tear falls.

The caustic salt in the tears both heightens the sensation and preserves it. Additionally, a curious component is found in the frigid wind, freezing her lips, which are conflagrant with love and the ensuing gift of song. Presumably, the quenching of the fire on the speaker's lips, the organ used to formulate her thoughts into spoken words, comprehensible to others, will impart form to verse, the product of extreme heat, in the same way that white-hot metal is cooled to assume a specific and enduring shape. To put it concretely, heat renders the material malleable for transformation; subsequent cooling affords it a permanent shape.

Equally important for creation is the concept of "prethunderstorm quiet" in the poem "Oh! It's you again. Not as a lad in love" (#121). Here the prethunderstorm silence communicates, as it were, with the creating persona. It is significant that in nature, birds and animals are particularly silent immediately before a storm, following a period of heightened commotion and activity. Indeed, science has recently begun investigating the possible use of animals as predictors of natural catastrophes, such as earthquakes, and of weather changes, such as hurricanes and storms. Due to changes in pressure, sound can travel farther immediately prior to a storm—this fact may explain increased

sound sensitivity at such a time. Thus the poet may indeed hear more keenly before a thunderstorm, whether a literal one or figurative. Conceivably, the persona, who previously underwent some animal transformations in certain poems bearing metempsychosis, may, as a result, be a good predictor of the impending storm. All this points to exceptional perception and observation skills in Akhmatova the poet even if she was not familiar with the scientific discoveries in question. The lightning in the thunderstorm, then, gives birth to poetry, as it does to gods in mythology. Coincidentally, some scientists believe that life on earth commenced, when lightning created amino acids.[20]

In the poem "I have stopped smiling" (#123) the persona is able to compose only following the exuberance of love: "There is one less hope, / There is one more song." It will be recalled that Pushkin wrote of a love only after it was over, according to *Eugene Onegin*: "Love passed, the Muse appeared." The creative process serves as a kind of relief for the suffering persona; the resulting product brings joy to people. The image of the frigid wind numbing the lips of Akhmatova's persona is picked up in the lyric "Oh, it was a cool day" (#125). The freezing checks, or extinguishes, the fire within her sufficiently to impart form to the verse, the ultimate product of burning. In the poem "They are flying, they are still on the way" (#124) the words of song fly as birds will elsewhere in the poet's work: "And I am already in presong anxiety / And colder than ice are my lips." The poem "Song of a Song" encapsulates the birth of a song through the searing caused by the poem prior to its origin and is compared to that which is inflicted by the frigid wind. Through comparison song subsequently assumes the form of a salty tear: "And later will fall into the heart / As one salty tear." What the speaker presents to the world through her art is more permanent than love, particularly, that of her fickle lover: "Allow me to present to the world / That which is more durable than love." The burning quality of salt is stressed in the poem "The Second Anniversary" (#407) as "all-burning salt." Indeed, salt is also an excellent preservative for perishable items. Later the salty tear will burgeon into the image of "quaffing grief" (*gore khlebat'*), which is likened to a sea of tears. In the peom "You are heavy, memory of love" (#118) tears, as part of the creative process, extend further into communication with the audience as a necessity: "They need my tears."

In connection with her poetic message and presenting her poems to the readership, the persona shows in "Song of a Song" that she

merely sows, leaving the harvesting to others. This attitude is biographical, insofar as Akhmatova composed her works leaving the correct comprehension and interpretation to her readers and critics. The agricultural picture in the poem evokes the grain imagery of the Muse metamorphosing in the earth, like a grain preparing to sprout. The image of birds, connected with fire imagery, from the epigraph to the collection *White Flock*, represents the bird imagery of the title, which is not, however, spelled out as any specific bird but is manifested as a flock (*staia*). In Russian the usage of the word *staia* is reserved primarily for birds and fish. In figurative parlance it can denote a group, such as clouds.[21] Akhmatova's own use in the title is figurative in that the implied birds eventuate as her poems in progress. Otherwise, owing to the presence of birds in the poems, one would be inclined to explain the title in literal terms. Observing similar reticence in the epigraph, Akhmatova does not specify fire or light, stating instead their qualities: to burn, to be light. The entire epigraph, and not only the word "I burn" is best interpreted figuratively in Akhmatova as in its source, the poem "Dear One" by Annenskii.

The catalyst for the bird imagery, which is not implied in all such poems, and its ramifications is the lover in a given poem. The shared emotional peripeties of love activate the bird image and release it from confinement: "To let out the bird—my yearning" (#84). The reference is to the persona's grief, mentioned elsewhere, which becomes embodied in her song. It is expressed here by an extended metaphor: "The bird will fly out—my yearning, / It will perch on a branch and begin to sing." Thus the unspecified flock image of birds in the title of the following collection becomes a bird explicitly.

In *White Flock* the persona avows her exclusive and permanent love for the Muse. An ardent votary of the Muse, she wanted to present her adored one with the purest crystalization of her grief which, in turn, would inspire herself to compose. In the verse "The Muse departed along the path" (#122) the speaker declares: "I wanted to give her a dove / The whitest one in the dovecot." Happily, the bird flies after the departing Muse of its own volition. The image combines here with fire imagery—red dawn as a harbinger of sun and light. Fire is connected with the Muse in the form of the sun as the gates to her land which in Greek mythology is Mt. Helicon (helic- means "sun" in Greek) or Mt. Parnassus: "The dawn as gates to your land." Apart from Mt. Helicon in Greek mythology being the home of the Muses, the word "helicon" denotes a willow-covered mountain

or a winding path: "The Muse departed along the path, / Autumnal, narrow, steep," which in the light of the poem's context suggests that she climbed up the "winding mountain" of Mt. Helicon to her home with the sun as her gates. Contrary to the indication in another poem "He was jealous, anxious and tender" (#117), the persona possesses many birds, as suggested in the previous lyric by means of the word "flock." All does not go well for the birds in the poem "He was jealous . . . ," since the lover in his ardent love for the persona: "Like God's sun he loved me," grows overly possessive. He demands the woman's exclusive attention, forbidding even her verse: "He killed my white bird." His objective in preventing her from writing about the past and her former loves is to compel her to concentrate her composition on their current love. Little does the lover know that the persona can compose only after a love is ended.[22] The image of the white bird here equals grief, combined with unarticulated song or verse inspiration, and not the completed poem itself, seeing that the lover can request new poems of her, unless he burned her prepared poems and is now demanding new ones on their love.[23] In the piece "They are flying, they are still on the way" the words of song fly like birds to the inspired speaker. In the verse, "I do not know whether you are dead or alive" (#181) all her life is dedicated to this person, about whom she has no recent information:

Все тебе: и молитва дневная,
И бессонницы млеющий жар,
И стихов моих белая стая,
И очей моих синий пожар.

All for you—My daily prayer,
And the swooning heat of insomnia,
And the white flock of my poems in the air,
And the dark blue fire of my eyes.

Each song is thus often an individual bird, and it is often inspired by a separate sorrow. In the lyric "Oh, no, it was not you that I loved" (#219) the addressee is clearly demised: he can come, albeit he is dead, in the guise of the illuminating sun and a bird. Transformation takes place here. Symbolically, the lover will return to her for inspiration and will help her to create a song based on her yearning.

Other, specific, images of birds appear in a slightly different context. Akhmatova employs the images of swan versus cygnet for Gumilev. The usage of swan for a poet of Tsarskoe Selo, the summer

residence of the tsars, stems from the Russian poetic tradition and could represent one possible source for Akhmatova's utilization of this bird image.[24] The other source is her state of grief and yearning that gives rise to song. In the poem "A graceful (swanlike) wind is blowing" (#253) tropes like "swan lake," "bloodied bushes" conjure up the image of a bird shot with an arrow. The motif of the swan persists in a quatrain from "A String of Quatrains" (#402) with the simile "And glory glided like a swan." A more abstract comparison is featured in the poem "A graceful wind is blowing," where the portrait of a swan through metaphor and simile finds its embodiment in natural surroundings. Indeed, "a graceful wind is blowing" harbors the image of a flying swan; "the dark-blue sky is in blood" intimates a bloody wounded bird falling from the sky; "the years floated like water" conjures up a swan, swimming or, more likely here, wounded and floating on the water; "snowy glory" of the addressee's brow suggests the whiteness of a swan's feathers. Put simply, the bloody sky indicates that the bird was wounded or killed and carried away by the current. The swan has, most probably, died, seeing that the lover, who symbolizes the swan, has not aged. This addressee is one of the swans, that is poets, of Tsarskoe Selo. He could be Gumilev but the poem was written before his execution in 1921; it was written in 1918 and dated 1922.[25]

Serving as a lifegiving force, as in the birth of deities, fire also rejuvenates and contributes toward rebirth. It recreates life in a younger and stronger form. This notion developed in the verse of Akhmatova after her collection *White Flock*, where there was, however, no mention of the Phoenix, no burning on a pyre and no burned poems or notebooks. The volume contains only themes and images of creation and what led to it: unhappy love, worship at the altar of the Muse, the birth of poetry as that of a deity through lightning. This is initial birth. On the contrary, the burning within the persona cleanses her of impurities much like fire does in Zoroastroism, leaving only the filtered, condensed essence of thoughts, emotions and experiences for incorporation into poetry. Through poetry all this experience evinces a new life; consequently, a simple transition can be made to the concept of rebirth and rejuvenation, as for the Phoenix, to whom the persona likens her Muse. The burning at stake of a living being first appears in Akhmatova in the collection *Anno Domini* in the form of a comparison pertaining to the treatment of the *femme fatale* in bygone days: "Such women were sent to monasteries / And

burned on high bonfires," comments the persona in the poem "How could you, strong and free" (#259). In a lyric dedicated to the writer Mikhail Bulgakov, entitled "In Memory of M. B—v" (#535), while lamenting the past, the persona assumes the image of a mourner which was a profession in some cultures. Indeed, vestiges of the practice of hiring professional mourners can be found in contemporary Soviet Georgia. The persona in Akhmatova's poem eventuates as the mourner of Bulgakov. She develops a tangible, as it were, image of herself smouldering over a pyre: "To me, smouldering on a slow fire."

The mention of the Phoenix in the poem "They will forget / —That's no surprise!" (#561) is consonant with resurrection imagery prevalent in the poet's final collection *Seventh Book*. In this poem, to be quoted in Chapter Seven on metempsychosis, the speaker compares lying in her grave and rising from it one hundred times with the enforced silence of her Muse, rejuvenating through silence and death in preparation for resurrection, like the Phoenix from its ashes. In comparing the Muse to the Phoenix, Akhmatova calls attention to a subtle parallel between them. The Muse resides on Mt. Helicon. Similarly, the Phoenix flies to Helicon in Egypt to ignite itself with the purpose of giving birth to a new bird from its ashes. Some say that it sings a final melodious song. Insofar as a bird in Akhmatova's poetics connotes singing, song and verse, a conjectural parallel arises, whereby the Phoenix comes to Helicon to sing its "swan song" to the Muse who will then impart it to the poet. Or the Muse will inspire the swan song of the Phoenix, which will be conveyed to Akhmatova's persona. Thus, like Pushkin, Akhmatova took obvious clichés—love, birds, fire, sun—and renewed them to blend into her special verse.

The poem to Bulgakov features as its objective immortality for that writer: "This here I present to you in lieu of graveside roses." According to Gertrude Jobes, roses at gravesites symbolize resurrection, and Akhmatova presents her poem instead of them. In the same poem the persona smoulders on a fire, which evokes the image of Dido in the *Aeneid* who figures elsewhere in Akhmatova. In the poem "The Last Rose (#480) the speaker burns at stake with famous women from literature and history: "It is for me to fly away with the smoke from Dido's bonfire. / In order to be on the fire again with Joan."

Foremost among the original contributions of Akhmatova to fire imagery is the curious phenomenon of the burned notebooks in her later works. It is particularly patent in the cycle "The Sweetbrier

Blooms" (#420–33), bearing the subtitle "From a Burned Notebook."[26] To be sure, the burning of works by its author is not a recent phenomenon. The burning of verse occurs in world literature as early as the Roman poet Ovid who resorted to destroying his works, as explained by Frank Justus Miller in his introduction to his translation of *Metamorphoses*:

> In the poet's own judgment, however, the poem was not finished, and, in his despair on learning of his impending exile, his [sic!] burned his manuscript. He himself tells us of his motive for this rash act (*Tristia*, I, 7): "On departing from Rome, I burned this poem as well as many others of my works, either because I was disgusted with poetry which had proved my bane, or because this poem was still rough and unfinished." But fortunately copies of this great work still survived in the hands of friends; and in this letter he begs his friends now to publish it, and at the same time he begs his readers to remember that the poem has never received its author's finishing touches and so to be lenient in their judgment of it.[27]

For Ovid, then, the burning of his work constitutes both a political statement and a poetic pose of incompletedness.

Pushkin composed a poem "The Burned Letter" on the process of destroying a letter to his love at her behest; however, the poem describing the act has been preserved. It could have been Pushkin's intention to evoke Ovid vaguely, for the Russian poet felt an affinity with the Roman which found expression in his comparison in the poem "To Ovid" of his plight as an exiled poet with that of Ovid who also pined away in the South. Further, Akhmatova has found verbatim quotations from the Roman poet's "Tenth Elegy" in Pushkin's burned autobiographical canto of *Eugene Onegin*, on which she expounds in her article "The Boldino Autumn: The 8th Chapter of 'Onegin.' "[28] As a result of Pushkin in part imitating Ovid in life and the implications of fire in his verse, as revealed by Gershenzon, the parallel of a poet firing his words takes on greater significance for Akhmatova.

Gogol's burning of the second part of *Dead Souls* is well known. The act and its underlying motives are expounded by Marcia Rose Satin in her unpublished dissertation "Akhmatova's 'Shipovnik tsvetet': A Study of Creative Method." She concludes that both he and Akhmatova employ fire as a means of "destruction, purification, and regeneration by incorporating the burning of their text in the work

itself."[29] Her assertion is buttressed by the following quotation from Gogol's fourth letter about *Dead Souls*:

> As soon as the flame carried away the last pages of my book, its contents suddenly were resurrected in a purified and lucid form, like the Phoenix from the pyre, and I suddenly saw how what I had already considered ordered and harmonious was still in disorder.

Thus neither the title of Akhmatova's cycle, "The Sweetbrier Blooms," a quotation from *Eugene Onegin*, nor the subtitle "From a Burned Notebook" deviate from literary tradition.

In the cycle "The Sweetbrier Blooms" the prologue "Instead of a Holiday Greeting" (#420) illustrates that the burning can transmit the pieces of the poems over the distance by means of the coarse and dry wind: "the smell of smoulder / The aftertaste of smoke and of verse." The wind will carry the smoke comprised of particles and gasses from the fire. Showing the closeness of smoke with fire is the simile in the poem "And you will forgive me all" (#531) that reads: "With my name, / Like noxious smoke with gracious fire, / Has merged forever vague slander." Slander, which generates grief, is compared to smoke here. Akhmatova's name, both literally and figuratively, represents the fire. Seemingly a unilateral means of communication, the wind transmits song in the form of smoke from the burned poems. To be sure, if, while composing, the persona, as the vehicle for producing verse, is aflame and some cooling takes place on her lips or following utterance to shape the songs, they are still hot, although not white-hot as required for substantial change and reshaping. In this state they burn the paper. Another function of the wind is specified in the poem "Along the road that Donskoi" (#427) from the same cycle; it possesses a tenacious memory, which makes it a suitable conduit for songs or poems. Indeed, Chapter Three of Akhmatova's narrative poem, *Poem without a Hero*, is mumbled to the reader mainly by the wind.

The first poem in the cycle "The Sweetbrier Blooms" bears the title "Burned Notebook" (#421), which echoes the cycle's subtitle, "From a Burned Notebook." The past passive participle form of the modifier in the title (*sozhzhennaia*) implies the completion of the firing. One would expect that these collated pages of paper burned and that would be the end of them. But no, the notebook constitutes more than pieces of paper covered with writing: it is a collection or cycle of verse, much like a book or a novel, which is not merely the

paper, but also the semantic and artistic entity printed on it. It can exist in the memory of men and can be recited as well as reproduced by printing. It would appear that the first notebook must be burned as in a pagan ritual to allocate room for the newest product. There is here a situation comparable to that in the myth concerning the rise of the young Phoenix from the ashes of the old one, or the annual killing of the king by a contender in ancient Greece, which comprises the major theme in the novel by Mary Renault, *The King Must Die.*

In Akhmatova the practice of burning the notebooks also stresses the continuum of the volumes: "Already standing in splendor on the bookshelf / Is your successful sister." The act mirrors Akhmatova's biography, for in the forties the poet developed the habit of burning copies of her newly created poems after allowing close friends to memorize them. It was her way of foiling any possible listening devices in her apartment or any discovery of undesirable poetry in the event of a search. Through constant repetition the act turned into a ritual, as shown in the recorded memoirs of Lidiia Chukovskaia, *Notes on Anna Akhmatova*:

> Anna Andreevna, in visiting me, would read to me verses from *Requiem,* also in a whisper, but at her own place at the Fontannyi Dom she would not dare even a whisper; suddenly in the middle of a conversation, she would fall silent and, pointing out the ceiling and walls to me with her eyes, would take a scrap of paper and a pencil; then she would loudly utter something very mundane: "do you want tea?" or "you have got very tanned," then she would write all over the scrap with a quick hand and extend it to me. I would read the verses and, having committed them to memory, would silently return them to her. "This year autumn is so early," Anna Andreevna would say loudly and, striking a match, she would burn the paper over the ashtray.
>
> It was a ritual: the hands, matches, ashtray—a beautiful and sorrowful ritual (I,10).[30]

In biographical terms, that is for the creating Akhmatova, the conceivable lack of a manuscript or of published form notwithstanding, the poem now existed in more than the memory of the composing poet and became a definite entity with its own identity in defiance of turbulent times. Correspondingly, the notebook in the lyric is not completely destroyed through ignition, owing to the fact that the persona is able to address it. Its "soul," or essence, namely, its poetic content and character, remains intact. Again, a burned notebook does not connote a destroyed or obliterated collection of verse. It is osten-

sibly a fossilized one, which has assumed constant shape, much as would a printed collection of verse over a working notebook. Nothing can be added or deleted now, at least until the next publication. Thus for Akhmatova a notebook equals a collection of verse, as evinced in her unrealized plan described by the Soviet scholar Viktor Zhirmunskii in his notes to the Poet's Library edition: "'From "Kiev Notebook" 1909 make "Preeveningtide."' The collection *Evening* ("First Notebook of Tsarskoe Selo," 1910) was to open with no. 17 and no. 55'" (452). Clearly, working notebooks were referred to as "notebook" prior to publication as a collection of verse. In essence and in its burning imagery the process is akin to the firing of a piece of pottery that acquires a stable form after the firing of the shaped clay. Interestingly, the ancient Babylonians, who wrote on clay tablets, believed that man was created out of clay—which equates the fiber of man and verse. In his essay "The Epic about Gilgamesh" the eminent Soviet scholar I. M. D'iakonov comments on this fact: "Men, by command of the gods, were created by the goddess Aruru out of clay, into which was added the blood of a fallen god" (103). To be sure, for clay to retain its shape and not to wash away, the object made of it is fired. And Akhmatova's verse, although written on paper, provides a continuum with ancient art and is just as immortal through the firing, which simulates the firing of clay tablets. On the symbolic level clay can be equated with earth, hence with life and blood, the very material of poetry and art in general. Indeed, for the Greeks, Athena breathes fire, that is, a soul, into man fashioned from earth and water.

The newest notebook can expect a similar fate, although this is not indicated explicitly. It is unclear whether all the burned notebooks mentioned in the various poems refer to the same one or to successive notebooks. Undoubtedly, Akhmatova's penchant for numerous addressees in her various poems would incline the reader to think in terms of several notebooks, making patent the similarity in fortune awaiting future notebooks. In the piece "You have imagined me. There is no such woman on earth" (#428) from the cycle "The Sweetbrier Blooms" the burned poems, possibly of one notebook, rush away metaphorically in or like a flock and likewise as smoke from a fire, which they have in part become. Indeed, there was fire and smoke in creating poems, or the initial stage of song, now fire and smoke figure in creating permanent cycles and collections of poems. The bird imagery in conjunction with burning identifies the poems with the myth-

ical bird, the Phoenix, as well as with Akhmatova's comparison of her poems earlier with a white flock. The whiteness of the flock reflects the whiteness of paper on which the poems were originally written in the notebooks. With all this in mind, a parallel is drawn between the fire of creation in *White Flock* and its title and with fire in *Seventh Book* in the sonnet "Do not be fear—I more similar" (#431) from the cycle "The Sweetbrier Blooms" through the postulation of the persona: "At that time I got off with a bonfire . . . You have forgotten those hands in horror and suffering / Extended out of the fire." This image, coupled with the epigraph from Virgil's *Aeneid*, brings to mind both Dido and Akhmatova's notebooks.

By contrast, in the poem from the cycle "Cinque" (#415–19), beginning "You yourself know that I will not glorify" (#418), the burned drama, other than its metaphorical connotation, could imply a piece actually destroyed:

> Что тебе на память оставить?
> Тень мою? На что тебе тень?
> Посвященье сожженной драмы,
> От которой и пепла нет,
>
> What shall I leave you to remember me by?
> My shadow? What could you do with it?
> Turn it into the dedication of a play
> That was burned without leaving any ashes,

With no ashes the drama will not be renewed or resurrected, hence it will not be published as a book, although it still exists in the author's memory and possibly of friends—but nowhere else.

A biographical parallel to the lines on the burned drama can be found in the recollections of V. Vilenkin, who attests to a factual burning of a play:

> Only later did I understand precisely why *The Process* [Kafka] excited and touched her so: after all, long before she had read it, Anna Andreevna had written a play *Prologue* ("Enuma Elish"—"There Above").[31] She called it "a satirical tragedy." In a certain quality this play turned out to be, in her words, the fellow-traveler of the *Poem without a Hero*. There were three parts there: the first—"On the Staircase"—and the third—"Beneath the Stairs"—were in prose; the second—"Prologue"—was in verse.
>
> Anna Andreevna burned this play in 1944 in the "Fontannyi Dom" ("The dedication of a burned drama, / From which there are not even

ashes . . ."). But she returned to it again almost twenty years later. In 1963 and, perhaps, even earlier, she tried to reconstruct in her memory that which she had burned earlier, but also wrote new pieces in prose and verse (much has been preserved in the Leningrad archive). Six verse fragments were published in 1964 in *Novyi mir.* On reading them, Tvardovskii is alleged to have said, "I don't understand anything for the life of me. But—it is Akhmatova, we will publish" (466).

Tvardovskii was at once more perceptive in view of the opaqueness in Akhmatova's poetry and more candid in admitting his confusion than most appraisers of the verse. Of further interest is Chukovskaia's brief plan for the drama, preserved in *Notes on Anna Akhmatova* (II, 34, 315).

In artistic terms, the burned drama as a motif could signify the past relationship of the persona and her lover, which cannot be resumed due to a lack of ashes, or to a paucity of feelings and the circumstances that could revive it. For burning is a means of freeing oneself from an object, it is a break. And burning on a funeral pyre reduces the object to its quintessence. Only if the ashes are intact, can the fired object be revivified, like the Phoenix.

The motif of burning works of literature never left Akhmatova in her late period. In Chapter Four and Final of the *Poem without a Hero* it reemerges as a burned novella. In light of the fact that this fourth chapter must have been composed after the earlier variant of 1940–1942, published as an earlier redaction in the Poet's Library series, which lacks this chapter, it culminates, as it were, the pervasive motif of burning one's work. Indeed, the *Poem without a Hero* frequently serves as the ultimate link in the chain of recurring motifs and devices in Akhmatova (431–442). The motif refers to the tragic love triangle in the *Poem without a Hero.* On the other hand, the poeticized story in immortalized form exists as a separate entity that can be found and read:

Это я—твоя старая совесть
Разыскала сожженную повесть
И на край подоконника
Положила—
и на цыпочках ушла . . .

It's me, your age-old conscience that looked
And looked and found the burned-up story

And laid it on the window sill
And tiptoed away . . .

Thus two important stages can be singled out in the creation of a collection of verse. First, fire through the medium of the poetic persona transfigures reality, that is transforms life and love in particular into verse through several stages: life-love-grief-smoke-prayer-birds-song. Verse, a small unit, represents the quintessence of life. Next, the contiguous related poems are gathered into a working notebook which is fired by the poetic persona to fossilize it in order to gain immortality for herself and her art. The act imparts to the notebook its own lasting individuality through transformation into a collection of printed verse (or prepares it for publication). Moreover, it makes way for the successive notebook.

It has been seen thus far that rarely does Akhmatova employ fire imagery without an ulterior meaning and rarely do the images of the bonfire, the blazing sunset, the sun, rays and stars serve as a mere backdrop. In her usage the poet moves from literary convention to her own unique rendition of the imagery into motifs and themes that suffuse a large part of her verse. There exists a longstanding literary tradition equating love with fire. Notably, in Russian literature Pushkin overtly resorts to it in his poem *Poltava* to delineate the passion of the elderly Mazepa for his young godchild Maria in Canto One: "The heart of the elder is ablaze"; "Persistently, slowly it is scorched / In the fire of passions." Akhmatova draws upon this vast tradition as well as on that depicting love as a source of light like the sun and the stars. At times through the expediency of metaphor the notion turns literal: eyes, like the sun or the stars, radiate light. Eyes can, moreover, be presented as a source of light that illuminates the way as the moon or the stars at night. With the termination of love comes the birth of song. Again, Pushkin has anticipated, to a certain extent, this phenomenon in *Eugene Onegin* in maintaining that he is mute artistically when in love: "But I, in loving, was stupid and mute" (Canto LVIII)—and that he can create only in the wake of love and with the advent of the Muse: "Love passed, the Muse appeared, / And my murky brain cleared" (Canto I). In Akhmatova the fire of dying love first emits smoke, acrid like the grief of miserable love. The poet's speaker, being the possessor of fire and consumed by it, serves as an intermediary between the Muse and the readership, between heaven and earth, as it were, like the Hindu god Agni. The

verse appears to be sent from heaven insofar as the persona composes prior to a thunderstorm, which parallels the birth of a deity in mythology. Accordingly, various sources of fire generate new forms of life and art. The fire of dying love and of approaching grief in the speaker, who is also a poet, first emits smoke, acrid like the grief of miserable love. In her misery and artistic need the poet worships her Muse through verbalized prayer, who in turn instills in her the melody of song. Thus emerges the artistic rhythmic mellifluous aspect of verse. Music as the concomitant for song, as thunder is to lightning, consisting of the score and lyrics, can be conflagrant. The burning is abated by cold wind or tears. The verbalized prayer of the persona (words) through the additional heavenly fire of the music equals poetry, which is collected in a notebook that must be fired to secure inperishibility. The result of ardent love and grief through the auspices of heavenly fire in the form of collected verse is published to immortalize the primary volatile experiences and emotions. Verse is more permanent. Through emotion, fire determines the gist of the future verse; it becomes instrumental in its creation and in finalizing its artistic form. Fire is not a whim of Akhmatova but an element that is present in the life of the poet's speaker until the ultimate emergence of verse which will fire others, or in Pushkin's words in his poem "The Prophet": "to inflame hearts with the word." Fire acts as a continuous, eternal force that creates different forms and transmutes one into the other.

An abstracted overview of fire in Akhmatova appears to make plausible the assumption that although not derogated *per se*, physical as well as emotional love are construed by the persona as being transient (like life) and, hence, as being the dark material of the Manichean sect of Gnosticism, as it were, that imprisons the light because it leads to misery. Conversely, song and verse garner for posterity the spiritual essence of those experiences and lead to the freeing from bondage and to cleansing from grief through adulation of the Muse and service to art. It could be the way to light and good. This supposition presents a distant reverberation of the Manichean concept of the freeing of light from its imprisonment in living matter. Similarly, in presenting the quintessence of life and love through song and verse the poet reaches the infinite desirable forms that enshrine the subsequent transformation of life and love, their most noble manifestation and ultimate freedom.

Thus derivational motifs from the themes of fire, flame and burning

combine with their basic meaning to create various nuances of light, stars and eyes. The fiery texture interweaves with concurrent themes of grief and torment, which are utilized as the raw material of life and love and the requisite ambience for inducing the singing. Given the talents of the poet, the situation eventuates as the birth of poetry through song.

Thus Akhmatova finalizes the omnipresence of fire in the life and work of her poetic speaker by exploiting the changing and petrifying quality of fire. She initially assumes the artistic pose adopted by Ovid and Pushkin of firing one's work out of political considerations. Her own life necessitated the burning of actual works. Eventually, however, Akhmatova raised political expediency and artistic pose to a new dimension of preserving the finished work and of securing its individuality as a collection through the decisive act of committing the product of fire to the same element—fire. The work becomes independent of its creator, the act becomes tantamount to cutting the umbilical cord.

CHAPTER THREE

Thematics Preordained through Names

The interaction of themes like fire, grief and song in Akhmatova is by no means random nor a mere tribute to literary tradition. Indeed, apart from the artistic function, this choice of themes is closely related to the poet's perception of the etymology yoking these words. In consulting Vasmer's *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language* it becomes clear that the word "grief" (*gore*) is compared to "burn" (*goret'*).[32] According to Vasmer, the word stems from the Sanskrit "çōkas" which means "flame," "fever" and also "torment," "sadness," "grief." The Modern Persian word "sog" has retained the second aspect of "grief," "sadness." Likewise of importance for Akhmatova's usage is the definition that Vasmer considers less likely; namely, certain scholars compare the Gothic "kaka" denoting "complaint," "sorrow" with the Ossetic "zarun" which means "to sing" whereas "zar" denotes "song." The Greek word γῆρος means "voice" which in Akhmatova can denote poetic voice. Even these disputed similarities reveal additional aspects of associations for Akhmatova. Further, Vasmer relates "to burn" (*goret'*) to the Lithuanian word "gareti" meaning "to consume," "to burst out in anger." The Sanskrit word "ghrnoti" signifies "to shine," "to glow"; the Middle Persian word "haras" denotes "fever"; the Greek word δέρομαι means "I am glowing" and another δὲρος equals "summer," "harvest." Finally, the Armenian word "jer" is defined as "warmth," "warm" (I, 441). Significantly, Vasmer lists "bitter" (*gor'kii*) as "connected with *goret'*." In fact, the inherent perceptiveness of a Russian's ear to the connection between these words leads Pushkin to underscore them and to bring out the obvious pun in his novella "The Shot" from *Tales of Belkin*. In describing a drunkard he says that the man was "a drunk out of grief, that is the most confirmed [bitter] drunk." This example serves to emphasize the origin of the idiom "gor'kii p'ianitsa."

These few definitions harbor the gist of fire thematics in the *oeuvre* of Akhmatova. The inherent relation between these words is further justified in the interchangeable relationship among the frequent images of fire, flame, fever, fervor; to burn, to give light, to be aglow,

to blaze; torment, sorrow, grief, complaints; to sing; song; voice; bitter—all of the enumerated, etymologically related definitions merely reiterate the themes and motifs that have already been traced to the leitmotif of fire. The images of summer and harvest conjure up the sowing performed by Akhmatova's persona who left the harvesting to others in the poem "Song of a Song." In the ballad "New Year's Ballad" (#297) the line "wine, like poison, burns" recalls the poison (*iad*) in Annenskii and its usage by Akhmatova.[53] Burning, through the introduction of the simile, "like poison," extends in meaning to encompass poison and the attributes of love and poetry imparted to it by Akhmatova. In the poem "You demand my poems directly" (#232) the bitterness (*gorech'*) of her poems and the notion of burning (*goret'*) are laced in the intricate semantic network. The semantic circle is able to close once more without leaving any dangling definitions. These examples prove how intricately crafted are even the most "ingenuous" verses of Akhmatova. In this poem the poet utilized not only the outright meaning of words, but she explored beyond the vernacular and contemporary written tradition to the semantic core of words, meticulously analyzing and coalescing their relations. The relationship between these words and their common Indo-European etymology enhances the international origin and meaning of Akhmatova's verse.

There is yet another reason for Akhmatova's choice of the enumerated themes—her names. In Akhmatova's verse names are often ascribed significance as in most literatures. Through her awareness of her mentor Pushkin's usage of real names to underpin certain traits of the persons bearing them Akhmatova reveals her own devices, deriving in part from him and, especially, from the eighteenth-century Russian classical tradition, such as the names Skotinin and Pravdin in Denis Fonvizin's *The Minor* and, more recently, from the Symbolists to the poetics of Acmeism. Pushkin employs the names of extinct ancient boyar aristocratic families, including descendents of the first royal dynasty of Riurik and of his own forebears to disclose the social position of a hero, such as that of Volotskii in his "Novel in Letters," as well as for tacit illustration of his own attitude toward the old nobility, as expounded by Akhmatova in her article "'Adolphe' by Benjamin Costant in the work of Pushkin" (72–73). The very usage of this name stemming from Riurik reveals Volotskii's social standing and the reason behind his contempt for the new nobility.

In Akhmatova's own verse the mere occasional mention of a his-

torical, mythological or literary name harbors a wealth of information through correspondence. Most frequently, the names of contemporaries and even of writers past and present are not placed in the body of the poem. Among the small numbers of exceptions are poems like "And today's Smolensk celebrant" (#279) in which the recently deceased poet Aleksandr Blok is presented as "our sun" and as "Aleksandr the pure swan." In her poems Akhmatova habitually reserves the title and the dedication, in particular, for identification. Within the text she frequently alludes to the person or addresses him or her without using any name. Examples of names in the dedication are the poems "Teacher" (#346), "Oh, how heady is the fragrance of the carnation" (#341) and "About Poems" (#340), all three of which list the addressee in the dedication, namely Annenskii, Mandel'shtam (initials only) and Vladimir Narbut respectively. Conversely, the poems "Dante" (#320) and "Maiakovskii in 1913" (#330) are instances of the title bearing the name. Poems not containing the addressee are in the majority, such as the ones dedicated to Boris Anrep who emigrated to London after 1917: "You are an apostate: for a green island" (#207), "When about my bitter death" (#211), "It is simple, it is clear" (#218) and "Oh no, it was not you I loved" (#219). Further, the lyric "Ditty" (#233), beginning with the line "I from morning would be silent," forms an acrostics on Anrep's name and surname, according to the observation of Amanda Haight in her book *Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage* (40). Sometimes Akhmatova presents a portrait without a specific description of external appearance or of gesture. It is a state of no name or of minus a name. The Sovet scholar E. Dobin in his book *The Poetry of Anna Akhmatova* has found in the *Poem without a Hero* "a description without a description" of the celebrated singer Shaliapin. Even the roles in Shaliapin's repertoire are relegated to reticence:

И опять тот голос знакомый,
Будто эхо горного грома,—
Наша слава и торжество!
Он сердца наполняет дрожью
И несется по бездорожью
Над страной, вскормившей его.

Again that familiar voice of wonder
Like an echo of mountain thunder—
Our glory and our fame!
Hearts shake with expectation

As it fills the air above the nation
That bore it and gave it a name.[33]

In rare instances, for personal reasons Akhmatova is known to mark the wrong name deliberately, such as Shileiko, in the poem "How could you, strong and free" (#259), as noted by Chukovskaia in *Notes on Anna Akhmatova*:

> Then she crossed out over the poem "How could you, strong and free" the name Shileiko and explained to me:
> "This poem has no relation whatsoever to Vladimir Kazimirovich. I had to mark it so at the time to put an end to gossip" (II, 98).

However, Zhirmunskii in the Poet's Library edition has restored the dedication to Shileiko according to the first publication of the lyric.

The uniqueness of the patronymic of Akhmatova's mother—Erazmovna—is singled out in oblique fashion in the first of the "Northern Elegies" (#634–39): "And the woman . . . with a most rare name." Sensitive to meaning as well as to sound in a name, the poet describes Blok's name phonetically as "a resounding name" with the certainty that her particular choice of words also underscores his fame through the resounding quality. Interesting in this connection is Marina Tsvetaeva's first poem on Blok's name in "Poems to Blok":

Имя твое—птица в руке,
Имя твое—льдинка на языке.
Одно-единственное движенье губ.
Имя твое—пять букв. . . .

Камень, кинутый в тихий пруд,
Всхлипнет так, как тебя зовут.

Your name—a bird in the hand;
Your name—an icicle in my mouth;
One-and-only-one lip movement.
Your name—five letters. . . .

A stone tossed into a still pond
Sobs the way people say your name.[34]

In a connected body of poems Akhmatova progresses in her poetics beyond the traditional function of names in literature, of the type discussed above, by imparting special import to her own names: Anna Andreevna Gorenko-Akhmatova. Two aspects of the names are particularly relevant to this study; their artistic significance in Akhmatova's verse, which is illuminated in her thematics, and the

interrelationship between her names as manifested structurally through the dual interchange in the names of unification (symbiosis) and dichotomy (disunity). In this light the role of the names in the verse will be examined as well as the revolving pattern of symbiosis versus dichotomy imparted to the names. Her first name, Anna, retained in her pseudonym, came from her maternal grandmother. Only once does the poet make reference to an Anna, other than herself in the poem "Lamentation" (#263) written on May 24, 1922. The lines "Anna—to Kashin, no longer to rule, / But to pull prickly flax" (cf. Christ's crown of thorns) are annotated by Zhirmunskii as denoting Anna (d. 1338), wife of the Grand Prince Mikhail Iaroslavskii who was executed by the Tatar khan. Anna took monastic vows and moved to Kashin to live with her son Prince Vasilii (473). This story vaguely echoes the personal tragedy of Akhmatova minus the veil and the royal connections and could well be one of the sources for the images of her persona as a religious zealot in the same collection *Anno Domini*. In fact, the speaker is not a religious zealot or a nun out of false modesty or chastity, but because in the twenties she was forced into a kind of political tonsure, as it were, like Tsarina Agrafena, the wife of Tsar Aleksei, whom she mentions elsewhere.

Akhmatova's impression concerning the sounds in her given name is positive. The two full *a* sounds and the double resonant *n*, which is pronounced with a certain lingering in Modern Russian, as when one relishes a taste, are construed as mellifluous. In the first poem from the cycle "Epic Motifs" which bears as its title the first line "At that time I was visiting the earth" (#629), the poet observes: "I was given a name at Baptism—Anna, / The sweetest for human lips and hearing." Here and, particularly, in the poem "In 23 Years" (#587), the fact of the persona being called Anna by name by the addressee produces a rare semblance of total fusion between the persona and the person Akhmatova.

Akhmatova also uses substitute synonyms for her names. Indeed, in her essay "Classical Heroines as Mirrors of Akhmatova" T. V. Tsiv'ian has pointed out the poet's repeated usage of the word *blagodat'* in contexts referring to herself.[35] Deriving from the Hebrew (Hanna is "graceful"), the name Anna denotes "grace" (*blagodat'*). Ushakov's *Defining Dictionary of the Russian Language* lists two definitions for "blagodat'." The first is termed colloquial: "Plenitude of boon, prosperity," whereas the second is deemed religious: "Strength, help sent from above." The second shows "a happy state of inner

peace, satisfaction; a beneficient property." The third definition elsewhere denotes: "An abundance of something necessary, helpful, especially in relation to provisions."[36] Aleksandrov's *Complete Russian-English Dictionary* opens further vistas in addition to "blessing; benevolence; benefaction; abundance," namely "*bot.* hyssop."[37] Dal''s *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language* corroborates the plant aspect but uses other plants (Graliola officinalis, *avran, koneviitrut, likhoradochnaia-trava*), whereas hyssop stresses ritualistic and aromatic qualities.[38] *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines hyssop as "a plant used in purificatory sprinkling rites by the ancient Hebrews; a European mint that has highly aromatic and pungent leaves and is sometimes used as a potherb."[39] The Hebrew origin of the word echoes the Hebrew origin of Anna. Moreover, Dal''s dictionary introduces the Siberian meanings of "food, edible products, especially bread; a kind of fertile, multihusked wheat," all of which find reflection in the thematic patterns of Akhmatova's verse.[40] Parallel to polysemy, Akhmatova develops the dichotomy in her name. Indeed, Vasmer enters "blago" and "blagoi" in the same innocuous way; then on the next page a startling dichotomy reveals further possibilities: "*blagoi*—cannot be isolated from the Russian *blagoi* 'stubborn, restive; abnormal, ugly,' Belorussian *blagi* 'bad; pretty.' " Here too the word preserves dichotomous value. Some scholars explain the negative definition "as a matter of descriptive taboo usage."

This dichotomous meaning is ostensibly not chance, for in the early verse of Akhmatova dual images of the virtuous and the bad, wayward persona coexist. Akhmatova's personas differ; they are the same only in a group of closely related poems where a given persona can be perceived as the same for several poems. Otherwise, the notion of multiple personas for different works remains in force. But within this multiple choice of personas they can be divided roughly into the benevolent and the negative ones. For the antinomy in the personas originated as early as Akhmatova's and her personas' name. The coexistence of the negative aspect along with the positive is credible in Akhmatova's view of her persona and of herself insofar as she was born on June 11 by the Julian Calendar (Old Style) and was therefore a Gemini (*bliznetsy*). This sign represents twins that incorporated both black and white, good and evil.[41] Correspondingly, in her early narrative poem *By the Very Sea* the industrious invalid twin sister is markedly distinct from the naively destructive twin, the persona. It is conceivable that even the persons that Akhmatova calls her doubles

in her verse, most of whom were her contemporaries, represent a kind of reflection for the duality inherent in her birth sign. Thus "blagoi," comprising the first root of "blagodat'" can have an unexpected, obscure derogatory meaning. Coincidentally, the meaning of this name Anna for a Gemini has *dual* roots in Russian translation: *blag-o-dat'*—"to give blessings and good." Akhmatova's personas, the early ones in particular, displayed negative streaks at times. Additionally, Lidiia Chukovskaia has instanced in *Notes on Anna Akhmatova* a curious negative nickname given to the poet by her second husband, Shileiko, whom she married in 1918. It refers to a negative side, and Akhmatova does not elaborate on the circumstances under which the name was applied:

> I dropped in on Anna Andreevna. She is listless, half-sick. . . . She talked about Anichka, Irina's daughter. I asked Anna Andreevna why that family calls her Akúma. "Ákuma would have been more correct," she replied. "In Japanese it means Evil Spirit. Volodia Shileiko used to call me that. And Nikolai Nikolaevich called me that once in a telegram" (II, 55).

The scholar Tsiv'ian understandably traces the usage of "blagodat'" to the name Anna in the line "It is all right that I am not a dream or joy / And least of all a blessing" from the lyric "The First Warning" (#444). Tsiv'ian further discerns literary treatment of the Greek Phaedra as the second source for the grace attributed to the ancient heroine by some critics and denied her by others. Phaedra must have been on Akhmatova's mind because she was a friend of Sergei Shervinskii, the translator of Racine's *Phaedre* into Russian, and she was familiar with the work. In fact, Mandel'shtam compares Akhmatova with Phaedra in his poem "Akhmatova." Aside from the linguistic and astrological sources for the dichotomization of Akhmatova's female persona, the literary roots of this phenomenon could go as far back in world literature as the Babylonian epic *Gilgamesh*. In the epic, which antedates Homer's *Iliad* by at least 800 years, there are two clearly demarcated female types—one being the high priestess, the pure virtuous mother of Gilgamesh, Ninsun, and the other being the seductive harlot, Shamkhesh. In modern literature many female characters often combine both qualities.

Akhmatova's sensitivity to her first name can be traced in part to Pushkin who has revealed the Russian definition of the name Anna in his poem "Although poems for a nameday" by italicizing the mean-

ing.[42] A footnote explains that the poem is addressed to Anna Vul'f and that in Hebrew Anna means "blagodat'." Showing his awareness of the name's etymology and its suitability for its owner, Pushkin alludes to a negative vein in the young woman's beauty for men without deducing it from the meaning of the name. It ends:

Вас окрестили *благодатью.*
Нет, нет, по мнению моему,
И ваша речь, и взор унылый,
И ножка (смею вам сказать)—
Все это чрезвычайно мило,
Но пагуба, не благодать.

They christened you Mistress Grace.
Wrong, wrong, if I'm right,
Because the way you talk and look so gloomy
And hold your little foot (mind my saying so?)—
It's absolutely mind-boggling,
But leads to ruin, not to grace.

Akhmatova likewise plays on the juxtaposition of the antonyms *paguba—blagodat'* for her persona but by revealing fuller awareness.

In the poem "You are an apostate: for a green island" the persona censures the man from the city of Iaroslavl who departed for London.[43] Like the lyric "When of my bitter death" (#211), also composed in 1917, it is dedicated to Boris Anrep. Akhmatova is the "oriental/eastern girlfriend" due to geography and to her Tatar heritage. The addressee has himself to blame for losing her: "You yourself lost grace," that is Anna. Pushkin, on the other hand, stressed "blessing." These cases evidently link grace with the first name of the poet; other examples, such as the following quatrain (#530) equate "blagodat'" to "beda" (misfortune):

Скучно мне оберегать
От себя людей,
Скучно кликать благодать
На чужих людей.

I'm tired of guarding people
Against me;
I'm tired of addressing strangers
In the name of grace.

The word "blagodat'" has only positive meaning but Akhmatova

appears to be implying the negative connotations of the first root *blag*. Put simply, she keeps herself away from people that she knows in order to preserve them from evil. Ostensibly, her dubious blessings are showered on strangers, or they actually remain benign for strangers. Elsewhere there are instances where the persona shows how she has brought only misery to her loves. More tenuously connected with her name or person are the lines from the poem "Somehow we managed to part" (#275) which run: "Like a gift, I will accept separation / And oblivion like a blessing." Finally, in the poem, "The ray is a blessing from God" (#192), the word "blessing" already refers to the speaker, while the poem's coda finalizes the identity.

A different aspect of some personas, again connected to "blagodat'," is found in the poem "I awaited him in vain for many years" (#229). The persona standing in church refers to herself as "blazhennaia," which can denote "blissful, beatific" as well as "fool in Christ" or "holy fool." It explains the persona who wanders like a fool in Christ in poverty, foretelling the future. Clearly the root of "blazhennaia" is *blag*. Thus her name again motivates her choice of persona.

Since statues of a writer are often a sign of wide acceptance and adulation by society, the young Akhmatova, understandably, expects similar treatment in the poem "And there my marble double" (#3) from the cycle dedicated to Pushkin "In Tsarskoe Selo": "I too will become of marble." Likewise the honorary bestowing of her name on objects will be an extension of herself for posterity. It can be compared to a heavenly reward to the persona for virtuous behavior. In the verse "And the sly moon saw" (#555) the persona deplores the fact that for her unsanctioned night with someone, usually explained by investigators as Isaiah Berlin, she will be denied her posthumous glory: "Neither a street, nor a stanza / Will be called Akhmatova." The naming of the street can be a reverberation with Vladimir Maiakovskii's poem "To Comrade Nette, the Steamship and the Person":

Мы идем
сквозь револьверный лай,
чтобы,
умирая,
воплотиться
в пароходы,
в строчки
и в другие долгие дела.

On we go
through the revolvers' barking,
To be,
dying,
turned into
steamships,
verse
and other long things.

The assertion concerning the strophe is ironical because the stanza used in the first part of the *Poem without a Hero* is named the Akhmatova Stanza. Additionally, making her penname famous is a sort of rebuff to her father Andrei Gorenko, a rapacious charmer, whom his daughter allegedly disliked. He initially forbade her from shaming his name publicly through her publications. Amanda Haight recalls the incident in her book *Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage*:

> And somehow, before she had ever written a line, everyone was convinced Anya, as she was called, would be a poet. Her father teased her, calling her a decadent poetess, and later it was he who was responsible for her becoming Anna Akhmatova, not Anna Gorenko. Hearing of her poems, when she was seventeen, he told her not to bring shame upon his name. "I don't need that name," she answered and chose a Tatar name—that of the last Tatar princes of the Golden Horde. A strange choice, as she said later, for a Russian poetess, but Akhmatova was a name of her Tatar great-grandmother and the Tatars in the south had always seemed to her mysterious and fascinating (6–7).[44]

Moreover, sharing an "exotic" non-Slavic great-grandparent brought her closer to Pushkin whose own writings immortalized his Ethiopian ancestor Hannibal. Additionally, Marina Tsvetaeva perceives the adoption of a penname as a certain distancing from one's father, as in Akhmatova's case, as well as complete freedom and total vulnerability.[45]

In studying Akhmatova's usage of her surnames, a curious parallel can be discerned between her inherited name, Gorenko, and her *nome de plume*, Akhmatova. The poet makes reference to this situation of dual names and the ensuing double life in the elegy "The Third" (#636) from the cycle "Northern Elegies":

> И женщина какая-то мое
> Единственное место заняла.

Мое законнейшее имя носит.
Оставивший мне кличку, из которой
Я сделала, пожалуй, все, что можно.
Я не в свою, увы, могилу лягу.
. . . . . .
Но если бы откуда-то взглянула
Я на свою теперешнюю жизнь,
Узнала бы я зависть наконец . . .

Some woman once upon a time
Held what for me is my only place,
Bore my truly legal name,
And left a label for me with which
I've done, I think, all that one could.
The grave I go into won't be my own.
. . . . . .
But if from somewhere I could glimpse
The life I'm leading now,
I'd know what envy is at last . . .

The two surnames are conceived as denoting different, yet the same identity. There can be no return to the single name and to the simple individual. The persona-poet dichotomizes. The relationship between the names, Gorenko and Akhmatova, can be perceived as being the same as between the persona as a person who feels, burns with desire, experiences joy, then grief and ultimately translates it all into her art in her capacity of poet within the poems, on the one hand, and as being Akhmatova, the private individual born Gorenko, whose reflected experiences and flights of creative imagination are transmuted by Akhmatova the poet into works of art. The names, then, mirror the inherent antinomy in both the persona as person and poet and the person and poet Gorenko-Akhmatova. Conversely, the first name, Anna, used with both surnames and for some of her personas plays a unifying role. Correspondingly, in her capacity of investigator Akhmatova is careful to distinguish between Pushkin, the author of the novel in verse *Eugene Onegin*, and Pushkin as Onegin. In her article "The Boldino Autumn: The Eighth Canto of 'Onegin' " Akhmatova makes a subtle distinction: "Thus in Canto 8 between Pushkin and Onegin one can put a sign of equality. Pushkin (not the author of the novel) totally installs himself in Onegin, runs about with him, is bored, recalls the past" (185). Even when Pushkin and his protagonist seem to fuse, they are not the Pushkin of the time of writing. This

notion is so central to his poetics that Akhmatova pursues it further in another article "Two New Novellas of Pushkin":

> No one doubts the fact that Charskii of "Egyptian Nights" is Pushkin himself. But one detail has escaped the attention of investigators. Charskii is Pushkin, but not the Pushkin of the time when the novella was being written—married, the father of a family, the husband of a beauty, a writer, who for many years did not read a single kind word about himself, a ruined gentleman of the Emperor's bedchamber, an unsuccessful editor of a journal (*The Contemporary*). No!—It is Pushkin—famous, beloved by all, renowned, independent, single—in a word, Pushkin of the pre-Poltava period. It is Pushkin of about the years 1827–1828 (195).

Given the variation in time between the protagonists, there is a strong possibility that there is a slight discrepancy between Pushkin and his protagonist, that is Charskii could be a changed and idealized portrait of the author. Hence the writer and his characters are not to be confused no matter how closely they appear to merge. The same caution, if not more, should be applied in Akhmatova's poetry to the seeming fusion between author and persona. Kees Verheul correctly dismisses the remark by Dobin that from the 1930s onward Akhmatova's persona converges totally with the author, for there always remains an essential difference, as observed by Boris Eikhenbaum, between the author and his creative transformation, through artistic devices, into the persona of the literary "I." Verheul, however, is not convincing in asserting that in the earlier poetry of Akhmatova specific autobiographical perspective is mostly missing and that no explicit identification is made between the person of the author and her poetical *alter ego* (62–65).

The duality inherent in Akhmatova the person and her poetic speaker is in keeping with the evanescent metamorphosis of the poetic personality that takes place during artistic creation. Such a concept hails back to Pushkin's famous poem "Poet" where he demarcates between the poet as a person and as a creator, who becomes exceptional in moments of inspiration, fostering the transcendation of ordinary mortal boundaries and of conventions prescribed to him. From a timid: "And among the insignificant children of the world, / Perhaps, the most insignificant is he"—the poet metamorphoses into a fiercely independent person:

> К ногам народного кумира
> Не клонит гордой головы:

Бежит он, дикий и суровый,
И звуков и смятенья полн,
На берегах пустынных волн,
В широкошумные дубровы . . .

He doesn't bow his proud head
To the feet of the national idol;
Savage and stern, full
Both of sounds and confusion,
He runs to the vast seashore,
To the echoing groves of the forest . . .

The duality inherent in a poetic personality as a person and a poet was originally slated to be crucial to the description of Evgenii in Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman.* Vestiges of such a person's fearlessness buttressed by this young man's ancient nobility make possible his challenge to the great imposing monument and the emperor. In the final version of *The Bronze Horseman,* however, Pushkin retained only a hint at a poetic personality for Evgenii by employing the simile "he fantasized like a poet."[46]

There is, then, in this poet a demarcation of personalities in reality and in name between Anna Gorenko, the private citizen who performs the daily tasks of living, loving, grieving, and the inspired artist, Anna Akhmatova, who extols and immortalizes with the help of her Muse the universal, yet unique, experiences of love, life and suffering. The conflagrant emotion of grief is transmuted through the poet's unusual creative burning and worshiping at the altar of the Muse into song and verse.

The semantics of the poet's original, inherited name, Gorenko, deriving from the root *goret'* (to burn) and *gore* (grief), undoubtedly influenced her choice of prevalent fire imagery and motifs of grief as a prescribed and decisive leitmotif in her verse as early as in *White Flock.* If for a poet not only every syllable fits into a preconceived structure within the poem, but frequently every sound is relevant, then the same could be true for the name that she and her ancestors bore through life. It will be recalled that ancient peoples, notably the Egyptians, believed names to be an omen.[47] The line selected as epigraph to the *White Flock* from Annenskii's poem "Dear One" is perfectly suited to the poet: "I burn [i.e., I, Gorenko—S.K.], and at night the road is light." Since the poet is ablaze, she lights up the road at night for herself as well as for others. Significantly, one poem,

written in 1925, "And you will forgive me all" entwines both semantic origins of the poet's full name: "with my name, / Like noxious smoke with *gracious fire*, / Has merged forever *vague slander.*" The adjective "blagostnyi" (pleasant, bringing blessing, boon, good) has the same root *blag* as the word "blagodat'." Still, due to the single root, there is no dichotomy, unlike the names Anna Gorenko. Both this adjective and the noun "ogon'" manifest peripheral usage of "grace" and "to burn; grief," the meaning of Akhmatova's two real names. The bitter aspect of the root in the surname Gorenko receives emphasis in the first poem of two in the cycle "Another Voice," which opens with the line "I was not sly with you, my angel" (#241). Both poems have a male persona and a female addressee, hence the title to the cycle. Here it is the female addressee who glorifies the bitter name Gorenko: "Glorifying my bitter name."

While the poet's penname, Akhmatova, was of her own choosing, it came from her great-grandmother's maiden name, her "Tatar grandmother" as she is called in the poem "Tale of the Black Ring" (#266).[48] Once her selection of a name was made, however, it became obvious that the choice was not sufficiently random by virtue of her Oriental heritage. The quatrain "Name" (#397) illustrates her perception of her pseudonym:

> Татарское, дремучее
> Пришло из никуда,
> К любой беде липучее,
> Само оно—беда.
>
> Shady and Tartar, it
> Came out of nowhere;
> Always on hand when something's wrong—
> It's what's wrong.

The title of the poem bears the key, as in a riddle. The contents underscores the fact that the name did not reach Akhmatova in the line of succession. Trouble and misfortune seem to cling to it. In the dictionary of Dal' the word "beda" is explained in the Viat dialect as "an accident, misfortune; incident/accident, a hapless, disastrous adventure, bringing harm, loss, grief." The Tatar name, which in itself contains grief, adheres to any misfortune and could, additionally, imply the name Gorenko when it is construed from its sorrowful aspect of "misfortune-grief." Thus the two names are united in their meaning of misfortune. Equating the name Akhmatova with "beda" (cf. *klev-*

eta—slander) can have twofold significance: all misfortunes befall the person Akhmatova and, further, the sounds in the name's root acquire meaning. For in Russifying the root through semantic division, we find that in Russian "akh" is an interjection of anger, annoyance and surprise and, coincidentally, "mat" denotes "four-letter" profanity uttered in the event of misfortune. It must be stressed, however, that the name lends itself to such irregular division of the root only by virtue of it not being Russian and such a demarcation "Russifies" it. Moreover, the "akh," spelled "ax" in Russian, is singled out through the poet's famous signature, where the tail of a capital *A* is crossed to form an *x*.

The division of the surname's root into a meaningful interjection was underscored in 1916 by the poet Marina Tsvetaeva in several of her poems from the cycle "To Akhmatova." In the poem opening the cycle "O Muse of tears, most splendid of the Muses!" Tsvetaeva brings out the dark aspect of Akhmatova and opines, "Akhmatova! That name is an immense sigh." In the second poem "I gripped my head and am standing," strategically placed interjections "akh" compensate for lack of overt mention of Akhmatova and create a strong presence.[49]

The pseudonym, Akhmatova, appears to be meaningful from a truly etymological standpoint as well as Gorenko. Its root *akhmat-* derives from the Arabic "Ahmad," which is also one of the names for the prophet Muhammad. The root means "more, or most laudable, commemorable, commendable." The related verb "hamida" denotes "to praise, commend, laud, extol."[50] It is the poet who sings the praises of love ("I at sunrise / Sing of love," (#23) and of grief. Above all, she extols the Muse, who is a deity, as a priestess would. She fulfills, as it were, the same prophetic and extolling role toward her deity as Muhammad does toward his Allah. The meaning of commanding and dominating acquires special forcefulness in her collection *Anno Domini*.

The eastern factors that are associated with the poet Akhmatova and through her with the persona render more credible her persona's practice of reincarnation and her propensity for fire worship. George Vernadsky in his book *The Mongols and Russia* notes that in religious belief the cult of fire was widely spread among the Mongol tribes. The historian explains that for the sake of simplicity he calls by the name Mongol both the Tatar and the Mongol tribes. The Turkish tribes, serving under their military leadership, that settled eventually in Ka-

zan and the Crimea were called Tatars (12–13). Moreover, Akhmatova not only had some Tatar blood but she was called an Egyptian for her unusual slimness by the artist Modigliani and for her eyes by others. It will be recalled that some people believed that the Greeks learned of reincarnation through the ancient Egyptians, albeit this is disputed by Herbert Strainge Long.[63] The country of the Egyptians is mainly Moslem now, like the Tatars themselves. Hence there is further parallel.

Akhmatova's patronymic is brought to bear on the verse more and more in the later poetry. For the persona displays increasing courage in the face of grief. The name Andrei, deriving from the Greek Andreios, denotes "manly, courageous." Fortitude is particularly patent in the poem "Courage" (#356) and in *Requiem*. The strong aspect of the persona connects with the pseudonym through the definition of "hamida" as "to command."

Thus in the poetics of Akhmatova through the determining factor of the surname Gorenko that reached the poet by succession and the personal traits inherited from preceding generations, her principal character was predetermined for her as burning, igneous, creative and caring. Her Christian name marked a subsidiary aspect of the person and the poet as well as the resulting persona-poet. On the other hand, the pseudonym was chosen freely, but by virtue of it having belonged to her great-grandmother and not being an arbitrary surname, despite her free choice, a restrictive category enters the selection. In the same vein is the relative freedom in concentrating on praising and adoring the Muse and creating verse as liturgy as a release for herself and for her persona as well as for others from the grief of life and love. Exercising free choice the persona-poet, nonetheless, restricted herself as a result of the selection to the obligatory burning implicit in the surname Gorenko.

Finally, a parallel can be drawn between the inherited name, Gorenko, and the penname, Akhmatova, on the one hand, and the correspondence between Akhmatova the poet who translates into art the experiences of the person born Gorenko and her personas as person and poet, on the other. Her given name, Anna, used by some of her personas, denotes *blagodat'* (grace). Dual-rooted in Russian translation and dichotomous in the contradictory definitions of "blagoi," Anna accompanies both surnames to produce symbiotic results, almost like a bridge between them. Despite the dichotomy of the two surnames, with the Slavic Gorenko deriving its root from *goret'* (to

burn) and *gore* (grief) and the Tatar Akhmatova denoting "to laud," "to extol," the two meet on the Russified grounds of *beda* (misfortune), thereby ultimately renewing through symbiosis the circular semantic chain of symbiosis versus dichotomy. And the father from whom she earlier distanced herself remained with her in her singular courage, as in the title of the poem "Muzhestvo" (#356) with its root of "manly courage." Interestingly, all the names, Anna Andreevna Gorenko-Akhmatova stem from non-Slavic sources, which in its entirety serves as an objective means for underpinning the ancient universal roots of her art.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fire Extended. Poison and Plants

I. Poison in the Verse of Akhmatova

Poison as a motif is connected with love and fire, with burning and grieving, as well as with plants. For many poisons are of plant origin. The notion of love as poison goes far back into literature. As early as the thirteenth century the Armenian Renaissance poet Kostandin Erzynkatsi (1250–1340), whose lyrics extolled love and nature, states in his poem "Vision," translated into Russian by M. Lozinskii—a friend of Akhmatova: "Dreams are my sweet poison."[51] Shakespeare parallels fire and poison to describe love in *Romeo and Juliet* in Benvolio's remark to Romeo:

> Tut, man, one fire burns out another's burning,
> One pain is lessen'd by another's anguish;
> Turn giddy, and be holp by backward turning;
> One desperate grief cures with another's languish:
> Take thou some new infection to thy eye,
> And the rank poison of the old will die (I.2).

Interestingly, Romeo's retort on an antidote to love-fire-poison involves a plant, the plantain: "Your plantain leaf is excellent for that." For Shakespeare, then, love is a fire and a poison. Boris Pasternak's translation retains the plantain rendering it as "podorozhnik," which is the title Akhmatova chose for her fourth collection of verse "Plantain" (1921).

Love as a sweet poison has found reflection in many literatures. A case in point is the poetic masterpiece by Avetik Isahakian *Abul Ala Maari*. In it the blind sage Abul Ala Maari comes to despise sexual love and to deplore the fathering of children for what he views as torment in this world. Such a notion is evocative of the Manicheans who abjured against begetting children because, in their belief, all life prolongs the captivity in matter of the light. Abul Ala Maari voices his invectives through a comparison of igneous life with a sweet

intoxicating poison. The translation into Russian from the Armenian is by Valerii Briusov:

> Ненавижу любовь, этот буйный прибой обжигающих болью,
> палящих пучин,
> Этот сладостный яд, опьяняются чем и жалостный раб, и
> царь-властелин! (404)

/I hate love, that turbulent surge of painfully burning, searing abysses, / That sweet poison, with which are intoxicated both the pitiful slave and the sovereign king!/

The notion of love as mainly a liquid poison probably stems from the old belief in love potions administered to induce amorous feelings toward a definite subject. In Akhmatova's poem "Melkhola" (#262) from the cycle "Biblical Poems" Mical, the love-stricken daughter of King Saul, experiences intense shame in her love for her social inferior, David. She both desires the man and dreads marriage to him through the arrangement of her father. She blames a possible love potion for her desire, whereas in actuality her complaints reveal that the source of attraction is David's physical beauty:

> Наверно с отравой мне дали питье,
> И мой помрачается дух.
> Бесстыдство мое! Униженье мое!
> Бродяга! Разбойник! Пастух!
> Зачем же никто из придворных вельмож,
> Увы, на него непохож?
>
> Someone probably poisoned my drink,
> And my sight is growing dark.
> The humiliation! The shame!
> A robber! A shepherd! A tramp!
> But why isn't one of the nobles at Court
> A man like him?

The beverage that could mask the poison potion is conceivably wine. In the ballad "New Year's Day Ballad" the wine burns like poison, thereby identifying the two through simile: "the wine burns like poison." This line will be quoted in Part One of Akhmatova's *Poem without a Hero* in conjunction with the arrival of the Guest from the Future. The refrain in the ballad links the one who is not currently in the midst of the carousing dead people and the persona who could be living. The image of the Guest from the Future is further evoked

through the vacant place setting reserved for the absent guest. The wine-poison connection is later alluded to in the Romantic-sounding "Guests" (#388) from the cycle "House-Warming." The rustling of the "black" wind through the branches, the rays pouring (*zalitykh*) over the trees concoct a green magic alternative to actual conversation between two deceased friends. The green rays, probably of the ominous moon over the green leaves, are compared to poison. The vehicle of the simile "like poison" assumes the green coloration of the tenor "rays," which is then comparable in color to wine in the Russian folk tradition. An example of green color in a fixed epithet with an alcoholic beverage is found in "zeleno vino," literally "green wine" in the medieval Russian folkloric work "The Tale of Misery-Luckless-Plight."

Poison in verse acquires various connotations and nuances for Akhmatova. As in traditional literature, love is perceived as poison. The toxin is exuded by love, like an aroma or liquid that can be inhaled or ingested to reach a state of euphoria or, conversely, can lead to a painful death. In the poem "Love conquers deceptively" (#6) love possesses a melody. It also has the ability to smile, like the sun, in gardens, the home and the field as well as to grip the addressee. Its toxin is drunk, which makes it a liquid: "You were radiant, captivated by it / And having drunk its toxin." The passion and kiss of a beautiful woman become deadly poison for the lover in the poem "The Old Portrait" (#493): "And for whom your sinister lips / Became a deadly toxin?" Mutual intoxication can be sufficiently volatile to incur coincidental death in the lyric beginning "We are to such a degree poisoned by each other, / That it is even possible to perish unwittingly" (#602). Additionally, poisoned wine can be compared to the bitter atmosphere of exile in the Epilogue to the *Poem without a Hero*: "And the bitter atmosphere of exile / Is like poisoned wine." The biographical reference of separation is to Akhmatova being in Tashkent far away from her brother Victor Gorenko in New York.[52]

An important source for poison in Akhmatova derives from Annenskii. In the poem "Teacher" she follows his example in equating *iad* (poison) and *odur'* (toxin) with art and poetry in light of its exciting and inebriating effect. *Odur'* in an obscure meaning is a toxin which disorders the mind. To be sure, poetry as inebriation is not new for Annenskii; it goes back to his specialty, classical literature. He is explicit about poison in certain poems. His persona craves it. In the piece "Flies Like Thoughts" the difficulty of composing poetry

obliterates all other thoughts for Annenskii: "I would like with the toxin of verse / To narcotize unbearable thoughts." Elsewhere a synonym *durman* (narcotic) is used, hence Akhmatova resorts to a word with the same root *odur'* in "Teacher." Annenskii's poems are created at night, like Akhmatova's; he can therefore write of a capitalized "Midnight" in the poem "Winter Train" that "Only silently hones its narcotic / And extinguishes the black outgrowths" as well as of the strange state that one falls into at night in the piece "Picture": "The pale day arises angrily, / Not having time to shake off stupor." More generally, poetic creation and art assume toxic qualities that in conjunction with the entire picture of burning love, poetry, bitter grief and poison intermesh these themes and motifs into the broader leitmotif of fire and creation. Annenskii is explicit about poison in some poems. In the verse "The Third Torturous Sonnet" his poems are perceived as "peregorevshie na medlennom ogne" (fired to temper over a slow fire); in the lyric "Torturous Sonnet" his persona pleads: "O, give me only an instant, but in life, not in a dream, / So that I can become fire or burn in fire!" Accordingly, in the *Poem without a Hero* the poison is aflame: "And above that broken bottle / Like a crooked and angry tongue / An unknown poison was flaming."[53]

II. Plants in the Verse of Akhmatova

Throughout her *oeuvre* Akhmatova evinces an impelling awareness of plants. Plants are important for Akhmatova because the Muses descend to a garden. Notably, in the poem "Let the voices of the organ again ring out" (#277) the persona heads for this garden: "And I go to possess the wondrous garden, / Where there is rustling of grasses and exclamations of the Muses." She associates the Muses with growing, living plants and the wind blowing through them and hence the suffusion of plants in Akhmatova's verse and the titles to her collections indicating plants, whether actually given or intended only. Moreover, one obscure definition of *blagodat'*, the Russian equivalent of Akhmatova's first name Anna, is a plant—the hyssop. Finally, Akhmatova's interest in plants and wild grasses could have been enhanced by her mother's maiden name, Stogova. In Russian the word "stog" means a haystack, hence an accumulation of grass and weeds. According to Ushakov's *Defining Dictionary of the Russian Language* this word can denote not only stacked hay but also stalks of grain and, possibly, of other plants. Plants, then, through

their connection with the Muses and Akhmatova's names form an integral part of her poetics.

Attention is focused on the significance of plants in two of the seven collections that bear as titles the names of plants, *Reed* and *Plantain*. Separate discussion of each title is featured in the appended Part Four of this book; only the most relevant mention of the titles will be made here. Significantly, the first collection *Evening* was originally to have been named *Lebeda* (*Pigweed*). In the verse of Akhmatova plants fulfill traditional roles; they embellish the scenery, concretize the delineation and promote a certain symbolism. The symbolism can incorporate familiar approaches, or it can relate Akhmatova's individually construed symbolism. The influence of Annenskii is frequently felt. The meaning and roles ascribed to some flowers, specifically to violets, chrysanthemums and to the cypress tree will be discussed in connection with subtexts and with traditional symbolism as refracted through Annenskii and Shakespeare. Another flower, the carnation, serves a traditional and symbolic role in the same context. Instead, this section will treat plants that, in the outlook of Akhmatova, have bearing on fire, creation, love and poetry; in short, the themes of the present chapter.

Wild plants, weeds and trees in particular form an intrusive theme. Under weeds are assumed a wide variety of plants as evinced by the definition in the Oxford English Dictionary: "A herbaceous plant not valued for use or beauty, growing wild and rank, and regarded as cumbering the ground or hindering the growth of superior vegetation."[54] It would appear that the spontaneous, uncultivated development of weeds attracts Akhmatova. Her love of weeds is mentioned in several memoirs and in the poem "Willow" (#322), which was to have been the original title to her collection *Reed*: "I loved burdock and nettle, / But most of all the silvery willow." Zhirmunskii cites the poet's predilection for weeds from her unpublished memoirs:

> In her recollections about her early childhood and youth spent in Tsarskoe Selo in the house of Shukhardina on Broad Street, Akhmatova describes the Nameless Alley, which the house faced: it "in summer was luxuriantly overgrown with weeds—burdock, splendid nettle and giant burdock (I discussed this in 1940, in recalling Pushkin's 'a delapidated bundle of trees')" (478).

The preponderance of weeds in the verse of Akhmatova has hitherto been treated in various terms. Zhirmunskii in his book *Anna*

Akhmatova professes that the poet is unafraid of the mundane, ungainly details of life and displays audacity by incorporating them masterfully into her poetry. He commends her inclination toward simplicity and the prosaism of colloquial speech:

> Such a choice of everyday words and expressions and by dint of them of simple human emotions and domestic realia Akhmatova later justified in her poetic manifesto "I have no use for odic hosts" (1940), which entered the cycle "Secrets of the Craft" (85).

Further, Zhirmunskii quotes the famous lines from that poem (#334):

> Когда б вы знали, из какого сора
> Растут стихи, не ведая стыда,
> Как желтый одуванчик у забора,
> Как лопухи и лебеда.[55]
>
> If only you knew from among what weeds
> Poems rise, unashamed,
> Like dandelion by a fence,
> Or burdock, or lambs'-quarters.

In this poem Akhmatova promotes her description through careful enumeration of objects and concrete details. The practice of reification in Akhmatova is linked with Annenskii as illustrated in Simon Karlinsky's article "Reification in Annenskii." Unlike other Symbolists, Annenskii did not avoid the ugly and crude aspects of life in his art. Karlinsky makes interesting comments:

> The isolation of art from living life, the poet as theurg and mythmaker—these concepts, so typical for the Russian Symbolists, are alien to Annenskii. Vital, concrete impressions in all their diversity are necessary to the poet for the very origin of poetry. The acknowledgment of the later Akhmatova
>
> > If you only knew, from what litter
> > Poems grow, lost to shame.
>
> was long before anticipated by her teacher Annenskii in his article on Gor'kii's drama "The Lower Depths," where we read: ". . . poetry is a tenacious creature which distinguishes neither an animal stall nor a trough, neither the old nor the young, neither Baptism nor funeral. Its forms are endlessly diverse." None of the Russian Symbolists (save perhaps Fedor Sologub) would have dared such a sharp and crude emphasis on the real life substrata of any art. Only Vladimir Maiakovskii went further than Annenskii in this direction, by calling poetry "a

> capricious woman," "a most swinish thing"—but after all he is Maiakovskii.
>
> Domestic details, as well as at times everyday words, play a tremendous role in the poetry of Annenskii.[56]

It will be recalled that the poetics of the ugly reached its apogee in Baroque literature.

At times Akhmatova dispenses with the method of reification for more tenuous imagery. In the poem "Name" the poet seems to be alluding to similar correspondences in her penname by employing two adjectives, *tatarskoe* (Tatar), which is expected for the name, and *dremuchee*, which is unusual. The latter word refers mainly to forests or to thick growths of plants. Ozhegov's *Dictionary of the Russian Language* defines it as: "1. Thick, dense, impenetrable (about a forest); 2. *figurative*. Total, complete (about one bearing negative qualities)."[57] In Vasmer's *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language* there is a listing under *drom* from a cross-reference to *dremuchii* which defines it as "thicket, undergrowth, wind-felled wood." It is related to the Bulgarian *dr'mka* "bush" and the Slovenian *drmášča* "thicket, thick shrubs" (I, 541). Obviously, Ozhegov's second definition applies to the name through the misfortune that it incurs. The first and more common definition of the word *dremuchii* is pertinent in connection with another word having the same root as the name's origin, which is Tatar, *tatarnik*. In Ozhegov's *Dictionary of the Russian Language* the word *tatarnik* is defined as "a prickly weed with lilac-rose flowers." Thus the association is made with a weed that has thorns. This plant, *tatarnik* (thistle), grows in the Ukraine, as evidenced by the following description of the weed growing in the vicinity of the village where the Soviet writer Mikhail Sholokhov lived. Of particular significance is the presence here of the adjective *dremuchii* for the growth of these weeds:

> A countryman of Sholokhov, the cossack Grachev, says that the farmstead was called Tatarskii, because in the old days . . . there grew thick [*dremuchii*—S.K.] weeds, tall prickly thistle [*tatarnik*—S.K.]: "And therefore in 'Quiet Flows the Don' the farmstead is called Tatarskii. It goes without saying, that if anything there were plenty of weeds, ignorance [*temnoty*—S.K.] and savagery in our farmstead."

As a native of the Ukraine, Akhmatova was undoubtedly familiar with such usage. All of these explanations point to external reasons, which probably motivated the poet.

The implicit reason behind this usage of plants, their interrelationship with one another and the thematics of Akhmatova becomes clear through the assertion of the Soviet scholar Manuk Abegian that in folklore "blackthorn [*ternoviki*—S.K.] and burr [*koliuchki*—S.K.]—are the incarnation of fire; a means of protection against evil spirits" (29). Also, for the Greeks some plants were believed to harbor fire. If certain weeds are indeed an incarnation of fire and if fire, according to Akhmatova's persona, is the source of life and love which in turn causes grief, transmuting into song through various means, then the prevalence of weeds in the *oeuvre* of Akhmatova, especially in poems on poetic composition, such as "Secrets of the Craft," becomes patent. In this context even her Tatar surname contains fire, albeit obliquely, through the connection with dense thistle (*tatarnik*), to which Akhmatova herself called attention. Akhmatova elaborates on her change of title for her first collection of verse and on her love for the weed that was originally intended as the title of the collection *Evening*. Interestingly, the first title would have necessitated changes in the order of poems in the collection, bringing to the forefront the theme of the proposed title *Pigweed*. Chukovskaia has instanced the poet's opinion in *Notes on Anna Akhmatova*:

> At first I wanted to call *Evening* "Pigweed," and then the first poem would have been "I upon the sun's rise / Sing of the pigweed" . . . But I was dissuaded. . . .
>
> I told her that from her poems it was obvious that she liked the pigweed very much.
>
> "Yes, very, very much, as well as the nettle and burdock. It's from childhood. When I was little, we lived in Tsarskoe Selo, in a by-street, and there in the ditch grew burdock and pigweed. I was little, and they were big, broadleaved, odorous, warmed by the sun—since then I have liked them so much (I, 127).

Thus from her earliest verse Akhmatova has demonstrated a predilection for weeds as well as for imagery connected with and containing weeds and other plants. Warmed by the sun, they grow outside her home untended, wild, uninhibited—hence densely. Her persona weeds them from the garden, as in the poem above. While weeding kills the plants, the sunlight contained in them and secured by dint of reacting with chlorophyl as well as the fire symbolism are preserved and utilized by the speaker: "On my knees in the garden / I weed the pigweed. I pull out and cast aside— / Let it forgive me. / I see a barefoot girl / Crying by the wattlefence." This barefoot girl could be

the Muse, who in Akhmatova likes to romp barefoot, or it could be the persona viewing herself as a girl or another person. The adjective "mertvyi" in the first definition given in Ushakov's *Dictionary* meaning "dead or bereft of life" is applicable only to living beings. Using it for a weed humanizes the plant as in a metaphor. The weeping girl further supports the humanization of the weed. Begging, although obliquely, in the third person the forgiveness of the weed for culling it, further aligns it with humans or a divinity: "Let (the weed) forgive me." Chukovskaia says that this is the only instance in world literature that the author addresses her own work. To be sure, Akhmatova is known to address her own poems, as in the piece "Inscription on the Poem 'Triptych'" (#548). Without the growing weed, strangely enough, the persona expects to die. Symbolically, it is the lack of the fire of life and creation that she cannot bear. A stone, a grave marking awaits the weeping girl. Weeds, then, embody the fire of the sun.

While expounding her creative process in the poem "I have no use for odic hosts" (#334), the persona calls the first item engendering her verse "sor." The word receives explication within the stanza in terms of various weeds: dandelion, burdock, pigweed. Other things are added in the next stanza, but they are not necessarily from "sor," though they can be. This word is a key in the poem, which constitutes a pastiche of her own poetry. Akhmatova compresses the functions of "sorniaki" (weeds) into the meaning of "sor" (dirt, trash). The etymological connection is obvious, despite the omission of the word "sorniak" from Vasmer's *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language*. In it "sornaia trava" is defined as "weeds." Further, a related word "sorobalina" is listed as a dialectical form denoting "ezhevika" (blackberry) from the Voronezh region, where the word "serbalina" signifies "shipovnik" (sweetbrier, rosehip). It is compared to the Lithuanian "serbentà" meaning "currant" and the Latin "sorbus"—"mountain ash" (III, 271). Importantly, the mountain ash is a member of the rose family. The common physical denominator between the plants is a berry, mostly of red color. Akhmatova knew both Latin and Italian, therefore the linguistic connections between the weeds, sweetbrier-rosehips and mountain ash must have been obvious to her, if not also the botanical connections.

In the poem "I have no use for odic hosts" the poet compares the growth and formation of her poems from "sor" to three specific weeds by means of a simile. This trope—the simile—tends to underpin all possible similarities between the tenor and its three vehicles when no

connecting quality is specified. In other words, Akhmatova does not say that her poems grow *quickly* from trash, like the three weeds, or that they become strong or fragrant. Instead, she leaves the specifics of the comparison open-ended and implicit; the poems grow "like a yellow dandelion by the fence (sheltered?) / Like burdock and pigweed." Clearly, the fence is wooden as in the poem "Near Kolomna" (#404), where the location is described as "Everything is of logs, of boards, and bent. . . ." The image of wooden fences is connected with Gumilev whom Akhmatova quotes in her epigraph to "Ode to Tsarskoe Selo" (#499): "And in the alley a wooden fence. . . ." Furthermore, Zhirmunskii cites the unpublished memoirs of Akhmatova in his notes to the ode: "Along one side of that alley there were no houses and there stretched and began (from the houses of the Shukhardskiis), a very ancient, unpainted wooden fence" (492).

Aside from these sources, another, literary one, stands out. The plants and the bent, caved-in fence apparently migrated into Akhmatova's verse from Pushkin's "Onegin's Travels" which she examines in her article "Pushkin and the Neva Beach." In "Onegin's Travels" Pushkin singles out the scenes most pleasing to him: "In front of the hut are two mountain ashes, / A gate, a broken-down fence. . . ." (151). The mountain ash, or rowan tree (*riabina*) figures in Akhmatova's poem "The Statue of Tsarskoe Selo" (#149), in which she sings praises to the statue of the girl lauded in Pushkin's poem bearing an identical title. Pushkin defines the picture that he has drawn in the canto "Onegin's Travels" as "The motley litter of the Flemish School." While Akhmatova relinquishes the Pushkinian adjective *pestryi* (motley, variegated) in her poem, her own enumeration of three plants renders her picture motley. This device of tacitly describing in lieu of naming terms has already been noted by Sam Driver in conjunction with Akhmatova's descriptive presentation of the concept "to live" in his article "Directions in Akhmatova's Poetry since the Early Period."[5]

Given the botanical relationship and the linguistic associations between "mountain ash" (Latin "sorbus") and the sweetbrier (Voronezh dialect "sorobalina"), it becomes clear what prompted Akhmatova to create deliberate parallels between the plants. In the final analysis, they all eventuate as *sor,* hence weeds, or plants. The sweetbrier has thorns, the flower has five petals, pursuant to Jobes, and symbolically signifies the number five. This factor enters into the title of Akhmatova's later cycle "Cinque," meaning "five" in Italian,

which contains five poems, closely aligned with the cycle "Shipovnik tsvetet" ("The Sweetbrier Blooms"), which it precedes in the *Seventh Book*. The crucial physical attribute of this plant for Akhmatova appears to be its thorns (*shipy*), which are the distinguishing feature incorporated in its Russian name. In Vasmer's *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language* "ship" is entered as signifying in different variations "a wild rose, a rose bush". In Bulgarian it denotes "needle, thorn; arrow." While no convincing etymology has been established as yet, some scholars link it to the Old English "heora" indicating "sweetbrier, thorny bush." The fruit of this plant, the rosehip, is usually orange-red in color, like the berries of the mountain ash and close enough to the reddish-black blackberry "ezhevika." Through its fruit the sweetbrier coalesces with the mountain ash, through its thorns and often reddish flower, a pervading factor, it is yoked with thorny weeds, some of which bloom in season. This in turn points to its containing fire with all the implicit connotations. A rose, it will be recalled, is connected with fire. Visually, the berries of the rowan tree growing close together in clusters resemble the curly circular outline of a rose. Indeed, this species is a member of the rose family. Given all these associations, the quotation "The sweetbrier was so fragrant that it turned into word" and all the other connections with love, grief and poetry in the cycle "The Sweetbrier Blooms" become patent. The title "The Sweetbrier Blooms" is derived from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin,* in which the two words stand in reverse order:

Там соловей, весны любовник,
Всю ночь поет; цветет шиповник,
И слышен говор ключевой—
Там виден камень гробовой
В тени двух сосен устарелых

There the spring's lover, the nightingale, sings
All night long; the sweetbrier blooms;
And water burbles from the ground,
And a gravestone stands in the shade
Of two ancient pines.

Thus for Pushkin "pestryi sor" connotes the material of the Flemish School. Akhmatova utilizes "sor" for the material of poetry, not only visually as the plants and through their olfactory effect on the persona

but also symbolically as weeds incarnating fire, the substance of life and poetry.

Furthermore, plants can serve as an instrument for sound. In the poem "Bury me, bury me, wind!" (#27) the persona adjures the wind to disseminate her sad story through the rustling of weeds, *osoka* (sedge, carex). The weeds serve, as it were, as a musical wind instrument for the wind, its mouthpiece, its means of articulating the sound for the comprehension of the human ear: "Sound through the tall sedge / About spring, about my spring." The instrumental case form of sedge can denote ambivalently "like" or "by means of/ through."

Other plants, such as *polyn'* (wormwood, absinth), can appear in the traditional folklore sense of bitterness and grief. The implication is of *gor'kaia polyn'* (bitter) in the poem "I am not with those who have abandoned their land" (#245), where the persona asserts: "Foreign bread reeks of wormwood." In the poems "For a week I do not say a word to anyone" (#215) and "In that year long ago when love was kindled" (#242) she adopts a tolerant attitude and even appears to relish its presence.

The plant *lebeda* (pigweed), etymologically connected with *lebed'* (swan), with both words deriving from *belyi* (white), is central to the poem "And fever in the evenings, and fatigue in the morning" (#506). Composed in 1913, it treats premature death in keeping with the thematics of *Evening* and was probably intended for the collection, had it been titled "Pigweed." The scenery with the pigweed seems to be the only thing now dear to the persona: "And the path is overgrown with pigweed, / And for me to walk along it—such joy." Thus pigweed is by implication connected with poets and poetry. In the poem above the speaker expects her premature death to open the kingdom of glory to her. An early death is suggested by her rising temperature at night probably brought on following separation from her lover, as evidenced by the overgrown path outside the house where they no longer stroll together. The line "That the sand would crunch and the paws of the firs . . ." reverberates imagery in Pushkin's "Onegin's Travels." Sand is similar to his "A sandy hillside," while firs are trees, as is the mountain ash. A fir tree's needles grow out from two sides of the branch in parallel formation. Similarly, the mountain ash's small elongated narrow leaves maintain a comparable order on their branch. The fact that the choice of tree is deliberate is buttressed by Akhmatova's use of the word *eli* (firs), where the bisyllabic word *sosny*

(pines), also a coniferous tree, would not have changed the rhythm. Significantly for her abstention, a pine tree's needles grow out of the branch in fanlike clusters, which would have distorted the image. Instead, Akhmatova imitates cleverly with approximation, a favorite device. The reason behind the correspondences could be that the recurrent picture conjured up by her master would not leave her.

In the poem "A difficult youth You gave me" (#88) the persona through proximity and homogeneity equates the word *sorinka* (speck) with the words of the fool: "I tremble over every mote, / Over every word of a fool." By identifying one with the other, she elevates the utterances of the fool. The word *sorinka* becomes associated with *sor* (trash) and, hence, by proximity with *sorniaki* (weeds). The Ushakov dictionary defines *sorinka* as "a small piece of something, a small piece of trash" (*sor*). And *sor* in the verse of Akhmatova connotes weeds.

Overgrown weeds and moss figure in another poem that develops imagery, already quoted above, "The log bridge has blackened and bent" (#288). By association and due to its wild growth, moss functions as a weed here. In this bipartite polymetrical poem the events in the preamble of the first six lines take place at the time of writing. A switch in meters demarcates the hiatus in time. Now everything is no longer entangled and abandoned with "burdock as high as a man, / And thick forests of nettle sing" and "along the walls has crept crooked (ragged) moss." Instead the landscape turns idyllic. This second section foregoes the ponderous *dolniki* meter of the first six lines in favor of four quatrains with a shorter, brisker trochaic meter for portrayal of the playful young girl. The concluding stanza to this part composed in three-foot trochaic meter acquires even greater speed due to the lack of temporal verbal forms in the past tense. All this whirlwind tempo obfuscates the fact that in a poem dated 1917 the speaker greeted the year '21: "I saw in there / The year twenty-one." The discrepancy in years could not be the result of later deliberate deception for personal or political reasons, seeing that the poem was published in 1918, thereby predating the execution of Gumilev in 1921. More likely, it is a poem on preliminary metempsychosis of the second type with similes, animal transformations and human incarnations, all of which will be treated in detail in Part Two of this study. In the poem the persona returns after 1921, if "dvadtsat' pervyi god" does not refer to a former century. Who or what emerges from the burrow remains vague. If it is an animal, it could be a transformed

lover: "At the prearranged shout / He will come out of the burrow." The coda inclines toward such an explanation: "But in return later / I will not say: let me alone." In a poem to be discussed in connection with metempsychosis "And so I have been left alone" (#224) the speaker implies transforming her lovers into animals. While the sex of the being in the poem under discussion is male, as evinced by the masculine short form adjective—"Wild (*dik*) like a wood goblin"—and enforced by the comparison with a male mythical creature, the following simile through comparison with a sister tends to mislead: "And more tender than a sister." It does not, however, cancel out the primary information. According to the Struve edition of Akhmatova's works, line 16 of the poem once read: "You will descend from the mountain," which could evoke the Muse (I, 397). As the poem stands currently, the image could denote an animal. The wooden bridge of the first part is reminiscent of the wooden fence in the poem "I have no use for odic hosts," and the line "Along the walls has crept ragged moss" mirrors the image of "mysterious mold on the wall." Both moss and molds reproduce by means of spores. In the picture the multitudinous weeds bespeak disuse and a possible hiatus in poetic creation. The rustling of the wind through a dense overgrowth of nettle evokes the image of rushes singing in mythology: "And forests of dense nettle sing." It will be recalled that Abegian equates burrs with fire, albeit his word *koliuchka* can and, possibly, does denote, according to Ushakov's dictionary, not only the thorn but also several weeds: "Regional name for some thorny plants."

Elsewhere in Akhmatova the wind is juxtaposed through a simile to a wild plant: "the wind is like heather." Heather is also a possible igneous conduit for poetry, given the reddish color of most of its flowers. Jobes characterizes heather as a plant of desert places symbolizing humility and solitude and containing dichotomy in its two colors: the red heather is a tree of passion, while the white is a protection against acts of passion. In Akhmatova's usage the wind would be compared with the red heather of passion with its fiery ardor. Interestingly, the tree is sacred to the Silician love goddess Erycina, which is a name of Venus; and for Akhmatova love is the art of living. The symbolism of the white heather, on the other hand, finds reflection in the pious aspect of some personas.

Reeds figure prominently in Akhmatova. The dictionary definition for the plant is: "any of various tall grasses having jointed, hollow stalks; especially, one of the genera *Phragmites* or *Arundo*. The stalks

of one of these plants." The sixth collection of Akhmatova's verse, *Reed*, originally titled *Willow*, now gives precedence to the marsh plant. According to Zhirmunskii, the epigraph to the collection *Reed* is taken from Pasternak's poem "Improvisation": "I play in them in all five" (476). However, this line cannot be located in the Poet's Library series edition of Pasternak's works because it derives from an early version of the poem. Be that as it may, the epigraph underscores the melodious aspect of the reed as a musical instrument. A discussion between Akhmatova and Chukovskaia in *Notes on Anna Akhmatova* concerning poems and reasons for changes in them casts light on the poet's design: "The collection 'Willow,' it turns out, should be called 'Reed' (she explained why . . . and the first poem there is not 'Willow' but 'To Lozinskii' " ("Almost from a shade from beyond the Lethe"; 98). In a footnote on the same page Chukovskaia explains:

> A. A. told me an Eastern legend: on how two sisters killed their youngest sister on the river bank. They managed to conceal the murder. But on the site of the bloodshed a reed sprung up; in the spring a shepherd carved out a pipe, blew it—and the reed began to sing of the secret crime.

Thus the reed is the raw material for the wind instrument that can narrate through song. Elsewhere it suffices for the wind to blow through the plants for them to relate or imitate. In this revealing role the reed is comparable to the basil plant in Keats' *The Pot of Basil*, taken from a story by Boccaccio, where the plant that grew over the dead beloved discloses to the maiden the secret that her own brothers were his murderers. Significantly, Akhmatova employs a line from Keats' poem as an epigraph to her cycle "The Sweetbrier Blooms": "And thou art distant in humanity."

The recurrent literary theme of talking reeds emphasizes the poet's incredulousness at the pretence of innocence by people of Akhmatova's milieu with respect to the political atrocities of the time. In *Notes on Akhmatova* she is quoted as bemoaning: "Stones cry out, the reed acquires speech, but man, in your opinion, does not see or hear? A lie. They were pretending" (II, 137–38). In folklore the reed assumes the power of echo. A case in point is an obscure Armenian tale told to me by my grandmother, Azniv Aroian Ketchian:

> There was once a king who had horns on his head. Fortunately, his crown hid them. Tormented by shame, he would condemn to death each barber who cut his hair. All barbers feared for their lives, and

> soon the executions resulted in a dearth of barbers. The only remaining barber was reluctant to obey the summons of the king's men. He was brought forcibly. When the barber saw the horns, he understood everything and knew his own end was near. However, he managed to convince the king that as the only remaining barber in the land his life should be spared. He would serve as the king's personal barber and would keep the king's secret. The king acquiesced. Periodically, the barber would cut his hair but the terrible secret weighed heavily on him. The man felt he would go insane, if he did not speak out. He had told no one, not even his wife. One day he could stand it no longer. He headed for the marshes and in the tangled rushes he shouted out his unbearable secret many times, "The king has horns." He went home relieved. Soon after, the king went hunting and came to the marsh. A voice was repeating, "The king has horns." It was the reeds that had retained the sound and were echoing it in the wind.[58]

This tale is relevant to Akhmatova's poem "You alone will guess all this" (#315), in which the persona opines: "But the pine forest and the reeds in the pond / Will answer with a strange echo. . ."

Another aspect of the reed retaining words lies in the fact that reed pens were used in the ancient world, notably in Babylon and Egypt, for writing on clay tablets.[59] Coincidentally, in his poem "The Heart of the Tribe" the poet Avetik Isahakian employs the motif of writing with a reed pen: "I sang with a reed pen." Isahakian also reiterates the imagery of the birth of the god Vahakn from a reed that was quoted from a historical source in Chapter One: "From the throat of the reed a flame arose." Akhmatova, well versed in the literature of Assyria, herself created a drama "Enuma Elish," which she burned. So the theme of fire is connected not only with her actual burning, but with the original Babylonian epic, *Enuma Elish,* which treats creation by juxtaposing fire with the reed. Marduk, the supreme deity, in collaboration with the goddess Aruru created man by laying a reed upon the face of the waters and forming dust, which he poured out beside it. The role of fire is apparent in Marduk's creation in the lines: "He set the lightning in front of him, / With burning flame he filled his body."[60] Additionally, it will be recalled that Prometheus carried the stolen fire to humans in a reed, rendering it a vessel for the containment of fire. An interesting item in the light of Akhmatova's sensitivity to smell is the fact that Gilgamesh burns the reed in the epic *Gilgamesh* as a fragrant offering to his gods along with myrtle and cedar (Tablet XI). Thus reeds are connected with fire, birth,

echoed words, worship, song and writing. It is no wonder that Akhmatova returns to the image repeatedly and that her collection *Reed* contains many poems on poets and the Muse.

The willow is a favorite tree despite concession of its superiority as title of a collection to the more prominent motif of the reed. The possibility of the willow signifying Mt. Helicon, the home of the Muse, became clear earlier. In the poem "Willow" the willow is almost personified. The speaker has one favorite silvery tree, the chopping down of which compares with the demise of a brother. The equation of the persona's sorrow by dint of a masculine word, and a brother at that, is peculiar for a feminine gender tree. But Akhmatova confused gender deliberately in the poem "The log bridge has blackened and bent" and in "Imitation from Annenskii" (#40). As in Pushkin's poem "Tsarskoe Selo" from which derives the epigraph to this poem, the willow is linked to the demise of a person. In Pushkin it is definite, in Akhmatova it is implied, for both her brothers were as unattainable as dead in foreign lands: "I am silent . . . As if my brother had died." Tsiv'ian construes the willow as the tree of mermaids in the traditional sense (115).

The ultimate unification of the themes and motifs, investigated in the three chapters of this study, was detailed in 1915 in the following poem of Akhmatova "Long he walked through fields and villages" (#179), where the eyes of the lost beloved woman are compared to stars in the sky. The radiance of eyes is metaphorized as God's garden. Thus the light and fire of stars are equated to plants, as already entered in Jobes (II, 1490):

> Разгорелся божий сад лучей:
> "Здесь она, здесь свет веселый
> Серых звезд—ее очей".
>
> The heavenly garden of rays caught fire:
> "She's here; the gray stars' happy light
> Is here—her eyes."

The circle of planned themes converges and closes. It prepares the reader for Akhmatova's comparison of blue fire and flowers to be discussed in the following chapters. Unity and wholeness of concept are established for much of her *oeuvre*, bringing it close to ultimate universal harmony.

PART TWO

Poetic Expansion of Experience through Metempsychosis

CHAPTER FIVE

The Concept of Metempsychosis

Anna Akhmatova delighted in creating poetry that was often abstruse beneath a pellucid exterior. While the reasons for many things in her verse cannot always be explained at the present state of scholarship, the poet is certainly not conducting an idle exercise in opaqueness. She raises obscurity in her work with the expectation that the reader will reap rewards in penetrating its circumlocution. In the poem "The Appearance of a Book," bearing the subtitle "From the Cycle 'Secrets of the Craft' " (#585), the poet describes her treatment of readers as putting them on the rack (*dyba*) and keeping them in ignorance, while leading them nowhere. Captivated readers, however, are aware of the joy to come with the discovery of secrets: "But it is clear to them without question, / What rewards await them for it." To be sure, familiarity with the poet's biography and the milieu can elucidate certain matters. The uncovering of intertextuality—allusions and subtexts—from Russian and world literature and culture adds depth and dimension to the reading. In the lyric "These praises are not according to my rank" (#575) the crux of Akhmatova's usage of deeply rooted subtexts and of paradox is specified:

Стихи эти были с подтекстом
Таким, что как в бездну глядишь.
А бездна та манит и тянет,
И ввек не доищешься дна,
И ввек говорить не устанет
Пустая ее тишина.

Beneath these lines there lay
A subtext as deep as the sea.
It lures you, pulls you down
Though you'll never get all the way
And never hear the end
Of what the silence says.

By contrast, a number of poems cannot be interpreted fully by tracing literary allusions. Among them is a group, which makes ref-

erence to previous lives or unusual transformations. In the concentrated verse of Akhmatova the noticeable recurrence of the phenomenon cannot be ascribed to chance. In this part I will explore examples of the phenomenon, namely metempsychosis, as it occurs in the art of Akhmatova, and its relationship to the body of her work. References to other lives and forms of nature for some of the personas, a method that constitutes the gist of her thematics in this selection of poems, is related to the method of triple, or possibly multiple, subtexts, which will be treated in some detail in Part Three. This layered past, whose "bottom can never be reached," along with the nonexistent present or future, functions like a theme, at times supporting the device of allusion. Its relationship to the device of layered subtexts integrates the miniature format of Akhmatova's poetry into a broader whole. In the poem "From the Cycle 'Secrets of the Craft' " (#560) the poet summarizes her method, if not the work of most poets in general who necessarily predicate their verse on tradition and the previous experiences of other writers. Specifically, she substantiates allusions in poetry by intimating that all poets draw upon an exciting poetic tradition. The following quatrain establishes poetic succession:

> Не повторяй—душа твоя богата—
> Того, что было сказано когда-то,
> Но, может быть, поэзия сама—
> Одна великолепная цитата.
>
> Don't quote—you have rich talent of your own—
> The things that will seem.hand-me-down;
> But, on the other hand, I have a notion
> That poetry may be one great quotation.

Accordingly, the admonition against repetition is adhered to by Akhmatova herself through her originality and her parallel practice of reverberating with some minor, albeit tangible, changes the poetic legacy of the world. This practice is, as it were, oxymoronic, a favorite device in her poetry.[61] It is in keeping with the tenets of Acmeism, which promulgate "nostalgia for world culture."[62] Moreover, Akhmatova's search for perfection in poetry can be prompted by her desire to echo the sweet sounds that her persona heard earlier from the Muse and which her memory failed to retain. In the first poem of "Epic Motifs" (#629) she queries the Muse:

Скажи, скажи, зачем угасла память,
И, так томительно лаская слух,
Ты отняла блаженство повторения? . . .

Tell me, tell me, why did memory go out,
And why, so sweetly touching what I hear,
Did you deny the bliss of repetition?

The philosophical concept of metempsychosis is ancient. It maintains that the soul undergoes several incarnations in different bodies, both human and animal, ultimately attaining higher forms of life.[63] Metempsychosis constitutes the belief that at death the soul passes into another body; the place where the soul and its new body dwell must be, at least in part, this world. The new body must be, as a rule, inhabited longer than for a temporary period. The soul, which passes from one body to another, must be that which creates an individual. The soul can exist apart from the body before birth, after birth or both. Some primitive peoples believe that the soul can absent itself from the body for limited periods, such as during sleep. Moreover, a soul can inhabit a body other than human. To be sure, Akhmatova does not consistently reproduce any one type of metempsychosis, such as primitive metempsychosis or its Greek or Hindu variations. Conversely, she employs traits from the various forms of belief in metempsychosis to compose whatever pictures best suit the objective of a given poem or cycle. Among these forms of belief is *oborotnichestvo*, which has no English equivalent. The Russian word involves changing into an animal or object. The English "lycanthropy" is narrower in denoting transformations into a wolf only. The transformations in the verse of Akhmatova cover not only animals and plants, but inanimate objects and natural phenomena as well. Incarnations, of course, are human.

Representative of metempsychosis in Akhmatova's works are the nonmeetings which became more prominent in her verse after the twenties. According to her presentation, the soul of a dead lover or a distant one leaves its place of habitation or the distant lover's body during sleep to visit the persona at night.[64] Nonmeetings can also be arranged through the medium of music in Akhmatova.[65]

In one ancient Greek fragment the great intellectual powers of Pythagoras, the first Greek documented as introducing metempsychosis, are ascribed to his alleged retainment of memories concerning events from numerous lifetimes.[66] Akhmatova appears to do some-

thing similar, drawing on her poetic and cultural heritage. In a broader sense, metempsychosis represents the same for the persona of Akhmatova's verse as literary tradition does for poetry and for the poet *per se,* enabling an individual, like the lyrical ego, to experience several stages of life, retaining all the while the memory associated with each life span. In Akhmatova's "Creation" (#572) a personified image of creative writing (*tvorchestvo*) voices this idea: "I remember everything at one and the same time." Interestingly, the subtitle to the Babylonian epic *Gilgamesh* and its opening line reverberate the gist of this line written in 1936: in the 1961 translation by the Soviet scholar I. M. D'iakonov the title reads *Epic about Gilgamesh* ("About Him Who Has Seen Everything"), the first line is: "About him who has seen all to the edge of the world." Akhmatova was well acquainted with the epic, because both her husbands of various times, Gumilev and Shileiko, translated the epic before the composition of her poem. Gumilev translated from a French approximate version with an introduction by Shileiko. Later Shileiko had his own fine verse translation, which has been lost, according to D'iakonov. Further references to the epic occur elsewhere in Akhmatova's verse. In connection with remembering everything at the same time, Chukovskaia in *Notes on Anna Akhmatova* characterizes the verse of Akhmatova as embodying memory: "Akhmatova's poetry, on the contrary, is all memory incarnated; it is all the history of the soul, the history of the country, the history of mankind . . ." (II, 61). By incorporating so much previous achievement and culture into her own poetic edifice Akhmatova achieves many layers, dimensions and subliminal nuances. A unique example is the multilayered verse to be discussed later. In a similar vein, Kees Verheul points out the presence of a correlation in Akhmatova's lyric "The Basement of Memory" (#324) between the descent into memory (the past) and the descent into hell to the devil (*k vragu*). Such imagery is highly evocative of intermediate descent into a period of purgation for the wicked or the imperfect between different incarnations, as expounded by Pythagoras (Long, 27).

In other words, metempsychosis is employed artistically by Akhmatova in her *oeuvre* to convey by yet another facet the connection among generations of people and, specifically among poets and writers. Her usage validates the reason for protomemory (*prapamiat'*) as well as her preoccupation with memories. It demonstrates a firsthand basis for her historical knowledge. While metempsychosis intermit-

tently suffuses Akhmatova's poetry in various periods, the concept becomes defined with greater regularity and clarity in the later stage. It complements the poetic method that begins to pervade the later works and the poems written for the planned cycle "From a Wreath to the Dead" in particular: that is, poetic allusions and subtexts, often ciphered and containing more than one level, which bring together the artistic lives of writers. For if the *oeuvre* of each poet can be construed as one lifetime or one stage in the process of literary reincarnation, then resonances with any other writer's works represent, as it were, an incorporation of other lives and the memories of others into the framework of Akhmatova's verse. Consequently, the limits of her work are expanded, enabling the poet to observe an economy of her own words and images through the invocation of already-existing and recognizable images, concepts and themes. Because the incorporated elements are rarely overtly transparent, their recognition and comprehension are achieved through additional attention in reading the poetry. In this respect, Akhmatova is like Mandel'shtam who did not make concessions to readers by simplifying his verse. Instead he treated his readers as equals, as observed by Nadezhda Mandel'shtam in *Hope Against Hope* (161).

The hints at metempsychosis, which grow more defined in the later verse, are treated in scholarship on Akhmatova either as unusual imagery or as elements of paganism—which they indeed are.[67] Nonetheless, on another plane they constitute the undercurrent of metempsychosis, an important component of primitive and ancient Greek religions as well as of Asian religions and philosophies. To be sure, nowhere does Akhmatova overtly enunciate her practice of incorporating into her verse concepts of metempsychosis. By the same token, neither does she elaborate on her practice of multilevel subtexts.

Predictably, hints of metempsychosis occur also in the favorite models of Akhmatova, Pushkin and Annenskii. In Pushkin there are indirect hints at reincarnation in the presentation of Comte de Saint-Germain in his novella *The Queen of Spades*. Pushkin intimates certain possibilities by enumerating some of the qualities attributed to Saint-Germain. The first two have bearing on singular longevity: "he claimed to be the Eternal Jew, the inventor of the elixir of life" (VI, 321). According to Tomskii in *The Queen of Spades*, it was Saint-Germain who revealed to the Countess the secret of the cards. The man's origin was shrouded in mystery. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

notes that he was a composer and a capable violinist. He was familiar with nearly all the European languages and had a comprehensive knowledge of history, as a result of which he claimed to have lived 2000 years. Moreover, Saint-Germain was an inimitable storyteller who narrated events as if he had been an eyewitness. He recited poems of unknown origin, bordering on the marvellous and the strange; he had probably authored them.[68] The comparison with *The Queen of Spades* and Cagliostro, the most popular name for Saint-Germain, is warranted due to Akhmatova's use of this character, such as in *Poem without a Hero*:

> Не отбиться от рухляди пестрой,
> Это старый чудит Калиостро—
> Сам изящнейший сатана,(371)
>
> You can't get away from the motleyness—
> Old Cagliostro acting up,
> The most elegant devil of all—

In the verse of Annenskii, metempsychosis finds minimal definition in the nocturnal appearance of his persona's double, which is similar to the belief of primitive man that the spirit can leave the body for brief periods during sleep. In the process of watching himself, the spiritual essence of Annenskii's persona separates itself from his being in ordinary life in the poem "The Double." The lyric "May" exemplifies hints at metempsychosis. Originally entitled "Glass," the poem introduces a windowpane as a suggestion of another world and another life through the reflection of this world, a world which is probably superimposed on the mirrored images from the room within. Admittedly, a slight distortion of images in the pane is physically possible through refraction. A scene is presented through the windowpane at sunset: the sky is aglow, the May day is thawing. The fire in the sky is mirrored in the dull glass. With the setting of the sun, a hint of other things emerges in stanza two:

> К нему прильнув из полутьмы,
> В минутном млеет позлащеньи
> Тот мир, которым были мы . . .
> Иль будем, в вечном превращеньи?
>
> Out of the dark, adhering to it,
> Dazed in an instant of gold,

There's the world, the one we were—
Or will be, in the last of all changes?

The glimpse here is that of the Beyond or of another eternal world. In Annenskii's poem "Out the Open Windows," initially entitled "On a Summer Eve," a window is again perceived as a conduit into imagination and a dream world. The enticing "lilac mist," beckoning through the window elsewhere in Annenskii, could be an offshoot from this imagery.

Metempsychosis, then, in Akhmatova's verse does not represent a maverick development. As usual, Pushkin and Annenskii have anticipated her to some extent with vague hints. The development and particular treatment, however, is entirely her own.[69]

CHAPTER SIX

Preliminary Metempsychosis of the First Type

Akhmatova's poems dealing with metempsychosis are preceded by pieces featuring preliminary metempsychosis of two types. The first type, like the few poems of Annenskii, remains amorphous in its portrayal. Allusions in it can be construed both as pertaining to Christian religion and to metempsychosis, as distinct from belonging to folklore and metempsychosis, or to other broadly pagan religions and to metempsychosis. The first type would not be singled out as bearing properties of metempsychosis, were it not for the progressively bald expressions of metempsychosis in the next two types. The themes for the first type are: meeting persons from the past through delirium and other means as well as praying for retention of memory. Animal transformations of the beloved or of friends remain vague. Incarnations of the persona are in human form. There are no specific identifying literary devices. The two preliminary types indicate transformation rather than incarnation with gradual intensification in the second type. The changes are mostly temporary. Conversely, metempsychosis proper, represented by six poems, always indicates reincarnation. Their examination will conclude Part Two.

The following poem (#91) is a good example of preliminary metempsychosis of the first type:

Умирая, томлюсь о бессмертьи,
Низко облако пыльной мглы . . .
Пусть хоть голые красные черти,
Пусть хоть чан зловонной смолы.

Приползайте ко мне, лукавьте,
Угрозы из ветхих книг,
Только память вы мне оставьте,
Только память в последний миг!

Чтоб в томительной веренице
Не чужим показался ты,
Я готова платить сторицей
За улыбки и за мечты.

Смертный час, наклонясь, напоит
Прозрачною сулемой.
А люди придут, зароют
Мое тело и голос мой.

Dying, I long for immortality;
The misty, dusty cloud hangs low—
No matter there be red naked devils
Or even a vat of stinking pitch.

Crawl to me, be cunning and sly,
You threats from old-time books;
But let me keep my memory;
At the last moment, leave me that.

So that you don't appear a stranger
In the insufferably long lines to come,
I'm willing to pay a hundred times over
For smiles and dreams.

The hour of death, bending low,
Will fill me with limpid sublimate,
And people will come to dig a hole
For my body and my voice.

The poem's message can be construed as a religious, Christian urge for immortality of the persona's soul. It will not eschew the death destined for her body and voice. Surprisingly, the burial of her voice precludes immortality for it by dint of her songs or poems. The possibility of a sojourn in hell with naked red devils and a caldron of malodorous tar fails to deter the persona. Personifying through appellation the threats in ancient books, she defies everything for the purpose of retaining her memory at the final moment with the objective of ensuring recognition of the addressee in the succession of faces to be recalled. The motif of the line of faces is evocative of the rapid recollections of a life-time that are reproduced in the mind of the condemned prisoner preceding the mock-execution in Dostoevskii's *Idiot*.[70] It should be emphasized that in the Hindu version of metempsychosis the retention of memory through various stages represents recompense for exemplary behavior.[71] There has to be something worth recalling and a time conducive to it. Importantly, in Akhmatova's long poem *Requiem* the persona says: "I must totally kill my memory" (#7). Tragic circumstances lead to a desire to liquidate memory. In the given poem the divergence between the persona and the poet allows the possibility of retaining memory. In *Requiem*, while

exhorting death to take her, the speaker, now more esthetic, as it were, details the various forms that death can assume to fulfill her deathwish. The persona's solution for death and for annihilating memory is through insanity, which will obviate taking memories with her into the "black valley" of death. Coincidentally, Nadezhda Mandel'shtam shows that liquidation of memory, the stupor of impassiveness, acts as a protection against the horrors of an unbearable life. She writes in her memoirs, *Hope Against Hope*: "Whether inside or outside the camps, we had all lost our memories" (379). Conversely, in this poem the determination of the lyrical ego to retain her memory up to the moment of death, and even later, can be interpreted as a wish to maintain a certain independence from the grave. From a religious standpoint the immortality sought cannot be forthcoming, should the soul enter the hell so vividly described. Metempsychosis is barely possible here if immortality is likely after hell—for souls in this belief can be purified in a similar place between successive stages of incarnations. The apostrophe to threats from ancient books represents an atypical device for preliminary metempsychosis.

Another way of meeting acquaintances from the past is through a burning fever, as in the poem "To fall properly ill, in a searing delirium" (#257):

Заболеть бы как следует, в жгучем бреду
Повстречаться со всеми опять,
В полном ветра и солнца приморском саду
По широким аллеям гулять.

Даже мертвые нынче согласны прийти,
И изгнанники в доме моем,
Ты ребенка за ручку ко мне приведи,
Так давно я скучаю о нем.

Буду с милыми есть голубой виноград,
Буду пить ледяное вино
И глядеть, как струится седой водопад
На кремнистое влажное дно.

To get terribly sick; in feverish madness
To meet everybody again;
To stroll the wide paths of a seaside garden
Filled with wind and sun:

Today even the dead have agreed to come,
And the exiles are in my house.

Bring me my child by the hand,
For I have been waiting so long.

I'll eat blue grapes with the people I love,
I'll drink some ice-cold wine,
And I'll watch the gray-haired waterfall
Stream down on the wet, flint stones.

Delirium is a means for initiates to a primitive religion to experience the requisite tribal spirits or to communicate with them. The state is achieved through fasting, through the infliction of pain and through feverish weakness. As the Soviet scholar Sokolova specifies in her book *The Cult of Animals in Religions*, the beings and hallucinations are evoked not only through fasting and suffering during primitive initiation, but also through torture (86–88). The poem above further treats the ritualistic religious and folk motif of partaking food and drink with the dead. A variant of the poem uses the singular number in its line nine to mark one beloved over many dear persons: "I will eat blue grapes with my loved one." The plurality introduced in the later version indicates that the dining will take place in the company of both the dead and the exiled. The addressee can presumably be living and could refer to the man of whom the speaker requests a visit with the child, ostensibly her own living progeny. Kees Verheul in the book *The Theme of Time in the Poetry of Anna Axmatova* perceives the addressee as Akhmatova's first husband Nikolai Gumilev, the father of their son Lev (25). Thus in a state of delirium the persona will participate in a meeting, unlikely under normal circumstances, in a place currently inaccessible to some of the guests.

In the poem "To fall properly ill, in a searing delirium" symbolism is attributed to the grape. According to Gertrude Jobes, the grape symbolizes exultation, fruitfulness, good cheer, good fellowship, intoxication, lust, pleasure and youth (I, 684). All are qualities that the persona is endeavoring to conjure up. On the other hand, it is interesting that in Christian tradition this fruit signifies resurrection thereby prefiguring the participation of the beloved in transformations in subsequent poems of the second type of preliminary metempsychosis and, specifically, in the poem "A New Year's Ballad," where the motif of dining with the deceased is developed without the motif of delirium. The image of the moon that opens the ballad is pivotal through its cyclical movement and its conduciveness to magic and the supernatural in folklore. The moon, notes Gertrude Jobes, is the ruler

of memory, of the soul or of the subconscious (II, 119). Several themes interpenetrate in the poem:

И месяц, скучая в облачной мгле,
Бросил в горницу тусклый взор.
Там шесть приборов стоят на столе,
И один только пуст прибор.

Это муж мой, и я, и друзья мои
Встречаем новый год.
Отчего мои пальцы словно в крови
И вино, как отрава жжет?

Хозяин, поднявши полный стакан,
Был важен и недвижим:
"Я пью за землю родных полян
В которой мы все лежим!"

А друг, поглядевши в лицо мое
И вспомнив бог весть о чем,
Воскликнул: "А я за песни ее,
В которых мы все живем!"

Но третий, не знавший ничего,
Когда он покинул свет,
Мыслям моим в ответ
Промолвил: "Мы выпить должны за того,
Кого еще с нами нет".

And the moon, lost in a cloud of mist,
Cast a glazed eye in the chamber:
There on the table stand places for six,
And only one place is empty.

There my husband, and I, and my friends,
Are seeing the New Year in.
Why do my fingers seem covered with blood,
And the wine burn like poison?

Lifting his brimming glass
The host was grave and still:
"I drink to the soil of our native fields
In which all of us come to lie!"

And a friend, catching sight of my face
And remembering Lord knows what,
Cried out, "And I, to her songs
In which we all find our lives!"

But still another, knowing nothing
At the time he left the world,
Uttered in answer to my thoughts,
"We ought to drink a toast
To the one who's not here yet."

The theme of music and the songs in which the persona and her beloved live, evocative of meeting in music for a nonmeeting, and the similes would ascribe this poem to the second type of preliminary metempsychosis. Interestingly, there is a place setting for a guest from the future. The notion brings to mind the later "person from the future" of the nonmeetings and the music. The structure of the poem enhances a folkloric setting through gradation in a trio. Indeed, each toaster drinks to something more progressively improbable in ordinary life: the first toasts the earth in which they are all lying, the second drinks to the poet's songs in which they live, and the third toasts somebody from the future.

In the lyric "The Last Return" (#408) the title could evoke metempsychosis for the last return in a series of incarnations. Oblique allusions to an absent male are conveyed through the lingering smell of tobacco. Still unclear is the question, whose return is this, his or hers? The impression created is that the persona adumbrates the parting during this final, seemingly ordinary meeting. The enveloping poisonous mist intimates that the returnee will never again depart or return. The poem vaguely echoes Akhmatova's later piece "But I warn you" (#351). There are three possible similes here, if the meaning of lines five and six is not "of," but "like," and if the verb is not impersonal but refers to *odinochestvo* (loneliness). Such a reading is more likely due to the word *tumantsem* (with fog). Dots, that sign of ineffability, and the singular position of *tumantsem* indicate that it could be a simile, that is the vehicle for the tenor of the simile, *odinochestvo*.

День шел за днем—и то и се
Как будто бы происходило
Обыкновенно—но чрез все
Уж одиночество сквозило.
Припахивало табаком,
Мышами, сундуком открытым
И обступало ядовитым
Туманцем . . .

Day followed day—one thing and another,
As if things were going on
As usual—but in fact loneliness
Shot through everything.
There was a smell of tobacco,
Of mice, of an opened trunk,
And embracing everything an acrid
Fog . . .

If the word *pripakhivalo* (smelled slightly) is construed not as an impersonal verb, but as the metaphoric predicate of *odinochestvo* from the first sentence, then *obstupalo* (was being surrounded) will easily assume the same meaning. In other words, the first verb sounds impersonal until the second verb emerges to cast doubt. The singular clipped rhythm of the final word *tumantsem* and ellipsis following it rivet the reader's attention, as does the enjambement in reciting. Accordingly, one begins to muse whether indeed the second sentence does not refer back to *odinochestvo* at least ambivalently, in spite of one's initial reaction. Should it be so, then *tabakom, otkrytym sundukom* and the peculiar *myshami* and *iadovitym tumantsem* would be similes. The last two, in particular, lend themselves readily to interpretation as comparisons and not as concretely present images. Loneliness would then assume alternate forms through its changes. The abstract concept would concretize through incarnation of likenesses as smell or objects. Thus the poem is of interest due to its incipient theme of return, to be taken up later elsewhere, and the possible metamorphoses of *odinochestvo*.

Bearing hints of metamorphosis into animal form and an annual return from the dead in the guise of birds, the next piece (#224) is of particular interest. The transformations appear to be of men, possibly several of the persona's lovers and close friends. Two appellations define them as her free friends; free in spirit after death, free in the form of birds—swans and a raven. An autobiographical rendition would show that the swans of Tsarskoe Selo were poets, Annenskii, Gumilev and others. Nikolai Otsup in his book *Literary Essays* enumerates the following poets as the "swans" of Tsarskoe Selo: Zhukovskii, Pushkin, Karamzin, Annenskii, Gumilev and Akhmatova (24). Gertrude Jobes identifies the swan with beauty, death, eternity, music, poetry and wisdom. Moreover, the bird is the "vehicle of the soul's journey to heaven, thus resurrection." It is also sacred to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. In Roman mythology, Cygnus

placed in the sky as a northern constellation. Obviously, the symbolism of the swan unites many of Akhmatova's prominent themes. The one from this group in the poem, who was shot and who kissed the persona, could be Gumilev. Albeit dated 1917 everywhere in the manuscripts, according to the Zhirmunskii edition, all poems from the collection *Plantain* that were not published separately in the press appeared in print for the first time as an appendix to the collection *Anno Domini* only in 1922. Gumilev was shot in 1921. This poem was not published in the press, hence the lingering suspicion of deliberate misdating by the author, who was known to change dates to avert censure.

И вот одна осталась я
Считать пустые дни.
О вольные мои друзья,
О лебеди мои!

И песней я не скличу вас,
Слезами не верну.
Но вечером в печальный час
В молитве помяну.

Настигнут смертною стрелой,
Один из вас упал,
И черным вороном другой,
Меня целуя стал.

Но так бывает: раз в году,
Когда растает лед,
В Екатеринином саду
Стою у чистых вод

И слышу плеск широких крыл
Над гладью голубой.
Не знаю, кто окно раскрыл
В темнице гробовой.

And now, I alone am left
To count the empty days.
O my liberated friends,
O swans, o swans of mine!

I can't recall you with a song;
I can't bring you back with tears;
But in the sad hour of evening
I'll remember you in prayer.

Struck by a fatal arrow
One of you went down,
And another turned as black as a crow,
Kissing me.

Still, now, once a year,
When the ice goes out,
I stand by the spring-clear water
In the Catherine Gardens

And hear the great wings slap
The glass-blue surface.
I don't know who threw the window open
In my prison-tomb.

Kees Verheul yokes this lyric with the poem "To My Beloved" (#189) in its address to the dead (22–23). Interesting is the ambiguous usage of *upal*—"fell down," rather than the poetic *pal*—"died," fell," to denote additionally a falling motion as if from the air which is appropriate for a bird. On the mythological and literary levels there exists in the persona the image of a woman who transforms her lovers into animals or brings misfortune to them in the form of death. In returning briefly to earth they all assume the form of birds, as illustrated by the mention of flapping wings. A version of Hades is implicit in the image of the sepulchral dungeon, probably their place of repose. In this context the persona is evocative of the goddess Ishtar from the Babylonian epic *Gilgamesh*, whose love the hero spurns. Gilgamesh meets Ishtar in Table Five of the epic. She has been defined as "the perfidious goddess of love, who transmogrifies her lovers into beasts—the well-known 'keeper of the beasts,' the Circe of Greek mythology" (119).

Another poem featuring the theme of bringing calamity to her lovers is "I brought death upon my loved ones" (#284). The power of her sultry love and her subsequent singing of it is to be feared, better for this beloved not to know her love nor to be featured in her song. Elsewhere the magical abilities of the speaker (*chary*) transform the lover into a swan, as in the poem "A swanlike wind is blowing." Furthermore, a remote echo may be discerned in the narrative poem "I am deadly for those who are loving and youthful" (#491), which is composed in the form of a long utterance by the Gamaiun, a mythical Russian creature of death that is half bird and half woman. The Gamaiun sings of remaining silent and even of dying that the young man may continue on his way and not be tempted to perish because

of it. Significantly, the singing creature is addressing the traveler, and hence the good intention of remaining silent is spurious at best, if not hypocritical. The two perorating narrative lines recount the veering of the traveler from his path. It becomes clear that the creature promises to be silent and in fact does not by virtue of the very song that it sings. Implicitly, the connection is made with the dangerous personas of Akhmatova that figure in some poems. Coincidentally, when Akhmatova visited the village of Slepnevo in 1911 a rumor circulated among the youth that she was a "London mummy" that brought misfortune upon all.[72] In their study "Akhmatova and Kuzmin" the Soviet scholars Timenchik and Tsiv'ian point out that the Egyptian connection is visualized through Cleopatra (234). Another factor for associating Akhmatova with an Egyptian is disclosed in the poet's reminiscences of the artist "Amadeo Modigliani."

> At that time [1911—S.K.] Modigliani was raving about Egypt. He would take me to the Louvre to see the Egyptian section, he assured me, that everything else, "tout le reste," was not worthy of attention. He used to draw my head in the attire of Egyptian queens and dancers . . .[73]

Modigliani perceiving Akhmatova as an Egyptian was slated to be part of "Tails" in the *Poem without a Hero*: "But he to me—his Egyptian woman."[74]

Type one of preliminary metempsychosis, then, is a relatively amorphous kind with the possibility of human, animal and other transformations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Preliminary Metempsychosis of the Second Type

The second type of preliminary metempsychosis spells out characteristics of metempsychosis. The transformations can involve the persona, the addressee, both of them or several intimated persons. Metamorphoses can be into plants, animals, objects or natural phenomena. They are of short duration and often for a purpose: to accomplish something more easily than in human form. Similes figure constantly, enhancing the duality and at times the plurality of the changes. The vehicles of the similes are most frequently connected with nature and animals. The implicit incompleteness of merging between the tenor and the vehicle of similes curbs, as it were, the intensification of metempsychosis. Time segments remain within the normal lifetime or allude tenuously to distant ages. This type is the most numerous and diverse in Akhmatova's poems. The examination of several poems will elucidate the possible variations that will develop into metempsychosis proper.

In the poem "Why do you pretend to be" (#154) ambivalence is introduced through the possible pretence of three transformations. The opening quatrain reads:

Зачем притворяешься ты
То ветром, то камнем, то птицей?
Зачем улыбаешься ты
Мне с неба внезапной зарницей?

Why do you pretend to be
The wind, a stone, a bird?
Why do you smile at me
Like a flash of heat-lightning?

Simulation of transformation on the part of the addressee would render the poem vague. The fourth line, however, unequivocally evinces a metaphoric simile, which nullifies the feigning quality of the first three changes. The transformations, it should be noted, are under-

gone by the addressee and not by the speaker. The three quasi-transformations may contain symbolic or metaphoric references. The wind would signify music, that is artistic creation, a bird can bear a message, if it is not merely one of the persona's transformed friends from a previous poem.[75] The rock brings to mind the white stone in the poem "Like a white stone" (#191), to be discussed below, which sublimates memory. The persona manifests a striving away from certain memories and toward the Muse by dint of which she can be expected to transform memories into art.

Evocative in title of "The Last Return," the poem "The First Return" (#53) in content appears to treat a straightforward return on a wintry holiday at dusk (morning or evening) following a five-year hiatus.

На землю саван тягостный возложен,
Торжественно гудят колокола,
И снова дух смятен и потревожен
Истомной скукой Царского Села.
Пять лет прошло. Здесь все мертво и немо,
Как будто мира наступил конец.
Как навсегда исчерпанная тема,
В смертельном сне покоится дворец.

A heavy shroud has been laid on the earth;
The bells solemnly toll;
Once more my spirit's upset and alarmed
At the dullness of Tsarskoe Selo.
Five years have passed. Everything's dead and dumb
Here, as if the end of the world had come.
Like an exhausted topic,
The palace lies in death-like sleep.

Nearly every line contains a death image, a statement of termination and heavy, as it were, immobility.[76] But the moribund landscape and two similes portend the prototype of imminent returns. The image "in mortal sleep rests the palace" reverberates in its frozen, exhausted quality with the vehicle of the simile, "like a theme exhausted once and for all." Death and silence in this ambience were first underpinned through the simile, "as if the end of the world had come." The contiguous, second simile with its seemingly literary vehicle focuses on an abstract exhaustion of life. It points to a past that has petrified. The opening image of the shroud anticipated the concluding imagery, although, initially, it appeared to be part of the solemn fes-

tivities. The only sounds are those of the solemn bells, which contradict the alleged lack of sounds "Everything here is lifeless and deathly-still." Instead the line points to a lack of voice. Only humans could be knelling the presumably heavy bells; the restful quietude of nature precludes the wind as the improbable cause of the ringing. Among the unanswered questions remains: Have five years elapsed from solemnity between the barrenness of the present, or has that much time passed since the last visit, left unspecified, which was not a return but an initial visit? Enumeration in the title implies the possibility of future returns, presumably, within the larger context of Akhmatova's verse. The title fits into her entire *oeuvre* through which it acquires clarity. Interestingly, bells were tolled in Russia during disasters, such as fires and snowstorms. If the bells in the poem are tolling during a snowstorm, then there would be continuity with the following poem written five years later.[77]

Both the persona and the addressee participate in transformations in the lyric "To My Beloved," which recreates a scene rife with whirling snow and ice. The whiteness of snow in Akhmatova, pursuant to Sam Driver in his *Anna Akhmatova,* symbolizes death (111). The poem "The First Return" instances this usage as well as the piece "Dying, I yearn for immortality" (#91), where death is associated with toxic white sublimate (*sulema*). The locale in "To My Beloved" is defined by Kees Verheul as Tsarskoe Selo (17). The time is the early years of the century at the time of writing with the guardhouses and barracks of the garrison at this location as early as the time of Catherine II.

Голубя ко мне не присылай,
Писем беспокойных не пиши,
Ветром мартовским в лицо не вей.
Я вошла вчера в зеленый рай,
Где покой для тела и души
Под шатром тенистых тополей.

И отсюда вижу городок,
Будки и казармы у дворца,
Надо льдом китайский желтый мост.
Третий час меня ты ждешь—продрог,
А уйти не можешь от крыльца
И дивишься, сколько новых звезд.

Серой белкой прыгну на ольху,
Ласочкой пугливой пробегу,

Лебедью тебя я стану звать,
Чтоб не страшно было жениху
В голубом кружащемся снегу
Мертвую невесту поджидать.

Don't send me a dove;
Don't write upsetting letters,
Don't blow in my face like March.
Yesterday I reached
Green Heaven, where there's release
For body and soul in the poplars' shade.

I look down on a town,
On palace sentry boxes and barracks,
On a yellow Chinese bridge over ice.
Waiting more than two hours for me
You're frozen but can't leave the porch
And keep marveling at all the new stars.

Like a gray squirrel, I'll jump to the alder;
Like a timid weasel, I'll run away,
Like a swan, I'll start calling you,
So the bridegroom won't be afraid
Of waiting in the swirling blue snow
For his dead bride.

The poem's composition is folkloric in manner with triple parallel imagery in the first and last stanzas. This imagery, coupled with the other nature and animal images, is characteristic of metempsychosis. To be sure, the acceptance of a philosophical aspect does not automatically exclude literary possibilities. Conversely, they coexist in Akhmatova's intricate verse. In the poem the lover-addressee is attempting to communicate with the awaited betrothed. In this type of poem, unlike those with metempsychosis proper, the lover is addressed obliquely through the title and by the second person singular. The fact that the persona is dead and yet is delineating the situation is alerting. The trifold magical means of communications faintly suggests transformation. The first two, the dove and the letter, are messengers of the lover. The dove can represent a personal message and the letter, his voice and thoughts. The wind is more complex. The metaphoric simile, "Do not blow in my face as the March wind," indicates at least temporary transformation of the lover. The impression is that he is prepared to undergo this form of transformation and did, in fact, assume it when she was living. The green paradise, en-

tered by the persona, is revealed as heavenly paradise. It could suggest a Christian, religious interpretation. On the other hand, the nature and animal imagery is more evocative of paganism. Negative parallelisms used in folklore are akin to the opening lines of the lyric.

Parallel to the three rejected messages, dispatched by pigeon, mail and brought personally under the guise of the wind, stand the three animal means by which the persona will communicate with her betrothed. The similelike instrumental case forms display greater assimilation of the denomination of the noun in the instrumental case than usage by dint of comparative adverbs.[78] Admittedly, these alternate forms may also serve to avert fright on the part of the beloved man in seeing his dead love. The persona is freer to contact the beloved. She comes from a calm environment providing peace for body and soul, while he is freezing in the whirling blue snow. The persona's three transformations are functional and transitory. The squirrel will leap swiftly onto the tree, the weasel will run furtively over land, and the swan will call out, although most swans are considered mute. The feminine grammatical gender is unusual for "lebed'"; it is used in folklore to designate the female of the species.[79] Pushkin employs "lebed' belaia" in his *Tale of Tsar Saltan*. These visual acrobatics notwithstanding, there is no assurance of the persona's appearance in human form.

The three negated means of the beloved communicating with the poet's speaker are vaguely reminiscent of Iaroslavna's lament to three powerful forces of nature in the Russian epic *The Lay of Igor's Campaign*, or simply *The Igor Tale*, and to her first address in particular: *veter vetrilo, Dnepr Slovutich, svetloe i tresvetloe solntse* (the wind, the Dnepr River, the thrice bright sun). The third stanza of Akhmatova's poem bears more similarity to *The Igor Tale*. The projected transformations of the persona are akin to Iaroslavna's supplication bearing the same future tense forms and animal instrumental case forms of comparison as a means of reaching her Prince Igor: "I will fly like a cuckoo along the Danube." Akhmatova's line "As a gray squirrel I will leap onto an alder tree" is reminiscent of one interpretation accepted by some scholars of *The Igor Tale*. The passage, which is on the bard Boian, reads: "rastekashetsia mysiiu po drevu," that is, "as a squirrel," as opposed to the more widely accepted version of "by thought." Thus in English it reads: "He ranges as a squirrel along the tree, as a gray wolf over the land, as a smoky-gray eagle beneath the clouds." The parallels in Akhmatova concern a squirrel

leaping through a tree, a ground animal running, and then a bird flying. The changes still remain of short duration, that is, they do not extend over the lifetime of each animal. In *The Igor Tale* Prince Igor undergoes transformations as an ermine, a golden-eye, a wolf and a falcon. Transformations are projected for Iaroslavna as well though her determination. In Akhmatova's poem "To My Beloved" the three means of communication of the lover conceivably indicate previous execution of these roles. Hence the persona forbidding him to do it now. Coincidentally, as in *The Igor Tale,* the possibility exists for both the male and the female to experience transformations. The parallel with Iaroslavna in the context of metempsychosis suggests personal familiarity between the two women, possibly through the speaker's experience in having lived in the princess's time in a previous life.

The transformations, which make possible the communication of the persona with her beloved, assume the form of sounds and a ray in the next poem.

Первый луч—благословенье бога—
По лицу любимому скользнул,
И дремавший побледнел немного,
Но еще покойнее уснул.

Верно, поцелуем показалась
Теплота небесного луча . . .
Так давно губами я касалась
Милых губ и смуглого плеча . . .

А теперь, усопших бестелесней,
В неутешном странствии моем,
Я к нему влетаю только песней
И ласкаюсь утренним лучом.

The sun's first ray—God's blessing—
Crossed the darling face,
And the sleeper paled slightly
But fell more soundly asleep.

The warmth of the ray, surely,
Seemed like a kiss . . .
Long ago my own lips brushed
Those sweet lips and tan shoulder.

Now hopelessly wandering,
More ghostly than the dead,
I fly to him as pure singing
And touch like the morning sun.

Here the cardinal image is that of the morning sunbeam sliding tangibly over the beloved's face, while it warms him as a kiss would. Emphasized by twofold expression is the ray's heavenly, nonterrestrial source: "the blessing of God," "the heavenly ray." The slight paling of the beloved demonstrates his awareness of a familiar phenomenon that allows him to fall asleep again more peacefully. The persona quickly leads to the source of the familiarity, a kiss. In the next seemingly unconnected sentence, which, in effect, is the tenor to the vehicle of the seeming kiss, the characteristic of the shoulder, furthermore, leaves little doubt that the persona had previously kissed the "dear lips." It dispels the ambivalence of *tak davno,* which can signify either "it was so long ago," which is not a simile, or, more likely, "in this way long ago," which is a simile.

The reason for a hiatus in showering the affection on the beloved and for assuming a new form is made clear in the final stanza in comparative form, inasmuch as the persona is more ethereal than the deceased. Her wandering is typical of a soul between stages of metempsychosis or for the brief transformations adopted by Akhmatova in poems of premetempsychosis for one or more personages. Unexpectedly at the end the reader discovers that the persona flies to her beloved as a song or that she caresses him as a morning ray, that is, she *is* the "first ray" of the opening stanza. A hint to the identity of the "first ray" lies in its description of "blessing." The same effective device of revelation, following a deliberate attempt to mislead, in the ultimate line is also utilized in the lyric "Like a white stone" (#191). The metamorphoses into a sunbeam and a song, albeit unusual for metempsychosis, fit well into Akhmatova's artistic reflection.

Furthermore, transformations can affect the addressee alone in some poems. The opening simile "Like a white stone," shown to be similar to a certain memory emanating through reflection from the persona's eyes, seems sufficiently complicated. Eulogized by the persona, this oxymoronic sorrow appears to constitute part of the recollection process:

Как белый камень в глубине колодца,
Лежит во мне одно воспоминанье.
Я не могу и не хочу бороться:
Оно веселье и оно—страданье.

Мне кажется, что тот, кто близко взглянет
В мои глаза, его увидит сразу.

Печальней и задумчивее станет
Внимающего скорбному рассказу.

Я ведаю, что боги превращали
Людей в предметы, не убив сознанья,
Чтоб вечно жили дивные печали.
Ты превращен в мое воспоминанье.

White as a stone deep in a well,
There's one thing I remember.
I can't and don't want to struggle:
That's good fun—but also painful.

I have the feeling that whoever looks
Directly into my eyes will see it.
He'll become sadder and more thoughtful
Than if hearing a tale of woe.

I know full well the gods used to change
People into animate things
So that wondrous sorrows would live on.
You've been changed into the thing I remember.

Stanza three exemplifies the repeated transformation of humans into objects by the gods in the past. Important is the fact that consciousness is retained throughout the stages. For Akhmatova this inanimate state preserves consciousness to perpetuate wondrous griefs. The final abrupt line renders the preceding lines of stanza three into a tacit comparison of the addressee with the white stone. If the memory is like a white stone and the addressee has been transformed into her recollection, then he is the tenor in the resulting complex simile with an equated, bipartite tenor and a single vehicle, the stone. An abstraction of the simile would read: he = recollection, which is like a white stone. The recollection, into which he has been transmuted, can be a vestige from a former life of hers where both of them were human. Now through the logistics of comparison it becomes evident that the addressee-beloved is like a stone. This stone, which in the speaker's belief has retained consciousness forever, appears to transmit its thoughts to the speaker. To be sure, stones can be possible stages of metempsychosis.[80] Akhmatova employs the image to connote commemoration in the poem "I will mark the day with a white stone" (#385).

The next poem (#265) brings in possible recollection from bygone centuries:

Хорошо здесь: и шелест, и хруст;
С каждым утром сильнее мороз,
В белом пламени клонится куст
Ледяных ослепительных роз.
И на пышных парадных снегах
Лыжный след, словно память о том,
Что в каких-то далеких веках
Здесь с тобой прошли мы вдвоем.

It's good to be here: There's rustling and crunching;
Every morning there's heavier frost;
A blindingly ice-covered rosebush
Bends low in white flame.
In the lovely, light snow
There's a ski track, like a reminder
That once, some ages ago,
We came here together.

Thematically, the poem continues the frozen immutable landscape of the lyric "The First Return." Again, the area seems to be adorned for a ceremonial: "And on the festive fluffy snows." A white diamond glitter emanating from snow and ice dominates the imagery: "in a white flame," "of icy dazzling roses"; they could be used to describe a brilliant diamond worn on a festive occasion. Correspondingly, memory is frozen and immutable. More time has elapsed since the previous five years of the earlier poem, reaching here a hyperbolic "remote ages." In terms of metempsychosis this time segment can be expected. These hints of metempsychosis hampered the poem's publication. Lidiia Chukovskaia in *Notes on Anna Akhmatova* reports a conversation with the poet with respect to the decision of Aleksei Surkov to delete this lyric from a collection that was being planned for publication:

> "Why does Aleksei Aleksandrovich want to delete "It is nice here: there is both rustle and crackle"? I asked in a quiet voice, restraining my anger.
>
> "Idealism," calmly replied Anna Andreevna from the bed.
>
> "The poem says: we passed here together in remote ages, but in reality this does not happen. Man lives in a definite age, and he cannot pass in remote ages neither together nor not together. It is idealism."
>
> "Did you guess that by yourself, or did Surkov explain it to you?"
> "By myself." (II, 35–36)

The author's voluntary observation focuses attention on the motif of

living in the past, distant centuries, demarcating it from any chance figurative usage.

Memories in this frozen wonderland have become so brittle that they are tangible; accordingly, the poet's comparison is hard and textured, as it were, in its tenor "ski track." Both the persona and the beloved are involved in the possible metempsychosis here. The petrification of memory through the simile notwithstanding, the setting is not devoid of movement and at least a semblance of life. While "crackle" could be the result of severe frosts that make branches crackle and "rustle" could imply wind, by the same token, they could intimate movement by some creatures and even by man. Emphasized in this poem is the affinity between fire and ice, or snow, a prevalent theme in Baroque literature, in metaphors where the tenor and the vehicle of a simile merge through the will of the speaker, A = B. Both fire and ice, albeit extreme opposites in terms of temperature, burn and can be blinding to the eye. The blinding effect of the sun shining on the snow is well known. While striving to merge the two phenomena through imagery, Akhmatova juxtaposes them: "in a white blaze" is reminiscent of extreme white-heat; "of icy dazzling roses" combines through the rose's implicit, most general color, redness (although white, pink and yellow roses exist) and heat with sparkling cold. Adequate heat generates life whereas excess heat or a lack of it terminates life. One recalls the Phoenix, insofar as a rose, like fire, emblemizes regeneration.[81] Cold equals the death of intermediate stages in metempsychosis. Interestingly, Zinaida Gippius speaks of cold fire in her poems "If" and "Shoal." The source of the cold flame derives from the eighth circle of Dante's Purgatory, as pointed out by Marcia Rose Satin in her unpublished dissertation "Akhmatova's 'Shipovnik tsvetet': A Study of Creative Method" (208).

The following poem (#350) stands fourth in the cycle "In 1940," containing five poems written in 1940. In the cycle it is followed by the programmatic poem on metempsychosis "But I warn you," to be discussed later.

Уж я ль не знала бессонницы
Все пропасти и тропы,
Но эта как топот конницы
Под вой одичалой трубы.
Вхожу в дома опустелые,
В недавний чей-то уют.
Все тихо, лишь тени белые

В чужих зеркалах плывут.
И что там в тумане—Дания,
Нормандия или тут
Сама я была ранее,
И это—переиздание
Навек забытых минут?

I thought I knew all the canyons
And pathways of insomnia,
But this one's like the hoofbeats of cavalry
Urged on by a wild bugle's wail.
I walk into vacant houses
Recently people's homes.
All's quiet. There are only white shadows
Floating in other people's mirrors.
What's behind the fog—Denmark,
Normandy, or here
Where I myself have been?
And is this a re-edition
Of minutes forgotten once and for all?

Here the characteristic simile of the premetempsychosis type combines with a question and a rhetorical question, typical of poems on metempsychosis proper. The thematics does not transgress beyond the antecedent type. During insomnia, much like during sleep, the spirit, or being, wanders away from the body, which is possible in metempsychosis. Foreign countries, ostensibly never visited by Akhmatova, are evoked with the intimation that unspecified current events are a reiteration of perennially forgotten minutes. These moments could conceivably be from World War I, given the cavalry simile and the time of writing, pre-World War II for the Soviet Union but with war raging in Europe: "No eta kak topot konnitsy / Pod voi odichaloi truby." The simile produces a dual image of insomnia with the tossing woman or her imagination, that is, pictures in her head, as opposed to the compared cavalry which is an army and, hence, an oblique reference to the pivotal source of insomnia, World War II. On the other hand, the hyperbolic adverb "forever" could intimate memories from former lives.

In yet another poem where music is discussed, premetempsychosis can be achieved through melody. Music, a medium for nonmeetings and creativity in Akhmatova, often connotes additionally poetic ere-

ation. The poem bearing the title "Music" (#452) is dedicated to the composer Dmitrii Shostakovich.

В ней что-то чудотворное горит,
И на глазах ее края гранятся.
Она одна со мной говорит,
Когда другие подойти боятся.
Когда последний друг отвел глаза,
Оне была со мной в моей могиле
И пела словно первая гроза
Иль будто все цветы заговорили.

Some miracle-working thing burns in it,
And its edges shape their limits before my eyes.
It's the only one that speaks to me
When every other thing's afraid of coming close.
When my last friend turned his eyes away,
It was beside me in my grave
And burst into song like the first thunderstorm
Or like all the flowers suddenly speaking.

By means of two alternative vehicles the concluding simile describes the ability of music to sing; music sang like a thunderstorm or also like talking flowers. Music is envisioned as internally conflagrant: "In it something wonder-working burns." Moreover, it has a glassy brilliant surface akin to a diamond or crystal glass which resembles ice, the opposite of fire. Due to ambiguity, "before my eyes its sides facet" can be construed either as "shine like a diamond" or as "before my eyes its sides become faceted," that is, it, like crystal, assumes this shape through its glitter. On the other hand, the image can be explained as figurative speech: music remains faithful to the persona during a nadir in life when the last friend has abandoned her. By contrast, comparisons of music's melody with nature, not only with a thunderstorm replete with noise, light and water, but with talking flowers having colors and geometrical form corresponding to music, fit this lyric into the pattern of preliminary metempsychosis as evolved by Akhmatova. Metempsychosis is implied for the persona in the form of a resurrection: "It was with me in my grave," seeing that because of the past tense of the verb she is no longer there. The variant to this poem that appeared in the periodical *Literature and Life* bears no hint of metempsychosis for the persona in lines two through seven.[82] Thus at one point qualities of metempsychosis were underscored by the poet or her editor, while at another time they were

obliterated. Curiously, in publishing the version accepted in the Zhirmunskii edition as the main one, the one with reincarnation, Struve terms it the "primary version," commenting that "in *The Course of Time* Akhmatova most frequently returns to the earlier versions of her former poems."[83] Assuming that this is the earlier version, the trend in Akhmatova was to publish the version representing metempsychosis, as with the previous poem. In my opinion, it is the version accepted as final by the poet. The primacy of one version over the other is not postulated in the Zhirmunskii edition; therefore, their sequence can be determined only through scrupulous consideration of the manuscripts in the Soviet Union and, possibly, through discussion with friends of Akhmatova.

The lyric, entitled "From the Cycle 'Tashkentian Pages' " (#463), of which only the first four stanzas are quoted here, depicts a meeting, as in nonmeeting, through misty music, dreams and memory. They serve as the medium for nonmeetings.

В ту ночь мы сошли друг от друга с ума,
Светила нам только зловещая тьма,
Свое бормотали арыки,
И Азией пахли гвоздики.

И мы проходили сквозь город чужой,
Сквозь дымную песнь и полночный зной,—
Одни под созвездием Змея,
Взглянуть друг на друга не смея.

То мог быть Стамбул или даже Багдад,
Но увы! не Варшава, не Ленинград,
И горькое это несходство
Душило, как воздух сиротства.

И чудилось: рядом шагают века,
И в бубен незримая била рука,
И звуки, как тайные знаки,
Пред нами кружились во мраке.

That night we drove each other wild.
The ominous dark was our only light.
The water gurgled in the irrigation ditches.
And the carnations smelled of Asia.

We kept passing through an alien city.
Through smoky singing and midnight heat
Alone beneath the starry Dragon,
Not daring to glance at each other's face.

Istanbul maybe, or even Baghdad
It could have been, but not Warsaw, not Leningrad.
That bitter unlikeness
Was choking, like the air in an orphanage.

And it seemed the ages were marching beside us,
An invisible hand beat the tambourine,
And the sounds, like mysterious signs,
Swirled through the dark up ahead.

A preponderance of ominous epithets—"ominous darkness," "smoky song," "mysterious mist"—coexist with a relativity of time made tangible through metaphor: "side by side / nearby were marching the ages." The impression is similar to people in a moving vehicle where the scenery seems to speed past, or the centuries could be marching alongside with them. More likely, only time moves on whereas the two of them appear unchanged to the speaker. Even the darkness evinces a certain relativity in its extremeness through the oxymoron in line two. There is an abundance of similes treating Asian themes and, by correspondence, the themes of wandering and of orphans, which reflect Akhmatova's vision of her sojourn in Central Asia as an evacuee during the war: "the carnations smelled of Asia"; "the moon like a diamond felucca";[84] "as if we were going along no man's land"; "it stifled, like the air of orphanhood"; "and sounds, like secret signs." Obviously, these similes do not represent metempsychosis. The mention of foreign cities, Istanbul (Cairo in an earlier version) and Baghdad, which are exotic for a Russian, in the same vein as Central Asia, adds an itinerant fairytale quality. Travel figures fairly prominently in metempsychosis. The moon and the Stars of Draco, in suggesting their respective symbolism, contribute to the evocation of nonmeeting. A paradoxic "meeting-separation" at night through the music is implied in stanza four.

The following two poems, although belonging to the preliminary type, incline strongly toward metempsychosis proper in certain respects. Similes and moderate explicitness, however, relegate the piece "From an Italian Diary: Mechelli" (#597) to the antecedent, second type. Rhetorical questions move it closer to metempsychosis proper. The involvement of both the persona and the beloved in reincarnation determines its consignment to the preliminary type.

Мы по ошибке встретили год—
Это не тот, не тот, не тот . . .

Что мы наделали, боже, с тобой.
С кем еще мы поменялись судьбой?
Лучше б нас не было на земле,
Лучше б мы в небесном кремле.
Летели, как птицы, цвели, как цветы,
Но все равно были—я и ты.

We greeted the New Year by mistake—
Wrong one, wrong one, wrong one . . .
Lord, look at what we've done to you.
And who else have we swapped fates with?
Better if we didn't exist;
Better to be in heaven's citadel;
Better to fly like birds and bloom like flowers
But all the same be—you and me.

Here, to the speaker's horror, she and her beloved have again exchanged their fate with others. The sentence "with whom else have we exchanged our fate?" embodies hints of exchange even prior to the present trade. Consequently, there are hints of at least three lifetimes.[85] Their form in these metamorphoses appears to be human, which is further illustrative of metempsychosis proper. It does not exclude incarnations as other beings, possible in the preliminary types of metempsychosis in Akhmatova. The persona expresses preference over this presumably human life in favor of floral or faunal form in a celestial kremlin as birds or flowers. It will be recalled that souls in incarnation remain immutable throughout the various forms, which means that the two enjoyed human consciousness, if not form and freedom. The direct address in the poem, illustrative of metempsychosis proper in Akhmatova, with its second person pronoun, while possibly referring to God, could, conversely, denote an interjection—"Lord!" Then too the *s toboi* (with you) would be a neglected person, presumably from the past, one of the persons involved in this exchange of fates. In my opinion, the more felicitous translation is not "God, what have we done with you?" but rather "Lord, what have you (thou—singular) and I done?" Such an interpretation would involve the speaker and a single addressee.

The poem "They will forget?—what a surprise!" combines similes—"She decomposed in the earth as a grain"; "like the Phoenix . . . to arise from the ashes"—with hyperbolic time: "I have been forgotten one hundred times." It continues the motifs of the earlier

poem "Dying I yearn for immortality" with its image of the persona-poet possibly lying in her grave. Here the mood turns militant.

Забудут?—вот чем удивили!
Меня забывали сто раз,
Сто раз я лежала в могиле,
Где, может быть, я и сейчас.

А Муза и глохла и слепла,
В земле истлевала зерном,
Чтоб после, как Феникс из пепла,
В эфире восстать голубом.

They'll forget? What a surprise!
I've been forgotten a hundred times;
I've lain in my grave a hundred times—
Where maybe I am even now.

The Muse has turned deaf and blind
And rotted in the earth like a seed,
So, like Phoenix out of ashes,
She'll rise in the bright blue sky.

Importantly, the Muse is associated with the Phoenix through a simile. Added to this poem in comparison with "Dying, I yearn for immortality" is the notion of recurrence of the event. True, it could be construed as hyperbole, as in some of the poet's other lyrics, and could be corroborated through the biographical aspect of life, as opposed to the artistic, when she was relatively silent in the twenties and thirties; however, in the poem the second line belies an exclusive interpretation of this kind. If the persona lies in her grave, she should be in a stage between lives. The parenthetical word "perhaps" signifying doubt, in Akhmatova's terms, often connotes definiteness in questioning and really knowing the answer in an unobtrusive way. An example of this device in Akhmatova is her poem "Pushkin" ("Who knows what glory is"; #344).

The notion of cycles in nature, of birth and rebirth in death, is observed in this poem. The deafened and blinded Muse, transmuting in the ground like a grain preparing to sprout, parallels the cycles of stages undergone by the persona. To an extent it echoes the Adonis myth along with other possibilities.[86] The result of change was regeneration in the blue ether for the persona, which could signify an intermediate place prior to return to earth. Owing to the cyclical processes of death and rebirth as well as the additional meaning of

tlenie (to smoulder), a connection can be drawn with the mythical bird, the Phoenix, that in its old age would ignite itself periodically to be reborn from its own ashes with renewed vitality and youth. The concept of rejuvenation through ignition is central to fire imagery in Akhmatova where it performs the role of a cleansing element. Also noteworthy is the fact that in most versions of the myth this bird is alleged to have flown from Arabia to Egypt; it would rejuvenate itself approximately every five hundred years. And the Muse is compared to the Phoenix bringing in further possibilities for Akhmatova's "dusky" Muse, as she is called elsewhere. Her darkness and her "African" connection suggest closeness to Pushkin. It will be recalled, that several times in her youth Akhmatova was envisioned as an Egyptian. In the next poem the speaker will mention a comparable long time period—about seven hundred years.

Thus the extensive use of similes in the preliminary, second type of metempsychosis promotes the largely temporary condition of the transformations. Similes are tenuous, amorphous in representation through their vehicles. A simile suggests two juxtaposed images in immediate proximity between which the mind's eye keeps fluctuating in the course of mental comparison. It serves as a suitable conduit for rendering transience. By contrast, the images suggested by metaphors, which occur occasionally in the poems with metempsychosis, are stable pictures that encompass one in the other owing to the equational properties of the images illustrated by them. Hence this figure of speech is more appropriate for rendering transformations of longer duration for the persona.[87]

CHAPTER EIGHT

Metempsychosis Proper

In poems embodying metempsychosis proper the themes and imagery of participating in previous lives are quite explicit. Metempsychosis concerns the persona mainly and only rarely includes the addressee. For the persona it is only of the human type and mostly approaching its ultimate stage. Similes and metaphors, though frequent, are optional. Characteristic are questions, especially rhetorical ones, apostrophes and inordinate lengths of time that cannot fit into one human lifetime. Represented by six published poems, this type cancels any lingering doubts about the poet's use of metempsychosis. The chronology of the poems bespeaks the intensification of reincarnation as the theme and its development in the direction of explicit human incarnations. Nonhuman transformations figure in the form of negation, as in the poem "But I warn you."

Vast periods of time fall within the speaker's experience in the poem "No, that did not happen to me":

Нет, это было не со мной.
С тех пор прошли тысячелетья,
И смыло шумною волной
Все то, за что была в ответе.

И все минулось. Как в чаду,
В водовороте дней безликих
Опять сквозь сотню лет пройду
Ловить мелькающие блики.[88] 1/XI-1961

No, that never happened to me.
Thousands of years have passed since then,
And everything I was accountable for
Was washed away in a thundering wave.

And was gone. As if in a smoky haze,
I'll again step through a hundred years
In the eddying whirl of faceless days
To catch the coruscating lights.

In this poem the abject persona rejects something dismal in her past,

a past removed from the present by millennia and a loud tidal wave of events. Whatever this enigma was and however unflattering her own role in it, she now apparently feels absolved of responsibility for it due to some subsequent traumatic, or dramatic events experienced. The speaker thus no longer wants to feel guilty of whatever it was in the past. Memory, however, is relentless as a persecutor. The length of time involved—the past millennia and a hundred years currently stretched out before her in the immediate future—bespeaks several, indeed numerous, past lifetimes with at least one more to go. The poem features no questions or rhetorical questions, only an emphatic denial opening the poem with great force, a force so strong that its residue will light up, despite the smokiness implicit in *v chadu*, the next hundred years at least occasionally. To be sure, the speaker's denial of guilt is not logical, for her negation does not rule out the events; she insists: It did not happen to me, because much time has passed (?) and something turbulent has wiped away that reality or its traces.

The opening sentence evokes a poem from *Requiem*, part of which was published in the Zhirmunskii edition "No, it is not I, it is someone else suffering" (#316). In both instances through self-negation the speaker achieves disassociation, as it were, from her own body and memory. The result is a negative sort of *sogliadataistvo* (spying on oneself), precisely because it was herself in another life—whether it be figurative, a happy life where she knew no suffering, as in "No, it is not I"—or literal, as in a previous life in another time thousands of years away, as in the poem under discussion. The past incarnation or incarnations and that implied for the future one hundred years are to be in the form of a human.

Like the poems of premetempsychosis of the second type, this poem contains a simile, *kak v chadu*, which advances fire imagery with hope for the future, as do *bliki*. Unlike metempsychosis proper, there is no apostrophe here.

Important upheavals, whether political or otherwise, are portrayed through water imagery, which, conceivably, washes and sweeps everything away: *I smylo shumnoiu volnoi*; and for the future: *v vodovorote dnei*. Expectations are not optimistic or happy if the days are "faceless," as in a prison, or the speaker is tired of her incarnations.

From the cycle "The Moon in Zenith" comes the second example (#374).

Я не была здесь лет семьсот,
Но ничего не изменилось . . .
Все так же льется божья милость
С непререкаемых высот.

Все те же хоры звезд и вод,
Все так же своды неба черны,
И так же ветер носит зерна,
И ту же песню мать поет.

Он прочен, мой азийский дом,
И беспокоиться не надо . . .
Еще приду. Цвети, ограда,
Будь полон, чистый водоем.

I haven't been here some seven hundred years,
But nothing has changed . . .
God's grace still pours down
From irrefutable heights;

There are the same choruses of sea and stars;
Heaven's vault is just as black;
The wind still carries seeds along;
And the mother's song's the same.

My Asian house stands firm—
No need to worry—
I'll come again. Blossom, hedge;
And you, pure reservoir, be full.

Already the title of the cycle conjures up magical possibilities ascribed to the moon during primitive and magical rites. On the other hand, this image could be construed as mere artistic usage. The full moon achieves the highest point in the sky, a true zenith, as distinct from other phases when the moon circles the sky closer to the earth's horizon. The most powerful magic, obviously, is worked at midnight when the moon is full. The image of the presumably full moon fits well in this poem with its intimations of metempsychosis. The opening statement, " I have not been here for about seven hundred years," could be ignored as hyperbole or construed as the time when Akhmatova's Tatar ancestors raided the locale, were it not for the encircling penultimate assertion: "I will come again"—and for the fact that astrologists have consigned to the moon a united intelligence which causes memories to be carried from one incarnation to another by the subconscious mind.[89] Repetition underscores the visitations

and the unusual time factor, which a single lifetime cannot encompass. Metempsychosis is invoked to accentuate the permanency of nature and the possibility of the Asian way of life. Instrumental in emphasizing the older is the obsolete form of the adjective *aziiskii* (Asiatic) in lieu of the expected *aziatskii* (Asian). Spatial nature ensures the continuum of tradition and of life: "choruses of stars and waters"; "the domes of heaven are black." Next the delineation approaches life and hints of man: "the wind carries grain." Symbolically, the wind equals music, which in turn evokes poetry. It will be recalled that the grain signified a transformation through simile of the Muse in the lyric "They will forget?—what a surprise!" By coalescing the two images through the wind carrying grain, the combined implications prepare the ground for the song of the mother. The continuum of generations is secured through the same lullaby sung traditionally by a mother. The ultimate sign of cyclical permanence is the promise of the persona's return, ostensibly in another seven hundred years, by virtue of reincarnation. The image of the moon with its implicit cycles of waning and waxing parallels other cyclical occurrences in nature as well as in this poem.

The poem utilizes only a semblance of similes; there are what could be termed quasi-similes, as distinct from similes. A simile invests different properties on the tenor and the vehicle; they are compared but never equalled, $A \neq B$. Their similarity is decreed by the speaker, A is like B. In a quasi-simile the tenor fails to equal the vehicle only to the extent that there is temporal inconvergence, but in all other ways they are virtually identical. In the lyric quasi-similes figure in lines three, five, six, seven and eight. The entire progression in these extended similes conveys the notion that things do not change in significant terms.

The image of the lynx, attributed to apostrophized Asia, retains its link to primitive religions and to metempsychosis in metaphoric form.

Это рысьи глаза твои, Азия.
Что-то высмотрели во мне,
Что-то выдразнили подспудное.
И рожденное тишиной,
И томительное, и трудное,
Как полдневный термезский зной.
Словно вся прапамять в сознание
Раскаленной лавой текла.

Словно я свои же рыдания
Из чужих ладоней пила.

You with your lynx-like eyes, Asia,
Saw something special in me,
Teased out something I had hidden,
Something that was born of silence,
Insufferable and recalcitrant
Like the heat of the Termez midday sun,
As if my whole pre-memory flowed
Like molten lava into my mind,
As if I were drinking my own tears
From some stranger's palms.

Through the penetrating faculties of lynx eyes Asia produces a reviving effect on Akhmatova's memory. An association of such eyes with slanted narrow Uzbek eyes is intimated. The eyes conjure up the persona's protomemory, much like the cumulative memory of many generations, ascribed to Pythagoras in metempsychosis. The consciousness of her Tatar background is stirred in Akhmatova. A person having lynxlike eyes can have more in common with the beast or he could be this animal in an incarnation. Thus in this poem of metempsychosis the metaphor carries the weight of animal imagery, whereas the similes are freed to convey other concepts. However, they retain their connection with metempsychosis through the motif of protomemory in one of the similes. The similes are associated with fire and water, that is, the elements, and with human consciousness and emotions. The sultry day portrayed melts solid things, lending motion and fierceness as well as the implicit tragedy of Pompeii in lines seven and eight. The agitated movement of memory precipitates, as it were, heat. The result is a double simile. Next the vicissitudes of memory and the bitterness of recollection afford the comparison of tears with drinking water in the last two lines. The generated recollections remain unspecified outside the realm of similes and are referred to twice through intensifying anaphora as *chto-to* (something). Apparently Akhmatova paraphrased a common image in the perorating lines to render it strange. A case in point is the extended metaphor within the simile here that can be compared with the familiar saying *nakhlebat' goria* (to quaff grief) and its distortion by Akhmatova *ia nakhlebala slez* (I quaffed tears). The transition is gradual when considered within the broader context of Akhmatova's verse.[30]

The poem "Afterword to 'The Leningrad Cycle' " (#549) posits

rhetorical questions, the first two of them bearing similarity to equations, and a direct address to an abstract concept, personified for greater emphasis. Admittedly, it brings to mind the folkloric image in old Russian literature of Misery-Luckless-Plight. In time this poem also spans millennia, from its first line indicating the Crucifixion of Christ to the second implying the drowning of the English poet Shelley, who is important elsewhere in Akhmatova as well and, finally, to the present bitter existence of the speaker.[91] The final stage encompasses all time, the present in particular.

Разве не я тогда у креста,
Разве не я тонула в море,
Разве забыли мои уста
Вкус твой, горе!

Wasn't I then at the Cross?
Didn't I drown in the sea?
Have my lips ever forgotten
What you taste like, grief?

The personification of apostrophized sorrow yokes it with the images of grief in the preceding poem. In fact, grief is metaphorized. From drinking tears to the idiom that implies drinking grief (*nakhlebat' goria*), the association can be made of drowning in a sea of tears and then again metaphorically in a sea of grief. Interestingly, in the thirties Marina Tsvetaeva used the extended metaphor of a sea of tears in her cycle "Poems to Bohemia," specifically in the first poem of the opening cycle "September":

. . . Одно лишь горе:
Нет у чехов—моря.
Стало чехам—море
Слез: не надо соли!

. . . One thing causes grief:
The Czechs have no sea.
So their sea is all tears;
No need to add salt.

Elsewhere in Akhmatova drinking is intimated for grief in the image conveyed by the title of a planned cycle "Kubok goria" ("Cup of Grief").[92] Further, through association of *gore* with *gor'kii* an allusion is made with *iad* (poison) and *odur'* (toxin), which connote poetry and poetic creation, as in the poems "Teacher" and "Ode to Tsarskoe

Selo," with the poetic legacy of one generation to another as a new facet to the piece. The stages of metempsychosis, implied through the persona's experiences and the duplication of feats or acts, are the result of negated assertion, a device espoused by Akhmatova. In poems of metempsychosis a considerable continuum of themes and imagery is observed. One seems to ensue from the other.

The experiences of the speaker over the ages are further specified in the lyric "The Last Rose" (#480):

Мне с Морозовою класть поклоны,
С падчерицей Ирода плясать,
С дымом улетать с костра Дидоны,
Чтоб с Жанной на костер опять.

Господи! Ты видишь, я устала
Воскресать, и умирать, и жить.
Все возьми, но этой розы алой
Дай мне свежесть снова ощутить.

I ought to genuflect with Morozova,
To do the dance that Herod's stepdaughter does,
To fly up with the smoke from Dido's fire,
To be at the stake again with Joan.

Lord! You see, the thing is, I'm worn out
By all the resurrection, death and life.
Take everything, but let me feel
Once more the freshness of this red, red, rose.

In this poem the speaker has experienced through poetic metempsychosis several famous lives as a cohort or possible double of at least four historical or literary women, whose lives were marked by violence for them and often for others as well: Dido, Salome, Morozova and Joan of Arc.[93] Given the burning at stake of the last two women and the persona's remarkable capacity for weathering calamities with them, the legend of the Phoenix comes to mind. Endemic to this kind of metempsychosis is the apostrophe *gospodi* (Lord). The strange juxtaposition of an address to a Judeo-Christian God with a request, characteristic of primitive religion or of metempsychosis for the taking of her life and for providing rebirth, will find its resolution in the final poem to be discussed. The persona's supplication for ending the reincarnation process, in which she is involved, will be granted there. Here, on the other hand, the persona desires one final life or, more likely, also an ultimate spiritual immortality after this terminal life.

Granted one final life, she will undoubtedly compress the beauties of the present for fleeting enjoyment through the rose. The choice of a rose as a flower is not random, for Lehner contends:

> The rose which originated in Asia Minor, is one of the oldest in cultivation. It was grown five thousand years ago in the ancient gardens of western Asia and north-eastern Africa. Roses have been mentioned in every poetical work since the dawn of civilization.[94]

For the persona, who has experienced life over a span of millennia, this flower provides a link between the changes in her incarnations; it represents a kind of stability from the time of Herod, when this flower was known, to the twentieth century. Similarly, for the poet the use of the rose as a continuum in poetry affords solace. Moreover, roses, as well as fire, in the Greek tradition are connected with immortality.[95] Burning at stake eventuates in a return to a new life deplored by the persona who has experienced such returns numerous times. In fact, she probably desires the red rose for the symbolism attached to Christian immortality, as distinct from metempsychosis. The poem contains no similes, but the delineation of participation in the lives of four successive women is construed as a comparison of sorts if not as direct equation.

While all six poems bearing metempsychosis were created in Akhmatova's later period, the one that seems to have suffused all the main precepts and concepts, employed by her chronologically, preceded the other dated pieces. The result is as if the poet had mapped out the possibilities before embarking on the variations. Indeed, it is reminiscent of the Roman poetic practice where the first poem in a collection of verse is particularly noteworthy. However, it was usually the last poem written in chronological sequence, unlike Akhmatova in this case. The first poem in a collection was often synoptical, as in Akhmatova's case. But Akhmatova goes further and provides the last stage in metempsychosis in her poem.[96] It will be recalled that the poems on premetempsychosis were basically written in a sequence of sorts, mainly in the early years, but with some poems composed in the later period when the total picture of metempsychosis in her verse had acquired more definite shape.

Но я предупреждаю вас,
Что я живу в последний раз.
Ни ласточкой, ни кленом,
Ни тростником и ни звездой.

Ни родниковою водой,
Ни колокольным звоном—
Не буду я людей смущать
И сны чужие навещать
Неутоленным стоном.[97]

But I warn you:
This is the last time I live.
As swallow, maple,
Reed, star, spring
Or even as the sound
of Sunday church bells,
I won't embarrass others
Or enter people's dreams
Like an inconsolable moan.

From the same cycle "In the Nineteen Forties" as an earlier poem discussed above, this poem marks the end of all transformations for this persona. Conceivably, through experience and suffering, eulogized above, she has expunged all possible sins and misdemeanors. The speaker is assured of not being reborn, having been liberated from what is deemed, as noted by George Foot Moore in *Metempsychosis,* the vicious cycle of metempsychosis.[98]

For Akhmatova metempsychosis reaches its thematic apogee here. In terms of explicitness it is the single most salient example of metempsychosis in this poet. Lacking a single addressee, it reaches many people through the pronoun "you," which could encompass the entire readership. The numerous incarnations undergone by the persona in the past, that is, in previous poems, are amply represented for this short piece through negation of the seven incarnations that she has experienced in the past. Grammatically, they are presented by means of the instrumental case, which intensifies the comparisons more than conjunctions, such as *kak* and *slovno* (like). These changes are not merely similes nor comparisons. The first six transformations seem to have used the waking hours to disturb people. The persona's form of unsatiated moan, an image not taken from nature, which is used in visitations of the dreams of others, brings in the notion of nonmeeting. The choice of inanimate incarnations as a star, spring water, the tolling of bells, suspiciously present in earlier poems, and the abstracted moan diverge from Hindu and Greek philosophy, which contains animate incarnations exclusively. Some of the forms assumed by the speaker suggest a concurrent symbolism, such as the swallow as bearer

of glad tidings, the reed as a symbol of literature and music, among other possibilities.

In summation, it can be stated that Akhmatova's use of metempsychosis for the persona in selected poems serves several definite purposes: it extends the speaker's firsthand experiences beyond the limits of one lifetime, one person and few places; it enables the persona and sometimes her addressee to employ temporary transformations into animals and objects to further certain objectives; it adds hints of ancient Greek philosophy and Buddhist religion. The changes in the persona become clear through this additional facet. In her early verse there are several variegated personas, including a few males. In the later verse several of the various personas fuse into one, which reduces the total number of different personas, some of which were the closest ever to Akhmatova the poet. The merging into fewer personas can be viewed as a certain parallel to the one speaker in specific poems now attaining the ultimate blissful human state of no return in metempsychosis. Moreover, as a poet Akhmatova had forged her own new and unique voice, the final expression of which she had sought fervently after her initial success. This voice drew more heavily on the poetic and cultural legacy of many generations and of all times as only a mature poetry can achieve. Akhmatova the poet employs allusions and subtexts, double and possibly multiple, particularly in the later period. They are taken from other poets and writers; self-quotations are relatively infrequent. Indeed, if the *oeuvre* of each poet is construed as one lifetime in the ongoing process of literature, then reverberations of other writers in the works of Akhmatova represent, as it were, an incorporation of other lives into her poetry. Metempsychosis for the persona parallels usage by Akhmatova the poet of allusions and subtexts. Consequently, the persona expands her experiences, while the poet extends the limits of her own verse. Metempsychosis as well as intertextuality, which will be discussed below, remain important literary devices for this poet.

PART THREE

The Transformation of Literary Legacy into Poetry

CHAPTER NINE

Imitation as Poetic Mode

All the Acmeists, Nikolai Gumilev, Osip Mandel'shtam, Vladimir Narbut, Sergei Gorodetskii and Akhmatova, in particular, were influenced by the Russian Symbolist poet Innokentii Annenskii. At various times the extent of Akhmatova's indebtedness to him has been perceived in different ways. Clarence Brown in his book *Mandelstam* quotes Osip Mandel'shtam's definition of Akhmatova's verse as "a vulgarization of Annenskii."[99] While this statement contains some truth, its formulation is overly bald and unilateral. Mandel'shtam himself as an incipient Acmeist related to Annenskii as his progenitor. Of the early critics the sensitive Soviet scholar Boris Eikhenbaum has displayed perspicacity on the subject of Akhmatova's concrete dependence in his important study "Anna Akhmatova: An Attempt at Analysis."[100] He arrived at his observations, ostensibly, without any prompting by Akhmatova. Indeed, she made a practice of collecting the opinions of respected experts on her poetry without divulging her own judgment. Increasingly over the years, the poet displayed greater reticence toward explanations, while her poetry grew less and less explicit and incorporated much semantic layering in the vein presaged by her friend N. Nedobrovo, a Russian critic and historian, in the conclusion to his seminal article "Anna Akhmatova":

> In general her vocation is not wide extension, but the uncovering of layers, for her tools are not those of the surveyor, measuring the earth and compiling a guide to its riches, but those of the miner, cutting into the depths of the earth to the veins of precious ore.
>
> Apropos, Pushkin gave one law to the poet. I quote it here with all its hints at the content of the stanza it belongs to: "Go where the secret / Reveries draw you."
>
> A poet as powerful as Anna Akhmatova, of course, will follow Pushkin's precept."[101]

In spite of Akhmatova's reluctance to divulge insight into her poetry, she repeatedly praised this study, because it uncovers the essence of her work while significantly tying her direction with the precepts of

Pushkin. Recent investigations attest to the viability of Nedobrovo's contention. Indeed, apart from cyclization, Akhmatova has transformed her poems of small dimension into multilevel edifices with an extensive subterranean structure. Moreover, in her narrative in verse, *Poem without a Hero,* her cumulative word, as it were, the poet cryptically provides a clue to certain poems where dual-level allusions in addition to her own level have been uncovered: "The case has a triple bottom" (373). It means that the total number of poets involved in the poems becomes three.[102]

Throughout her life Akhmatova perfected and intensified this internal method. At the same time, she continued learning from Pushkin and elaborating on his poetic legacy. An important link in her connection with Pushkin is contained in Akhmatova's perception of false bottoms in boxes as evinced in her investigations of him and perceived by Amanda Haight in her book *Anna Akhmatova: a Poetic Pilgrimage.* Haight coalesces the younger poet's discovery of the method of allusions and encoding and her own application of it. The source for Haight's observations is the forthright study by Anna Akhmatova of Pushkin, "Unpublished Notes of Anna Akhmatova on Pushkin."[103] Akhmatova's investigations represent a valuable contribution to scholarship on Pushkin, while at the same time disclosing some of her own attitudes toward poetry as well as her own devices.

Akhmatova openly dedicated two poems to Annenskii. Beginning with the first poem "Imitation from I. F. Annenskii" from her first collection *Evening* to the "Teacher" in her last collection, *Seventh Book,* distinct changes span her entire artistic lifetime. The early poem selects as building blocks, that is as material, compatible themes, motifs and imagery from Annenskii's poems to craft a new pseudo-Annenskian edifice hardly distinguishable from his own. No secret is made of the method, which is imitation, as stated in the title of the poem. Her source of imitation is Russian.

Подражание И. Ф. Анненскому

И с тобой, моей первой причудой,
Я простился. Восток голубел.
Просто молвила: "Я не забуду".
Я не сразу поверил тебе.

Возникают, стираются лица,
Мил сегодня, а завтра далек.

Отчего же на этой странице
Я когда-то загнул уголок?

И всегда открывается книга
В том же месте. И странно тогда:
Все как будто с прощального мига
Не прошли невозвратно года.

О, сказавший, что сердце из камня,
Знал наверно: оно из огня . . .
Никогда не пойму, ты блузка мне
Или только любила меня.

First fancy of mine, I said farewell.
The sky in the East was turning blue.
You uttered simply, "I'll never forget."
I then didn't think that was true.

Faces come forward, fade away.
One day I'm close; the next, remote.
I wonder why some time ago
I bent the corner on this page?

And every time the book opens
At this same place, which seems very strange,
As if from the moment we parted.
Years hadn't passed without return.

Whoever told me the heart's made of stone
Probably knew it's made of fire;
I'll never really know are you close,
Or did you merely love me once?

On the other hand, the later poem, "Teacher" displays total assimilation of Annenskii's poetics. Outwardly, Akhmatova pays homage to her mentor with little specification of areas of indebtedness or of imitation. Close study unveils dual-layered correspondences with Annenskii, which often hail back to their common source, Pushkin. These are mainly correspondences of a structural nature. As distinct from the early poem, Akhmatova now employs his method and attitude rather than the material. Strong assimilation is required for the success of such a method. Specifically, her building blocks are now figurative; they are not tangible pieces, but they point effectively to the mentor's area of influence. I will treat this poem later. Of immediate concern is the first poem and the period between the two poems; the objective is the explication of the evolution of the so-called "building blocks" and their role in reverberating and expand-

ing, as it were, Annenskii's legacy within her own. At the same time Akhmatova is performing an explanatory role in resorting to the poetry of Annenskii. It can be combined with a reshaping of material taken from other sources.

The most salient change in the two poems, from explicitness (imitation) to tacit, undefined assimilation, reflects a general trend in Akhmatova's *oeuvre*. And it is significant that the two poems are placed in her first and last collections respectively. In diction "Teacher" does not closely echo the most common aspects of her mentor. Indeed, most of the thematic imitation and that of imagery is subtle and very specific. Part of the camouflage features details from Annenskii's life; they are certainly what Akhmatova incorporated into her poetry. Conversely, "Imitation from Annenskii" sounds much like him. It evokes Annenskii's themes and imagery which constitute the pivotal connections. Following initial, marginal assimilation, Akhmatova sets to imitating her master. The objective is accurate reproduction insofar as originality for a bright pupil with still much to learn is out of the question for her at this point. In later collections of her poetry Akhmatova omitted this poem as well as her other two imitations; therefore, it can be assumed that the deletion was deliberate. The reason could be the assembled and frankly imitative nature of the work, which is not representative of her later work, when, increasingly, subtlety and masking a greater portion of her message and composition gained prominence over the years and these transparent poems with their telling titles became incompatible with the poet's established credo of intangible mystery. To be sure, in this poem the themes and imagery, derived from Annenskii, are not lucid but then neither are his original poems.

The poem "Imitation from Annenskii" is composed in three-foot anapestic meter which is the most frequent ternary meter in Annenskii; according to Vsevolod Setchkarev in his book, *Studies in the Life and Works of Innokentij Annenskij,* this poet has forty pieces in this meter as distinct from twenty-two in amphibrachs and eleven in dactyls.[104] Other poems of Annenskij from which Akhmatova's imitation derives are anapestic: "A Stream of Mignonettes in a Dark Car," "The Melancholy of Remembrance."

The interweaving of parallel themes in the stanzas of the poem also finds its reflection in Annenskii. It was the scholar Boris Eikhenbaum who traced the genesis of demarcating a stanza into two parallel segments, that became Akhmatova's hallmark, to the poetic practice of

Annenskii: "There are instances when the first part of the stanza represents an abstract judgment, a sentention or aphorism and the second remains unarticulated." Quoting a quatrain from Akhmatova's poem "How many requests a loved one always makes" (#71), the scholar continues: "This device brings Akhmatova closer to Innokentii Annenskii, whose influence on *Evening* is very significant. In her 'Imitation from I. F. Annenskii' . . . Akhmatova follows this device" (137–38). In fact, the origins of the device stem from Lermontov's poem "The Sail."

In the poem the speaker's voice appears to echo Annenskii's persona, for the lyrical ego is masculine as in Annenskii. This is significant insofar as Akhmatova has produced only eleven poems in masculine ego form.[105] All of them were created in her early period, in the years from 1910 to 1922. Few of them were included in her collections, a fact which points to the author attaching lesser importance to them later. The vague identity of the persona in Akhmatova's poem grows still more tenuous through an unexpected allusion to Annenskii's persona in the third person: "Oh, he, who has said that the heart is of stone, knew." This is an allusion to Annenskii's lyric "I thought that the heart was of stone" and to his speaker. The question arises as to whether the *I* in "Imitation from Annenskii" is the equivalent of the one referred to as "he knew," that is, the masculine persona of Annenskii, or whether it is merely an imitation underscored by the inclusion of elusive allusions in the poem. It could be bifurcation of the personality or a means of *sogliadataistvo,* spying on oneself, watching oneself. Annenskii is known to perceive his own persona's death in such a fashion in the poem "The Chrysanthemum." At night, observes Vsevolod Setchkarev, the poet assumes a double in Annenskii's verse. In the process of watching himself, his spiritual essence separates itself from his being in ordinary life in his poem "The Double." However, the other allusions in Akhmatova's poem point to similitude in action and themes with Annenskii's persona in his various poems. In all likelihood, Akhmatova's persona is also an imitation and must not be confused with that of Annenskii; the muted associative possibilities, mentioned above, are evoked to flesh out the portrayal. Moreover, the threads in the fabric of the ambiguous persona are interwoven into the poem's general fabric which extends over more than one person by each of the two poets, necessitating the inspection of several poems.

It must be borne in mind that, despite semantic obscurity, most

of Annenskii's poetry elicits both a symbolic and a straightforward interpretation. Indeed, in his poems it is unclear whether the declared love is for his Muse, for a specific woman or for ideal abstract Beauty. Akhmatova's similarly obscure *prichuda* (caprice, fancy, whim), with whom the persona communicates in the still of the night arrives before dawn: "The east was turning blue"—which is likewise the time of artistic creation in Annenskii.

In composing her poem Akhmatova assembles themes, motifs and imagery from Annenskii as building blocks. Contouring them to jell, or to cement, together in a convincing form, she selects related and compatible material; in metamorphosing it she is, to a certain extent, initially interpreting and subsequently assimilating his work. The points of junction or fusion remain evident as in the use of bricks or stone in an architectural structure. Such a method of montage parallels Akhmatova's predominating Acmeistic method of capturing and rendering a feeling and even a message through a compilation of details or seemingly extraneous imagery. The detailed images of the pipe and the mantle in the ballad "The Gray-eyed King" (#34) express distress and some nonchalance: "He found his pipe on the mantel / And left for his night work." Likewise implying confusion is the famous left hand glove slipped over the right hand in the lyric "Song of the Last Meeting" (#12), where the speaker observes: "I slipped onto my right hand / The glove from my left hand." In his article "Directions in Akhmatova's Poetry since the Early Period" Sam Driver expounds cogently on "Akhmatova's method of expressing complex abstracts by simple, concrete imagery: 'to live,' for example, is rendered 'to go for walks, to kiss, and to grow old'" (87, 90). For a clearer understanding one can add "to live *together.*" Similarly, in the poem under discussion the yearning for the caprice, an unattainable entity, is depicted without spelling it out. This device occurs also in Annenskii.

A previous version of the poem evinces Akhmatova's propensity for thematic opaqueness already in her early poetry. The imagery in the second version, the accepted canonical one, is less obviously connected with Annenskii. To this end, Akhmatova deleted the first of the two specified colors: "the water was turning black"; "light-blue chrysanthemums." Significantly, she left the perception of the second color, light-blue, in a more vague form: "the east was turning light-blue." The east was only turning blue as opposed to already blue chrysanthemums in the earlier version. The deleted image from the

variant, "the water was turning black," suggests death or suicide in Akhmatova, as shown by Sam Driver in his book *Anna Akhmatova*:

> Dark water more than once in Akhmatova's poetry symbolizes suicide or death . . . While it may or may not have been intended here, there is a close parallel with the symbol of water/river as it is used in the feminine genre of Russian folk lyrics. In the folk tradition, cold or rolling water/river symbolizes sadness, desertion or abandonment by the lover, loneliness (90).

Such usage probably stems from Annenskii who makes comparable use of water. In executing the change of imagery, Akhmatova not only frees herself of excessive obtrusive imitation, but she also shifts her emphasis. Twilight as the moment of inspiration for Annenskii enters the picture, on the one hand, and suggests the moment of parting during a spiritual, ephemeral predawn visit to the persona, on the other. In the variant the original parting intimated a physical one, that is, the death of the caprice, by dint of "the water was turning black" and of a well-known funereal image of Annenskii, chrysanthemums, as in his poem "Before the Funeral Services," where he says: "And the manes of the chrysanthemums wilt / In the stifling smoke." Akhmatova's lines in the variant read:

> В том же месте. Не знаю зачем!
> Я люблю только радости мига
> И цветы голубых хризантем.
>
> In the same place. I don't know why!
> I love only the moment's joys
> And the bright blue chrysanthemums.

I will return to this floral image later.[106] Of greater immediacy now is the moribund aspect evoked by it. In Annenskii comparable allusions to an otherworldly meeting following the death of a female entity occur. The first poem, "The Lilac Mist," in the posthumously published collection, *The Cypress Chest,* alludes to such a tryst. Lilac color, suggesting death in Annenskii, also invites death and suicide in Akhmatova. The title of Annenskii's collection initiates this symbolic ambience. The usual explanation for the title is that the manuscript was kept in a chest of cypress. However, cypress branches were used as a symbol of mourning and death in ancient Greek culture.[107] In Shakespeare the cypress becomes metonymy for a coffin; its wood was used for the best coffins:

Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid. (*Twelfth Night,* II.4)

Ernst and Johanna Lehner in their book *Folklore and Symbolism of Flowers, Plants and Trees* elaborate on the three facets of the tree in various cultures, notably, as Mourning and Lament in Occidental culture, as a symbol of Death in Greek culture and an Emblem of Grace and Joy in Oriental (114). Annenski, given his classical training and interests, would be inclined to interpret the symbolism in the Greek manner. The relevance of the entry is obvious:

> The evergreen cypress (Cupressus Sempervirens), native to the Himalaya Mountains was introduced into the Mediterranean region by the Phoenicians who in 1,000 B.C. colonized the isle of Cypress which derived its name from that tree. The Greek poet Ovid (34 B.C.–17 A.D.) tells a mythological legend about the youth Cyparissus, son of Thelephus of Cea, a special friend of Apollo; one day Cyparissus killed by accident a mighty stag, a favorite of Apollo, held sacred by Dictean nymphs. The youth suffered such agony of remorse for what he had done, that he begged the gods to let his grief endure forever. In answer to his prayers the gods turned him into a cypress tree. The tree became the symbol of the immortal soul and eternal death. In Greek and Roman mythology the cypress was the emblem of the gods of the netherworld, the Fates and the Furies. Its wood was used for Egyptian mummy cases and coffins for Greek heroes because of its proverbial durability, and also because it is not liable to the attacks of insects. Cypresses were planted around cemeteries and at the head of graves. Its branches were carried by mourners at funerals as a symbol of irrevocable death, because the cypress tree, once cut, will never flourish and grow again (57).

Much of this symbolism has carried over into the verse of Akhmatova.

Annenskii's collection, *The Cypress Chest,* is strongly imbued with the suggestion of death. It will become evident below that Akhmatova finds the fact not coincidental that the manuscripts of Annenskii were kept in a cypress chest. She herself employs the cemeterial image of the trees planted at the site of graves and in cemeteries to form an outer coffin, as it were, much like an outer sarcophagus: "the chorus line of your graveside cypresses" (185). Additionally, the cypress figures metonymically in the Dedication of the *Poem without a Hero* as *khvoia mogil'naia* (graveside needles of a conifer). Of cardinal im-

portance is the definition of *larets*. Vasmer in his *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language* enters *lar'* as having a dialectical meaning in the Russian city of Arkhangelsk as *grob* (coffin), aside from the other well-known definitions. Amanda Haight translates the word as "casket." Furthermore, another definition given to it in the English rendition as "case" denoted in Old English a reliquary for bones.[108] Finally, in *Poem without a Hero* Akhmatova produces a synonym *ukladka* meaning "chest, box" (372).

In Annenskii's poem on the "lilac mist" the persona displays yearning for the lilac mist that peeks enticingly in his window. The motifs and imagery conjure up Akhmatova's poem:

> Если любишь, так и сам отыщешь след,
> Где над омутом синеет лед,
> Там часочек погощу я, кончив лет,
> А у печки-то никто нас не видел . . .
> Только те мои, кто волен да удал.
>
> If you're in love, you'll find the way yourself
> Where the ice is dark blue above the pool;
> At the end of my flight, I'll spend an hour there,
> For no one saw us by the stove—
> A lover of mine must be loose and bold.

The ice is turning dark blue and not a lighter shade because the water beneath it is black and turgid, as in any eddy.

In Akhmatova, on the other hand, with the arrival of dawn, "the east was turning light blue," everything ethereal abandons the persona. Note that the blue is lighter than in Annenskii but still sufficiently dark, since the east was only *turning* blue. Typically, in her nonimitative works the lilac as a flower bears the same death connotation: "And the lilac from beyond the grave" ("Heiress," 302); "And the lilac smelled of the cemetery" (*Poem without a Hero*, 367); "And he to me, the shade that has flown away, / Will give an armful of wet lilacs" (*Poem without a Hero*, 373); "You smell, like the lilac smells" ("I have come to replace you, sister," 77). This usage echoes with Annenskii's verse: in "Traumerei" (107) he evokes such pictures as "dreaming," "reveries," "lilac," "moonlit May night," "there is no meeting"; in the poem "Ghosts" (143) he has "The green ghost of a lilac bush / Clung to the window" and "With two bunches of the lilacs of May." Finally, in "Trefoil of Loneliness" the poem "Only to him

whose peace we conceal" harbors imagery of "light blue fire," "bees," "honey," stars," "the heart lives in dreams":

Ты придешь, коль верна мечтам,
Только та ли ты?
Знаю: сад там, сирени там
Солнцем залиты.

If you're true to my dreams, you'll come;
Will the dream be you?
I know the garden's there, and the lilacs
Flooded with sun.

Thus Annenskii juxtaposes lilacs with death, dreams and phantoms. For both poets the month of May often signifies a time of death.

Returning to the blue chrysanthemum image, we observe that it reverberates explicitly with Annenskii, even in color. Blue is an unnatural color for this flower, but so is its usage here. In the opinion of Setchkarev, blue for Annenskii connotes ice or fire, as in the poem "The aroma of lilies is heavy for me." In this latter poem blue color conjures up phantom imagery as distinct from night with its darkness and the morose paleness of the moon. For a stronger effect, Annenskii fuses the image with the blue flowerlike fires, perceptible only to the persona: "And the imperishable flowers of the fires / I alone will perceive as blue." Moreover, Setchkarev ascribes lilac color to the family of blue colors. The lilac mist, like the blue flowers, is ostensibly visible only to Annenskii's speaker. It is noteworthy that Akhmatova carried her deleted chrysanthemum image, minus the blue, and its symbolism through her verse into her later masterpiece, *Poem without a Hero*: "Like a crushed chrysanthemum / On the floor, when the coffin is being carried." Lidiia Chukovskaia's explanation of this usage in her diarylike memoirs, *Notes on Anna Akhmatova,* presents an additional facet, albeit of lesser significance. She quotes Akhmatova as stating that she avoided stepping on these flowers at the wake for Iakubovich: "Under the feet of everybody, of the pallbearers and of the mourners, on the steps were scattered flowers—chrysanthemums, strewn by chance. I walked around them, I could not step on them—they were alive" (I, 114–15). Given the accord here with imagery in Annenskii's lyric "Chrysanthemum," it is likely that Akhmatova was paraphrasing him in her description of the event: the funereal theme is interwoven with imagery, such as *purpurnyi* for a shade of blue, twilight and chrysanthemums. The homogeneity of the two images, the chest and

the chrysanthemums, becomes clear in Akhmatova's poem "You are probably someone's husband" (#593) through her correlation: "In the *case* (even) without you there are enough topics . . . / And how many *parting chrysanthemums* there are in September" [emphasis mine]. Elsewhere in her ode "Ode to Tsarskoe Selo," she specifies the material of the chest. Importantly, she reiterates *skatulka* (case), as above, then resorts to its synonym *larets* (casket), as in Annenskii's title to his collection *Kiparisovyi larets*. True to her frequent method of not imitating exactly, Akhmatova employs the adjective *kiparisnyi* and not Annenski's good modern usage *kiparisovyi*:

Царскосельскую одурь
Прячу в *ящик* пустой,
В роковую *шкатулку*,
В кипарисный ларец.

I hide the torpor of Tsarskoe Selo
In an empty box,
In a fatal little case,
In a cypress chest.

In both poets *odur'* (stupor) equals poetry. Just as Annenskii's manuscript is kept in a chest and in a collection bearing the name, so too Akhmatova's is placed, figuratively at least, in a chest and also in a collection.

The word *mig* (moment, instant) in Akhmatova's usage ostensibly derives from Annenskii where the word, in true Symbolist fashion, is frequent. This word is important for Akhmatova in the context of blue chrysanthemums, providing its usage is not solely for the sake of the rhyme. Even after altering the first variant, she retains the concept of *mig*. The original read: "I love only the joys of the moment / And the flowers of the blue chrysanthemums." By underscoring the transitoriness of life, *mig* enhances the finality of death and the permanency of its ties. The awareness of the fleeting moment and the threatening presence of death hails back to the Roman poet Tibullus.[109]

While both poets discuss meetings, their poems treat different times in respect to the trysts. The lyric "Lilac Mist" addresses the time preceding an invitation to a meeting, as does the verse "A Stream of Mignonettes." Akhmatova, on the other hand, intimates that the meeting took place, introducing slight changes in her usual free fashion. The details of the meeting are obscured. The early ver-

sion's "the water was turning black" suggests that the place of meeting was near a whirlpool, *omut*. Setchkarev envisions this imagery as an invitation to suicide (85–96, 91). Because death in Annenskii appears as "The Invisible Lady," the words printed in lower case letters, "lilac mist," do not necessarily represent death. Additionally, in Akhmatova's poem "Confession" (#93) there is ostensibly an offshoot, if not a paraphrase of "lilac mist" (*sirenevaia mgla*) in her *lilovyi sumrak* (lilac twilight). The Russian word *lilovyi* denotes "lilac," "violet color," based on a word that comes from French or German, which Vasmer traces to Indo-European. The lilac color identifies with the flower lilac for which the Russian word is *siren'*.

Meetings are brief and well characterized by *mig*, the concept of which is so cardinal that it is retained in the same final position. The variant's line—"I love only the joys of the moment"—changes in the second version to: "As if from the moment of farewell." The word *mig*, connected with lines five and six, which imply impermanence of human contact and relationships where the involved parties communicate over time and space, is redolent of Akhmatova's later poetic efforts at incantation for a living person far away: "And away with time and away with space" (#422; "The Sweetbrier Blooms"). Although lines five and six are apparently connected logically, they exhibit grammatical diversity and ambiguity in translation from the Russian: "Faces appear and fade away, / One is dear today and distant tomorrow." Here in lieu of *one* it is possible to understand *ia* (masc., I) or *chelovek* (person). The distance refers both to space and to emotional remoteness. Line five could conceivably allude in part to a humanized caprice, the Muse or a dead woman. For according to Setchkarev, in Annenskii love is frequently expressed as both real and as a passion for the Muse, the distinction remaining tenuous (116–17). Ambivalence is deliberately sustained. By contrast, line six in no way refers to the feminine gender, *prichuda* (caprice), unless in the most abstract academic sense, insofar as it conceivably alludes to "person" or to "I" denoting the male persona.

The correlation between Annenskii's blue flower and the fire image coupled with the chrysanthemums, on the one hand, and the theme of *there*, on the other, which emanates from the box/chest/casket images and indicates the Beyond, appears in his poem "A Stream of Mignonettes in a Dark Car":

В голубых фонарях
Меж листьев на ветвях,

Без числа
Восковые сиянья плывут.
И в саду
Как в бреду.
Хризантемы цветут.

In the blue light of the street lamps
Among the leafy branches
Numberless
Wax auroras float by.
And in the garden,
As in a trance,
Chrysanthemums are blooming.

Further in the poem the crucial reiterated imagery evinces the inherent emotional level: "On the branches, / *In the lamps* the reverie was finishing burning / Of the *blue chrysanthemums*" [italics mine]. To be sure, the blue color for the flower is a direct borrowing from Annenskii. Yet there is more, oblique, reference to flowers in our poem in the vein of describing a concept in a roundabout way instead of naming it. In order to bring it to light we must resort again to the broader spectrum of both poets' verse. In Akhmatova's "Imitation from Annenskii" the image of the book opening to the same page warrants comparison with the mention of a bookmark elsewhere. In Annenskii's poem "The burden of life is bright and light for me" the woman mentioned by dint of *gore bezumnoi* (the grief of the insane woman) represents Ophelia from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The image of a violet wilted in a book also occurs here: "I regret that in vain has wilted / The violet forgotten in a book." This accords with imagery in *Hamlet* where violets figure three times, always in connection with Ophelia. Beginning with her first lines and the ensuing admonishment by her brother Laertes the violet inextricably remains a part of her unfulfilled promise of happiness:

Laertes: For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood,
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more. (I.3)

Noteworthy is the suggestion of transience and its connection in the tragedy with *mig*. Obviously, in the tragedy much symbolism is at-

tached to flowers whose significance is explicated within the piece, as in Ophelia's lines:

> Ophelia: There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray you, love, remember; and there is pansies, that's for thoughts. . . . There's fennel for you, and columbines; there's rue for you, and here's some for me; we may call it herb of grace o' Sundays; oh, you must wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy. *I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died;* they say he made a good end,—[110] (IV.5; italics mine)

A withered violet, then, is illustrative of death. The final emergence of the motif intimates a certain permanency, if not eternity and continuity, as indicated during Laertes' outburst at his sister's burial:

> And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
> May violets spring! (V.1)

Importantly, the image of the dried, shriveled violets echoes Akhmatova's deleted image of the blue chrysanthemum. It is known that violets can be blue as well as violet in color, and drying levels them all to the same nondescript color. Furthermore, a dried violet, or other flower, in a book will cause it to open easily to that page. The flower will facilitate the book's opening to a particular page, the persona's bewilderment notwithstanding ("I don't know why").[111] Elsewhere in Annenskii the motif of a book continually opening to the same page occurs in "The Tedium of Recollection." Composed in three-foot anapests, the poem is highly evocative of "Imitation from Annenskii." Indeed, this poem can be considered the cornerstone of Akhmatova's intricately crafted edifice:

> Мне всегда открывается та же
> Залитая чернилом страница.
> Я уйду от людей, но куда же,
> От ночей мне куда схорониться?
>
> Все живые так стали далеки,
> Все несбытное стало так внятно,
> И слились позабытые строки
> До зари в мутно-черные пятна.
>
> Весь я там в невозможном ответе,
> Где миражные буквы маячут . . .
> . . . Я люблю, когда в доме есть дети
> И когда по ночам они плачут.

I always open to the same
Ink-covered page.
I could go away from people, but where?
Where can I hide from the dark?

Everything living has become remote;
All the unheard-of has become clear;
And just before dawn forgotten lines
Dissolve into black, muddy spots.

All of me's there in impossible reply,
Where the alphabet looms like a mirage—
I love having children in the house
And hearing them cry at night.

The metaphor of books and reading figures in Annenskii's poem "The Bronze Poet" ("Trefoil in the Park"), which treats Pushkin's life in a jarring unprepared way following a description of the physical surroundings: "I do not know whether the novella was so short, / Or I did not finish reading the last half?" Akhmatova will respond to this with her divergent preference for commencing reading at the end of a book in the lyric "And in books I the last page" (#343) and in the poem "And there my marble double" from her triad "In Tsarskoe Selo" where she asserts that "I too will become marble." Obviously, in writing on Pushkin with the format of three poems she follows Annenskii.

Books in Annenskii, pursuant to Setchkarev, symbolize life (154). In his poem Annenskii deplores the brevity of Pushkin's life. In the previous quotation the book opening to the same page is emblematic of repetitiveness. Akhmatova also utilizes the book image as if to parry "The Bronze Poet" in her later Gothic-sounding poem "And in books I the last page," since the ultimate results always concern her most. In her early verse Akhmatova is famous for treating the postculmination period in relationships with her beloved. This has several explanations, some of which have already been explored by other scholars. It is likewise in keeping with the traditions of Greek drama where the mythical story was familiar to all thereby switching emphasis on details. Similarly, in Akhmatova's poems the story of the personal conflict is familiar to those concerned, therefore only important details need to be provided in view of the form which is meant for herself and sometimes for the male addressee as well. The symbolism of the book encompasses the meaning "Book of Life." The life that is to be read in the future can include the addressee as well:

"two wondrous books / Will appear and will tell all to everyone." Additionally, gods view life and the people in it as pages in a book, as observed by Setchkarev (107, 136, 190). Something is amiss if the pages have yellowed, as in Annenskii's verse "Parcae Are Women's Babbling" where the pages have long yellowed: "But of the nights of white May / The pages have yellowed long ago." Torn-out pages or a page blotted with ink signifies Death, as in Annenskii's piece "Decoration": "Barely moved the eyelashes . . . / Further . . . further the pages are torn out." Moreover, in Akhmatova a book opening of its own accord is symptomatic of stagnation and recurrent events, which conjure up the past and an important moment in it. Time stands still: "And it is strange then: / As if from the parting moment / Years had not elapsed irrevocably." These lines reverberate with Annenskii's poem, quoted earlier, "The Tedium of Recollection." If, indeed, the feminine being in Akhmatova is a Muse and, hence, a god, then the book of life symbol is fitting, for gods view life as pages in a book.[112]

Salvaging the word *stranno* from her deleted line: "I so strangely believed then," Akhmatova utilized it in another context within the same poem—"And it is strange then"—inasmuch as this word in another context is evocative of Annenskii's lyric "You are with me once more, friend autumn" with its unnerving usage of the adverb *stranno*: "Oh, how this air is strangely new." In Annenskii's last poem "My Yearning," the mood of the persona is conveyed as "I do not love her—and she is close to me," which is echoed in Akhmatova's "are you close to me, / Or did you only love me." Setchkarev construes the passage as Annenskii not loving man but yearning for what lies hidden behind man; in other words, the poet loves the riddles of life. Pertinent to this topic and the elusive feminine entity who breathed life into him and may return too late is the poem "On the Threshold" ("Thirteen Lines").

Hitherto the reader envisioned Akhmatova's male persona as the equivalent of Annenskii's. Subsequently, a person versed in the poetry of the latter is jarred by reference in the third person to Annenskii's persona in the lines: "Oh, he who said that the heart was of stone, / Knew for certain: it is of fire." The imagery here stems from her mentor's lyric "I thought that the heart was of stone," where even extinguished fire in the heart has toxic qualities. In this poem Akhmatova has employed pronouns in a slightly confusing manner: from the *ia* (I) of the lyrical persona she quotes the *ia* of the "caprice" and returns to the *ia* of the lyrical ego. Then impersonal meaning moves

to the third person and subsequently returns to the *ia* of the second person singular. Annenskii's persona is known to view himself in the third person, as at his own funeral. This poet's poems, "Double" and "Which," composed in three-foot ternary meter, advance the notion that flights of imagination, autism and insomnia of the poet creating at night, actually constitute another self, a bifurcation into two selves and, hence, the appearance of the poet's double. This idea accords with that of Pushkin in his famous poem "Poet," which states that an inspired poet differs from his ordinary self in moments of creation. In the verse "By the Coffin" Annenskii's persona ponders his own corpse before philosophizing, a device which creates, as it were, a dichotomy. It seemingly splits the personas of Annenskii and of Akhmatova into two different persons, as indeed they are: one is original, that of Annenskii, and the other is a reflection or imitation, that of Akhmatova in this poem.[113]

Accordingly, from the first version to the second in the poem "Imitation from Annenskii" Akhmatova developed greater subtlety in her imitative manner which was to reach its apogee in "Teacher." She employed imagery and motifs from Annenskii in her earlier poem; however, as will be seen later, she subsequently imbibed the imagery and the motifs to such an extent that they were effortlessly carried over through "Teacher" into her later work in almost pristine form. A case in point is *Poem without a Hero.* As a result of the imitative poetic mode Akhmatova expanded the legacy of Annenskii and enriched her own works beyond the two poetic tributes. For this purpose she used images, such as the chest and chrysanthemums, all of which was useful but hardly pivotal. The crucial influence lay elsewhere and had become such a part of Akhmatova's own verse that she reverently refrained from expounding on it to her friends and admirers. Instead, in her poem "Teacher" she unobtrusively *demonstrated* her main area of indebtedness, insofar as by now she had espoused the method of obscuring important messages beneath her seemingly pellucid edifice of verse.[114]

CHAPTER TEN

The Teacher's Lessons

In reading Akhmatova's poem "Teacher," we discover that in spite of its promising title the piece fails to deliver the information that is common knowledge in literary criticism concerning the influence of Annenskii on the younger poet. It remains unclear precisely what the mentor imparted to the poet, other than "languor" (*tomlen'e*), which, in the words of the poem, was projected to a wide audience.[115] This somewhat impersonal instruction is not sufficient to warrant such profound acknowledgment. Significantly, Akhmatova did not bestow this title on anyone else. The appellation "precursor" is more cogent, but there must be more substantial motivation. Indeed, Akhmatova puts into poetic practice the secrets of the craft gleaned from the *ouevre* of Annenskii. In numerous instances this chapter will trace her artistic provenance through Annenskii to their common source, Pushkin, through the use of encoded double subtexts.

Before embarking on our exegesis we must clarify the difference between Akhmatova the poet and person and her persona, who is both a person and a poet, inasmuch as in this poem the two are only vaguely distinguishable. Akhmatova and her female persona, in my interpretation, are never the same person no matter how many similarities and biographical overlaps may exist. Indeed, artistic refraction and lapses in time prevent any would-be equation, despite the tribute to tradition in the introduction or the presence of a speaker ostensibly mirroring the poet—a prevalent device in lyric poetry. Biographical unification with the poet is also not achieved, even when there is a definite addressee, based on a biographical personage, whether named or implied, such as Boris Anrep as addressee in many poems. Akhmatova and her persona appear to conflate as never before in parts of such works as *Poem without a Hero, Requiem* and in "Teacher" without actually merging. In fact, contrary to Amanda Haight's assertion that in *Requiem* "Akhmatova no longer needed to use a heroine as a means of linking her own life with that of other women," I hold that the poem expanded the delineated experiences to encompass all women standing in interminable lines before prisons

(99). The focus here is closer to the persona seeing through the eyes of Mary. Although biographical allusions can be traced, Akhmatova the person and the poet still remain distinct from her creation, her persona, even in that persona's capacity of poet. To be sure, in the different pieces within the *Poem without a Hero* the degree of coalescence with the persona varies considerably. The blanket contention of Dobin in his book *The Poetry of Anna Akhmatova* is unconvincing oversimplification: "From the 1930s the lyrical ego of Akhmatova totally merged with the author. 'I' is the poet herself" (140). Such an attitude ignores the artistic moment in a work of literature and in Akhmatova's poetry in particular. The poet is not writing personal letters or memoirs for her character to penetrate wholly the poetry: "And the nature that peeps through the love lyrics, through the confessions, reflections and outpourings is the character of the poet herself" (140–41). Sam Driver distinguishes clearly between the multiple, often conflicting, personas of the early lyrics and the fewer, sometimes seemingly single, personas in the late poetry. This distinction will bring into relief the merits and message of the poem "Teacher."

Учитель

Памяти Иннокентия Анненского[116]

А тот, кого учителем считаю,
Как тень прошел и тени не оставил,
Весь яд впитал, всю эту одурь выпил,
И славы ждал, и славы не дождался,
Кто был предвестьем, предзнаменованьем,
Всех пожалел, во всех вдохнул томленье—
И задохнулся . . .

The Teacher

In memory of Innokentii Annenskii

The man that I consider my teacher
Passed like a shadow and left none,
Sucked in all the poison, drank up all this torpor,
Waited for fame though fame never came;
It was he was the harbinger, he was the omen,
He pitied us all, filled us with longing—
And gave up the ghost . . .

The poem develops on two levels—the patent and the recondite. On the obvious level, which treats mostly themes, Akhmatova refers to Annenskii as a mortal rather than an immortal poet. The presence

of "In memory of" in the dedication serves as the first confirmation. Unlike Akhmatova's poems to other poets—such as Osip Mandel'shtam ("Oh, how heady is the fragrance of the carnation," #341) and to Vladimir Narbut ("About Poems," #340)—this dedication indicates a man deceased. On the ciphered level there are stylistic allusions to Annenskii's poetic craft and to his adherence to the Symbolist practice of obfuscating meaning. Annenskii enunciated his affinity with the Symbolist credo in his critical essay "On Modern Lyricism":

> A single and common interpretation is not at all mandatory for me. On the contrary, I consider it a virtue in a lyrical piece if it can be interpreted in two or more ways or, if without having fully understood it, one can merely feel it and then can complete it mentally oneself. The very thing that distinguishes a poetical phrasing from an ordinary one is that behind it can be discerned the mystical life of words, which is ancient and diverse, and that at times a certain verse strikes such cords in your sensibility about which you had even forgotten to think.[117]

Ostensibly, Akhmatova is in part imitating this method in her usual free way. Deceptive outward comprehensibility inherent in Akhmatova, combined with concealed inner complexity, produces an abstruse message. In other words, she is blending her so-called clarity, inherited from Pushkin, with the Symbolist ambiguity of Annenskii. The pellucidity of Pushkin, particularly in some of his later works, can be professed only in regard to his form. His contents generate reservations, for recent studies demonstrate that the poetry of this author can combine both the overt level, that has been studied heretofore, and the covert level destined for a select audience.[118] In Akhmatova's "Teacher" the combination is somewhat perplexing at first glance. However, an investigation, which incorporates the larger context of other poems by her, will shed light on this compact poem.

The sequential proximity of poems within a given collection is often ascribed semantic significance by Akhmatova. Preceded by the programmatic cycle "Secrets of the Craft" and the "literary" poem "And in books I the last page," which reverberates the Romantic (or Gothic) novel, "Teacher" is anticipated by two laconic poems. There would appear to be inner cyclization between these free poems. The first poem "Pushkin" (#344) suggests his enormous contribution in the form of a somewhat irrefutable exclamation and rhetorical question, which are frequent devices in his verse and appear with regularity in

Annenskii. The poem treats the pain and vanity of fame and glory as well as the high price paid for the pleasure of expressing one's artistic ideas. For this reason the poet proffers advice on shunning fame in the couplet (#627): "Pray for the night, that you / Do not suddenly wake up famous." Chukovskaia in her *Notes on Anna Akhmatova* instances several occasions when the poet expounded on the futility of glory:

> I think about this a lot now, and I have come to the opinion that it [glory—S.K.] is an abomination and a horror—always. What muck Iasnaia Poliana was! Each and everyone, all and sundry considered Tolstoi their own and pulled him to shreds. A decent person must live above this: above admirers, autographs, myrrh-bearing women—in one's own atmosphere (II, 51).

On another occasion Akhmatova was indignant with a reader for construing her poem "Song of the Last Meeting" as taking place in Blok's bedroom (II, 78). Moreover, when Chukovskaia later compared fame and glory with the love of one's fans and admirers, Akhmatova objected:

> "They have nothing in common," Anna Andreevna immediately interrupted me. "Fame means that everybody owns you, and you become a rag with which anyone can dust. At the end of his life Tolstoi understood the worthlessness of fame and in 'Father Sergius' explained how to cleanse oneself of it. I, particularly, respect him for this" (II, 117).

And, finally, closer to Akhmatova's own experiences is her following observation that fame can be of value to a person only given luxurious circumstances:

> I said that apparently fame had its bad points. "Oh, yes!" cheerfully confirmed Anna Andreevna. "When you are riding in a soft landau, under a small umbrella, with a big dog next to you on the seat and everyone says: 'There's Akhmatova'—that's one thing. But when you are standing in the courtyard, in the wet snow, in line for herring, and it smells of herring so sharply that both your shoes and your coat will reek for ten more days, and suddenly someone from behind utters: 'The oysters in a dish of ice smelled fresh and pungently of the sea'—that is totally different. I was annoyed and did not even turn around" (I, 184–85).

Akhmatova deplored the tactless occurrence whereby for some time the last apartment of Pushkin on the Moika Canal number 13 housed

the offices of the Soviet fishing firm Rybtrest. Even when the apartment was later converted into a museum, it was not as Pushkin would have had it. In his bedroom there were now portraits of his enemies: Nikolai I, Uvarov, Benkendorf, Poletika, which certainly dampened any wish Akhmatova may have had for fame: "Looking at that, I began thinking about what fame is. You die and over your bed they will hang the portraits of your enemies. . . . To hell with it!" (II, 19). Such is the reaction of the philistine toward the celebrity and such is the divergent response to it of Akhmatova. To be sure, her attitude toward fame and glory with the proper treatment and the lack of undue fanfare is positive, inasmuch as the life and works of man are perpetuated in this manner. In a poem dedicated to the fallen heroes of World War II, "And you, my friends, of the last conscription" (#361), from the cycle "Wind of War," she maintains that "for glory there are no deceased."

In the poems following the cycle "Secrets of the Craft" the third lyric "Our sacred craft" (#345) advances themes from its preceding cycle. The implication is that the influence exerted by Pushkin on Annenskii and on Akhmatova—some of it via Annenskii—is truly viable. The poem "Our sacred craft" raises the hope that a poet's contribution to art can transcend old age and even death. Akhmatova evinces a positive attitude toward her discerning reading public in her poem "Reader" (#337) from the cycle "Secrets of the Craft." In it she advances the notion that the poet attains immortality through his reading public:

> Наш век на земле быстротечен
> И тесен назначенный круг,
> А он неизменен и вечен—
> Поэта неведомый друг.
>
> Our time on earth flows swiftly by;
> The circle ordained for us is tight;
> But the changeless one who goes on forever
> Is the poet's unknown friend.

Reverberating and expanding on these ideas is the excerpt in a footnote to Akhmatova's article, "*The Stone Guest* of Pushkin," in her collection of studies on the poet, *On Pushkin,* where she discovers his implicit trust in his true reader:

> But on the other hand, what a degree of attention the poet must suspect

> in the reader (precisely such were the readers of the famous early narrative poems and the first cantos of "Onegin") and what sunny confidence one must have in the reader to employ this method. Perhaps it was precisely this boundless trust, which cannot fail to be felt, that turned out to be one of the reasons for our one hundred and forty year long state of being in love with Pushkin. It is all the more strange because, beginning with *Poltava* (1829), Pushkin did not read in print a single word of praise about himself and in 1837 won a second, posthumous fame (234–35).

As if to parry the preceding poem's question of mortality for a poet, the poem "Teacher" opens with the logical hidden link, inherent in the particle *a*, and quickly brings the reader to the death of Annenskii. Underlying this external framework of his poetic biography are stylized allusions to his creative practice. If, as asserted in the preceding cycle and underscored both by the Acmeists and the Futurists, poetic creation is a craft rather than pure inspiration as Pushkin would have insisted, then a teacher can be assumed for a poet: for Akhmatova this teacher is purported to be Annenskii and Pushkin, for Annenskii it is Pushkin, among others.

The message of the poem can best be comprehended by a twofold analysis, of linguostylistic devices and of imagery. The present discussion will concentrate on the former as the aspect more fully developed by the poet herself. In employing devices and imagery taken from the poetic practice of the writer to whom a poem is dedicated, Akhmatova achieves greater economy of means and a stronger impact due to the additional implications of the larger context. Moreover, as Driver has pointed out in his book *Anna Akhmatova*, this poet is a master of indirect, wordless, as it were, imitation: "The suggestion of black-on-white is often made without the use of these words: snezhnaya noch' (snowy night)" (111). In this way she gives rise to associations.

The concluding, seventh, line of "Teacher" is disrupted as if to convey Annenskii's premature demise rythmically as well as lexically. That the line is deliberately aborted can be seen in the example of the poem "The Third Zachat'evskii" (#250) from the cycle "Black Dream," in which the first line is incomplete: "Pereulochek, pereul" . . . ("Alley, al . . ."). Akhmatova has drawn attention to this fact in a conversation with Chukovskaia in *Notes on Anna Akhmatova* (I, 144). The length of "Teacher"—seven lines—is rare for Akhmatova, a master of the short form. In her published works there are only

thirteen other occurrences of which three did not enter her collections.[119] The truncated line ending in ellipsis, common for all three poets, calls attention to possible meaning.[120] An aborted seven lines emphasizes the number and could imply its double and, hence, a sonnet. Indeed, sonnets abound in the verse of Annenskii as in other Symbolist works. Some of his sonnets are germane to the given poem in their treatment of poetic creation, among which are all three "Torturous Sonnets" and "Poetry." Akhmatova conceivably strove to underpin this fact. While sonnets have a few rigid forms, deviations from the norm are possible. Even Pushkin has some variations, and Annenskii, who rarely repeated the same pattern, likewise took liberties with this form.[121] The earliest sonnets, which were created in Italy in the thirteenth century, lacked segmentation into quatrains and tercets, a fact which vindicates Akhmatova's undivided poem. Further, she could hardly have segmented seven lines satisfactorily. Her iambic pentameter is the customary meter for the Russian sonnet. Some of the rhymes, insofar as sonnets are always rhymed, are "imprecise" and "approximate."[122] Annenskii's rhymes can also have irregularities, as observed by Setchkarev (115). It is conceivable, then, that Akhmatova wrote in disrupted form to convey graphically and rhythmically the break in her mentor's life and work.

Syntactically, the poem comprises one compound complex sentence, which is common enough in Pushkin ("The Grape," "Oh, Rose Maiden," "To My Friends," "Splendid City") but rare in Annenskii. It is, however, significant that the first poem in Annenskii's collection of verse *Quiet Songs,* "Poetry," consists of one sentence. The single sentence of "Teacher" contains eleven verbs, ten of which refer to the teacher. Nine of these denote an action; most are perfective and, hence, imply swiftness and completedness. Five of them are emphasized by rhyming position; even the remaining two rhymes are verbal nouns, which retain a hint of development. All this is emblematic of saturated energy in a poet who compressed much literary activity into the short creative period, which could have precipitated his heart attack. Where germane, Pushkin accumulates many verbs in much the same fashion. For example, in the lyric "Splendid city" Pushkin heaps nouns, both concrete and abstract, in four of the poem's eight lines. His objective is to conjure up a visual image, to imitate the congestion of objects and even ideas in the grand city of St. Petersburg. By contrast, Annenskii generally eschews a heaping of verbs with the exception of the sonnet "The Bronze Poet," which

contains seventeen verbs in its fourteen lines, as well as the poems "August" and "The Anguish of the Pendulum." The sonnet form and the Pushkinian theme of Annenskii's lyric "The Bronze Poet" could be meaningful for Akhmatova, particularly in view of her penchant for shunning verbs, as noted by Eikhenbaum (104).

A cardinal feature in the poem's structure is a notable frequency of lexical repetitions. Words are reduplicated in various morphological forms: *kogo—kto, vsekh—vo vsekh, ten'—teni* (apparently different meanings of "shade" versus "shadow"), *ves'—vsiu, slavy—slavy.* Moreover, Akhmatova plays on roots, which stand in immediate proximity, to underscore similarity: *zhdal—ne dozhdalsia, vdokhnul—zadokhnulsia.* The pair *vpital—vypil* can be construed as paronyms, words which are similar in sound and have the same root that can be substituted for one another, either unwittingly or to form puns. They are used with the approximate synonyms *iad—odur'*. Likewise synonymous are the words *predvest'e—predznamenovan'e.* It should be stressed that Akhmatova does not characteristically engage in a concentrated exercise in lexical repetition and a concentration of verbs for its own sake. Here she conjures up an ambience familiar to students of Annenskii's work. Roman Timenchik has pointed out in his article, "Akhmatova and Pushkin: An Analysis of the Poem 'A dusky lad wandered through the lanes,'" that Annenskii also recreates a general impression of Pushkin's work in his centenary address, *Pushkin and Tsarskoe Selo,* where obvious quotations and paraphrases abound:

> The formation of the analyzed poem ["A dusky lad wandered through the lanes"] is prefigured in many respects by "The Bronze Poet" of I. Annenskii, just as the entire cycle "In Tsarskoe Selo" is created under the perceptible influence of "Trefoil in the Park," which includes the above-mentioned poem of Annenskii on Pushkin. One must note that in Akhmatova's poem has found reflection the mood of the well-known speech of Annenskii on Pushkin and Tsarskoe Selo (130). . . . motifs stemming from Pushkin himself ("Recollections in Tsarskoe Selo"), are refracted in the system of the new poetics. Pushkin was introduced into the poetic world of Akhmatova (131).

In his homily *Pushkin and Tsarskoe Selo* Annenskii praises Pushkin as a genius of poetic craft who worked hard for the precision of his expressions and the musicality of his verse. Annenskii himself deals mainly with the formal side of beauty, as if to underscore the formal aspect in Pushkin. Akhmatova, in turn, revives Annenskii's mood.

thereby imbuing her own poem with dual significance. In this panegyric address Annenskii himself employs tautology and a play on roots in close succession, that is, pleonastic expressions within the same sentence:

> Сто лет назад, в Москве, на Немецкой улице, родился человек, которому суждено было *прославить* свою родину и *стать* ее *славой*.
>
> Бог *дал* ему горячее и смелое *сердце* и дивный *дар* мелодией слов волновать *сердца* (5).
>
> Не *чувствуете* ли вы, как волны *чувства* поднимаются здесь у поэта с самого дна души (25). [emphasis mine][123]

/One hundred years ago, in Moscow, on German Street, was born a man, who was destined *to glorify* his fatherland and *to become* its *glory*. // God *gave* him an ardent and audacious *heart* and a wondrous *gift* of exciting *hearts* with the melody of words. // Do you not *feel*, how waves of *feeling* are surging here in the poet's work from the very bottom of his soul./

In the first paragraph there is morphological intensity with three words having the same fairly uncommon suffix: *urochishche, pristanishche, obitalishche*. This device of repetition and tautology signals a studied effort on the part of Annenskii and not inadvertent doubling. Indeed, this poet's precision of expression and style is widely accepted in scholarship, the following quotation from Zelinskii being but one example:

> It is not enough to say that he [Annenskii] was an extraordinarily refined and sentient stylist of precisely the spoken and not the written word; he was concerned with the meticulous choice of expressions not only to convey a certain meaning but also a particular sound.[124]

A superb craftsman in his poetry, Annenskii could hardly be haphazard in a speech prepared for publication. More likely, he is imitating Pushkin and, correspondingly, Akhmatova's objective is to illustrate her teacher's awareness of his predecessor. Timenchik discerns Akhmatova's impressionistic reflection of the mood in the speech in her cycle "In Tsarskoe Selo." This is precipitated by Annenskii's sensitive stylization predicated, in turn, on the recurrence of the devices in Pushkin. The latter has a propensity for repeating and reduplicating words to indicate intensity:

> Я *сладко, сладко* задремал ("Тургеневу," I, 316).

От воздержания муза чахнет
И *редко, редко* с ней грешу ("Дельвигу," II, 34)

И *долго, долго толковали*
Давнишни *толки* стариков ("Истина," I, 210; emphasis mine)

/I *sweetly, sweetly* slumbered ("To Turgenev") // From abstention my Muse pines // And *rarely, rarely* do I sin with her ("To Del'vig") // And for a *long, long time did discuss* // longstanding *discussions* the old men ("Truth")/.[125]

Pushkin makes wide stylistic use of synonyms: "Tvoiu *pogibel', smert'* detei / S zhestokoi radostiu vizhu" ("Vol'nost'"). /Your *ruin,* the *death* of your children / With cruel joy I see/ ("Freedom"). Above all, he often plays on roots to enhance his point or to underscore semantic possibilities in a word. Along with the above example *tolki, tolkovali,* many others come to mind:

Одни славянских од *громады громоздят* ("К Жуковскому,".I, 202)
Рано друг твой незабвенный / *Вздохом* смерти *воздохнул* ("К молодой вдове," I, 249)
Мой друг! *неславный* я поэт,/ Хоть христианин *православаный* ("В альбом Илличевскому," I, 263)
Какой святой, какая *сводня / Сведет* Жуковского со мной ("Записка к Жуковскому," I, 375)

/Some *pile up piles* of Slavic odes ("To Zhukovskii") // Early your unforgettable friend / *Sighed* the *sigh* of death ("To the Young Widow") // My friend! I am not a *glorious* poet, / Although (I am) an *Orthodox* Christian ("In Illichevskii's Album") // What saint, what *panderer* // *Will bring* Zhukovskii *together* with me ("A Note to Zhukovskii")/.

What Akhmatova is trying to demonstrate is something Eikhenbaum observed in her verse many years prior to this poem, namely, that the movement of her intonation and syntax have their genesis in Annenskii. Not only does she take him as her model, but she goes one step further by reflecting and developing his legacy (138). The imagery in the poem also corroborates this contention: "all the poison absorbed" echoes Annenskii's "the toxin of verse"; "all this toxin drank up" stems from Annenskii's "to benumb" (*odurmanit'*), which is more or less equivalent to *odur'*. His persona avers: "I would like with the toxin of verse / To benumb unbearable thoughts" (90). Setchkarev makes a facile observation concerning the torment of

creating poetry and the concurrent poison to which the poet is exposed:

> Poetry—we might even say art in general—is not Beauty. Even in its most genuine form it is only a suggestion of Beauty. A work of art which really succeeds does no more than hint at a sublime idea, which cannot be embodied or fully expressed on earth. The feeling that Beauty exists somewhere, but that it can never be shaped, is *tormenting*. The creative spirit of the artist feels Beauty behind the "hazards" of life. The artist takes pieces of life and forms them, but only vague and fleeting suggestions of the substance behind them can be reached. So the poet (the creative artist) is doomed: unlike the ordinary man, he feels the presence of Beauty, he is forced by an inner compulsion to reflect it, to shape it—and he can produce no more than a suggestion of it. This impossibility to do justice to an intense feeling always leaves a drop of poison even in the greatest artistic achievement (61).

Likewise of interest in the context of Akhmatova's poem with the notion "drank up all the toxin" is the pouring image in the epigraph to Annenskii's collection *Quiet Songs*: "From the sacred phial / Has been poured into this song, / But alas! not beauty . . . / Only the torment of the ideal." In both instances the poison is in liquid form.

Having assimilated the poetic legacy emblemized in Pushkin, and having contributed to it, Annenskii failed to receive his due glory, inasmuch as his influential collection, *The Cypress Chest,* was to bring posthumous fame only (hence Akhmatova's *ne dozhdalsia*). His work promoted future poetic development: Akhmatova's concept of *tomlen'e* (languor) is comparable to her mentor's *tomit'* (make languid, torment). As noted by Setchkarev, tragedy for Annenskii is the universal form of creativity, insofar as it is the eternal search for Beauty (155). In view of the fact that in the poetics of Annenskii death epitomizes the final disappointment of life, Akhmatova concludes her poem on this note, which integrates her teacher's main function *vdokhnul* by dint of the play on the root *-dokh-* with his demise *zadokhnulsia.* It means that, having breathed *inspiration* into all poets, Acmeists in particular, the poet *expired* through *suffocation.* Akhmatova may have employed this word because its form and probably origin ambivalently imply doing something to exhaustion with negative results.[126] The concluding word in the poem resounds forcefully and crudely in accordance with Annenskii's own practice. Indeed, Setchkarev has investigated the frequency of unpoetic words in Annenskii and the occasional strangeness of key words (113). The

final word in Akhmatova's poem fits this description. On the other hand, it promotes the cult of the suffering poet inculcated by Pushkin and mentioned by Annenskii in his address: "This juvenile piece ["To My Friend the Poet"] was the first step in that 'cult of the suffering of poets and great men,' which brought fame to Pushkin." (23).

It can, then, be asserted that the emphasis in the poem "Teacher" is on the structural correspondences. Akhmatova intimates that Annenskii served as her immediate teacher in the area of structure and syntax through Pushkin. This important influence does not rule out thematic parallels, such as Tsarskoe Selo and its statues, elsewhere in the *oeuvre* of the three poets, nor correspondences in imagery. Instead, it stresses Akhmatova's perception of the main area of her indebtedness. She gives acclaim to Eikhenbaum's early discovery dealing with her syntax and intonation. The poem acquires the significance of lucid, "Akhmatovian" self-analysis, interlaced with a tinge of Annenskii's "insolvability of dissonances" ("Poetry"), which in its refractions is not entirely alien to the verse of Anna Akhmatova. Accordingly, in the poem "Imitation from Annenskii" Akhmatova imitates her mentor following a thorough study of his technique. In "Teacher," on the other hand, the adaptation into her own *oeuvre* has become so much a part of it that she can demonstrate through specific usage the most salient areas of influence. The delineation can impart a ciphered story through consummate juxtaposition of devices from Annenskii and from Pushkin.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Three-Tiered Edifices

The poem "Teacher" (1945) is the earliest of Akhmatova's poems which lend themselves to analysis in terms of three levels through utilization of subtexts and allusions from two other authors bearing a strong semantic relation. Two other later poems, "Oh, how heady is the fragrance of the carnation" (1957) and "Do not frighten me with a terrible fate" (#253; 1959) practice the same device. Conceivably, triple layers became a viable artistic device for Akhmatova only after the creation of "Teacher." This fact could explain the reason for changing an important line in the *Poem without a Hero* as late as June 1955. According to Lidiia Chukovskaia in *Notes on Anna Akhmatova*: "She made corrections in one of the strophes of 'Tails'—she now made it: 'The case [*shkatulka*] has a double bottom.' " A footnote (#3) added to the earlier excerpts in Chukovskaia *In Memory of Anna Akhmatova* records the change made to triple bottoms: "In April of 1960 the 'double bottom' turned into a 'triple' " (148). Conceivably, until this time Akhmatova had poems with predominant allusions to one writer and/or she did not care to comment on the ones referring to two authors. Anything more than two levels was probably not as fully developed nor designed with such purpose as later. By 1960, however, the number of such poems had risen, and her readers and critics had not yet discovered the unique device and the purposeful message behind it. She was therefore willing to provide a clue to the existence of the levels.[127] Thus far the three instances of investigated triple-level poems all reveal an important reason for fusing the specific works of two other writers with the given poem by Akhmatova. This chapter will address the second instance of dual-level subtexts where the hidden level is likewise Pushkin; thereafter a summary will follow of a study by Anna Lisa Crone in which the hiddenmost level is not Pushkin but Nikolai Nekrasov.[128] The reason for Akhmatova's usage of Pushkin stems not only from her veneration of the great master, but also from the fact that Akhmatova discovered layering in him in the "Queen of Spades." Notably, Chukovskaia in *Notes on Anna Akhmatova* quotes Akhmatova as exclaiming: "How complex the 'Queen

of Spades' is! Layer on layer" (I, 21). Further, in retort to an effusive reader who commended the simplicity of her poems, Akhmatova told Chukovskaia, "They think they understand Pushkin too." She deplored "simple" poetry, as witnessed by her advice to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn not to write any more verse.

The poem "O, how heady is the fragrance of the carnation" constitutes part of the cycle "Secrets of the Craft." Originally, it had been slated for a cycle "A Wreath to the Dead." However, the poems intended for this cycle were scattered elsewhere for various reasons.[129] Akhmatova utilizes the influence of Pushkin on her as well as on her friend of long standing, Osip Mandel'shtam, through a series of conscious parallels. They are based on her personal affinity for her illustrious predecessor's legacy and her own permeation with it. The poem, dedicated to Mandel'shtam, is short and concentrated in its final form.

Осипу Мандельштаму

О, как пряно дыханье гвоздики,
Мне когда-то приснившейся там—
Там, где кружатся Эвридики,
Бык Европу везет по волнам;
Там, где наши проносятся тени,
Над Невой, над Невой, над Невой:
Там, где плещет Нева о ступени,—
Это пропуск в бессмертие твой.

To Osip Mandel'shtam

O how spicy is the scent of a carnation
That once upon a time I dreamed—
There where all the Eurydices whirl
And the bull takes Europa over the waves.
There where our shadows sweep past
Across the Neva, across the Neva, across the Neva:
There where the Neva laps the stone step—
That's your pass to immortality.

At first glance, there is little to justify the placement of the lyric in a cycle dealing with the secrets of the craft, other than the poem's dedication to a poet and the concluding line concerning Mandel'shtam's immortality. The contents sounds like a simple reference to the years that Mandel'shtam spent in the city on the Neva River. Admittedly, the city and the river are pivotal to the *oeuvre* of both poets. The carnation, probably forming part of the wreath, serves as

a symbol of divine love, fascination and woman's love, which alone explains little. Akhmatova, however, following certain poetic tradition, consigns to this flower the power of retelling old stories, that is, the carnation's association with memory and voice. In an earlier poem of Akhmatova ". . . And on the steps to meet" (#64), which develops the theme of fickle love under the guise of the Cinderella story, the prince presents her with three carnations as a token of his love and faithfulness. Moreover, in a sonnet on Pushkin's statue "The Bronze Poet" Annenskii ascribes to the carnation miraculous powers of bringing to life the monument:

> Не шевелись—сейчас гвоздики засверкают,
> Воздушные кусты сольются и растают,
> И бронзовый поэт, стряхнув дремоты гнет,
> С подставки на траву росистую спрыгнёт.
>
> Don't move—the carnations are about to sparkle;
> Bushes of air, to blend and to thaw;
> And the bronze poet, shaking off sleepiness,
> To jump from his pedestal onto the dew-wet grass.

The connection of carnations with Pushkin coming to life yokes Mandel'shtam and his predecessor through the themes of life after death and immortality through verse. Coincidentally, the Armenian poet Avetik Isahakian, whose poems Akhmatova translated, employs an image similar to Akhmatova as a refrain to his widely acclaimed philosophical masterpiece, the narrative in verse, *Abul Ala Maari*. In it the wind whispered the tales of a thousand and one nights through the fragrance of the carnation. The translation by Valerii Briusov into Russian reads: "Aromatom gvozdiki rasskazyval veter / Skazki drevnikh vremen, skazki Shekherezad." / Through the aroma of the carnation the wind narrated / Tales of ancient times, the tales of Scheherazade / (401).

Upon closer scrutiny, allusions in this lyric to the works of Mandel'shtam become apparent. A longer variation of the poem has been published in the Struve edition and more recently in the Zhirmunskii edition under the title "From the 'Wreath to the Dead,' " which contains the poem quoted above in its center, following line eight and then followed by lines sixteen through twenty. The differences between the two versions in the eight common lines are negligible. Both versions are dated 1958. The longer version has more allusions to poems by Mandel'shtam and to his life.[130]

Я над ними склонюсь, как над чашей,
В них заветных заметок не счесть—
Окровавленной юности нашей
Это черная нежная весть.

Тем же воздухом, так же над бездной
Я дышала когда-то в ночи,
В той ночи и пустой и железной,
Где напрасно зови и кричи.

О, как пряно дыханье гвоздики,
Мне когда-то приснившейся там,—
Это кружатся Эвридики,
Бык Европу везет по волнам.

Это наши проносятся тени
Над Невой, над Невой, над Невой,
Это плещет Нева о ступени,
Это пропуск в бессмертие твой.

Это ключики от квартиры,
О которой теперь ни гу-гу . . .
Это голос таинственной лиры,
На загробном гостящей лугу.

I'll lean over them as over a chalice;
No counting their testamentary marks—
This sweet, black news
Of our blood-stained youth.

Once upon a time at night
I breathed the air of the abyss,
The sort of empty, iron night
Where there's no point to call or shout.

O how spicy the scent of a carnation
That once upon a time I dreamed—
That's where all the Eurydices whirl
And the bull takes Europa over the waves.

That's where our shadows sweep past
Across the Neva, across the Neva, across the Neva;
That's where the Neva laps the stone step—
That's your pass to immortality.

That's the keys to the apartment
Which is now hush-hush . . .
That's the sound of a magical lyre
Visiting the fields of the dead.

Our concern here is with the parallels of the shorter version as the one polished for the express reason of better conveying Akhmatova's message. It is the version published in all recent collections. The pivotal parallels to Mandel'shtam's poetry are the following.

The line "That's where Eurydices whirl" stems from Mandel'shtam's poem "Slightly glimmers the illusory stage." Its subject is the opera and leaving it after a performance of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice*. It will be recalled that in Greek methology Eurydice was the wife of Orpheus, the inventor of music and poetry. Upon the demise of Eurydice from a snake bite, Orpheus tried to return her to life by charming the keepers of Hades. In some versions of the myth he succeeded. The reference to former beauties, resurrected by the power of poetry, is plausible in Akhmatova insofar as she is reminiscing; in Mandel'shtam, on the other hand, such an intention is dubious. Akhmatova's lyric conjures up the past when Eurydices whirled during a performance and when she and Mandel'shtam were young. In the opera it is ballerinas who are whirling, as noted by Zhirmunskii in his notes to the Poet's Library edition:

> The mythological images of this poem could be prompted to Akhmatova by artistic impressions of the prerevolutionary years: by Gluck's opera "Orpheus," produced by V. E. Meierkhol'd in 1911 in the Mariinskii Theater (The Round Dance of the "Eurydices," whirling in "the meadow of the Beyond"), and by the well-known painting of V. A. Serov "The Abduction of Europa" (1910; p. 482). Further elucidation of the Eurydice image is found in the first part of Nadezhda Mandel'shtam's memoirs, *Hope against Hope*:
>
> M. often wrote the program notes for concerts, notably for a performance of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice*. He was very pleased when he walked along the street and heard his story of Eurydice [*rasskaz pro golubku-Evridiku*] coming over all the loudspeakers (141).

In this passage Nadezhda Mandel'shtam deliberately reiterates the same words as in her husband's poem: "Nichego, golubka Evridika, / Chto u nas studenaia zima" (Never mind, dear Eurydice, / That it is cold winter here).

The second major allusion to Mandel'shtam's poetry is the line "The bull carries Europa over the waves," which has its provenance in another poem, "With the pink foam of fatigue around his soft lips."[131] This poem treats the abduction of Europa by the bull. The

germane lines are "S rozovoi penoi ustalosti u miagkikh gub / Iarostno volny roet byk" (With the pink foam of fatigue around his soft lips / The bull is furiously plowing through the waves) and: "Gor'ko vnimaet Evropa moguchii plesk, / Tuchnoe more krugom zakipaet v kliuch" (Europa bitterly hearkens to the powerful splash, / The fertile sea boils over all around in a spring).

These enumerated facts scarcely warrant the poem's inclusion in a cycle on poetry and poetic creation. There is no mention of Mandel'shtam's creative process, aside from the assertion that his immortality, obviously resulting from his poetry, is secure on the banks of the Neva. Zhirmunskii observes in his notes to the Poet's Library edition: "St. Petersburg and the Neva River occupy no less an important place in the poetry of the young Mandel'shtam, than in the verse of Akhmatova" (482). The biographical and creative aspects are thus yoked. These considerations are all accurate so far as themes are concerned. However, if we turn our attention to imagery and structure, a new dimension emerges. A second, ciphered layer of allusions, interwoven with the more obvious references, reminiscent of Mandel'shtam, opens further possibilities. It is precisely this underlying poetry that binds the poem "O, how heady is the fragrance of the carnation" to the cycle on the "secrets of the craft."

The ciphered layer refers to the introduction to Pushkin's long poem *Ruslan and Liudmila* which begins "U lukomor'ia dub zelenyi" (By the seastrand a green oak / Stands). Characteristically for Akhmatova, the similarity is not slavish: like Pushkin himself, she changes words even in quoted epigraphs.[132] The noteworthy parallels in imagery are three. Where Pushkin has "kot uchenyi / Vse khodit po tsepi krugom" (the learned cat / Keeps walking around on the chain), Akhmatova has "gde kruzhatsia Evridiki." In both instances the motion is circular. Given the fact that Mandel'shtam makes no mention of Eurydice in motion, this parallel with Pushkin is all the more significant. Second, where Pushkin has "Tam v oblakakh pered narodom / Cherez lesa, cherez moria / Koldun neset bogatyria" (There in the clouds before the people / Across forests, across seas / A sorcerer is carrying a brave warrior), Akhmatova has "Byk Evropu vezet po volnam." Here both figures, endowed with extraordinary powers, carry someone across a body of water. With Pushkin it is through the air, with Akhmatova it is across the water. And third, where Pushkin has "Tam o zare prikhlynut volny / Na breg peschanyi i pustoi"

(There at dawn the waves rush / To the sandy and barren bank), Akhmatova has "Tam, gde pleshchet Neva o stupeni." Both usages reflect the image of waves splashing against a bank.

Still another point of similarity lies in the claim of both poets that they have been in the land under discussion. Where Pushkin states "I tam ia byl" (And I was there), Akhmatova has "Mne kogda-to prisnivshiisia tam" and "Tam, gde nashi pronosiatsia teni." In both instances these are magical places where uncanny things occur. Indeed, Akhmatova's *Poem without a Hero* exemplifies that one of the characteristics of St. Petersburg is that anything can happen there: "gde vse ugodno mozhet sluchit'sia."[133] Both Pushkin and Akhmatova observe taboos for the magical land by dint of *tam* (there). Although they refrain from naming the place directly, they still concretize. Akhmatova mentions the Neva River and the embankment steps (*stupeni*), which serve to pinpoint the locus to the city limits; further along in his introduction Pushkin exclaims: "Tam russkii dukh . . . tam Rus'iu pakhnet" (There is Russian spirit there . . . it smells of Russia there). One surmizes that the settings are St. Petersburg and Russia respectively. The time is the irretrievable past. In connection with this investigation, Victor Terras commented that *tam* in Pushkin's introduction alludes to the land of the dead. His observation stresses the significance attached to the image of Eurydice who was resurrected by the power of poetry and music in some versions of the myth as well as to the notion of *tam,* the magical Russian past in Akhmatova's poem. This past is the place of their youth.

Frequent repetition of *tam* in both poems further corroborates the similarities in imagery. With Pushkin in thirty-five lines *tam* is repeated nine times in initial position and four times elsewhere. The anaphoric repetition, in particular, emphasizes the word and strengthens its impact. With Akhmatova *tam* is repeated three times anaphorically in a single eight-line poem. In one instance *tam* in final position is followed immediately by the same word in initial position, which further amplifies it. Equally pertinent is the fact that Akhmatova has three times substituted *eto* from the longer version of her poem with *tam* in the shorter version.

Akhmatova's poem, then, contains levels of allusions. The first level, from Mandel'shtam, is obvious by dint of the dedication; the second level, from Pushkin, is ciphered. As in the poem "Teacher," such poetic structure is by no means a mere intellectual exercise for Akhmatova. Quite the contrary, everything here is motivated and

predicated on her sentient acquaintance with Mandel'shtam's poetic practice. For, as Omry Ronen has shown in his essay on Mandel'shtam's "Kashchei," Mandel'shtam himself derived imagery from the introduction to Pushkin's *Ruslan and Liudmila*:

> Kaščej of the Russian folk tradition is not only a miserly keeper of treasures, but also a chained captive . . . which is quite consistent with the old Russian meaning of the word. However, the texts underlying Mandel'shtam's image of Kaščej are not folk tales or bylinas, but the introduction to *Ruslan i Ljudmila* (in which, unlike in the fairy tale, both Kaščej and Cat appear). . . . The important item remaining to be deciphered in this text is the cat, or rather the cat's eye, since the cat that appears . . . is largely a metonymic development—as well as a reference to *Ruslan i Ljudmila* (*kot učenyj*). This subtext clearly links the cat with the gift of poetic narration.[134]

Thus the carnation and the cat are parallel, complementary images connected with poetic narration and the retelling of ancient stories.

Having discovered Mandel'shtam's usage of imagery from Pushkin, Akhmatova expanded on it. She did not simply reiterate Mandel'shtam's borrowings from Pushkin, for she rarely copied faithfully. Instead, she created her own frame based on Mandel'shtam's general poetic themes and imagery, thereby enriching them with structure and imagery from Pushkin in a manner evocative of the great poet. Akhmatova's example for change in imitation is Pushkin himself. Indeed, in her study "Benjamin Costant's 'Adolphe' in Pushkin's Work" Akhmatova notes that "Onegin's Letter" coincides almost literally with the text of *Adolphe*, which in her estimation is unusual for Pushkin: "Usually in Pushkin's borrowings the source undergoes a certain reworking and further development. But here we see almost literal translation" (81). Akhmatova is again following in the footsteps of Pushkin. Above all, this device of dual subtexts coupled with the theme of immortality in Akhmatova's poem—expressed in the line "Eto propusk v bessmertie tvoi"—underscores Mandel'shtam's own right to artistic immortality by proving his proximity to Pushkin. Moreover, Mandel'shtam himself made wide use of subtexts in his verse.[135] In this poem, then, Akhmatova shares the trade secrets of Mandel'shtam.

In a detailed analysis of Akhmatova's lyric "A dusky lad wandered through the lanes" (#4), Roman Timenchik perceives in it reverberations of Innokentii Annenskii, his poem "Bronze Poet," in particular, and even his speech on Pushkin (131). Regrettably, Timenchik fails

to develop his discovery, nor does he attempt to unravel the purpose behind the device of multilayered allusions. As we have seen, the poem "Oh, how heady is the fragrance of the carnation" is far more intricate than it appears to be at first glance. The same is probably true of "A dusky lad wandered through the lanes" too, for both poems are comprised of allusions to works of poets other than those to whom they are overtly dedicated. Until recently, overlooking the covert message seems to have been a shortcoming in otherwise fine Soviet studies of Akhmatova where sources and allusions are discovered and catalogued, as if the poet's main concern were to conduct through intertextuality a study in eclecticism. They make little effort to cohere the subtexts into the writer's poetic world, and rarely are they able to find a purpose or poetic message in the allusions. Consequently, their lists of carefully recorded correspondences will serve as the raw material for future investigation. The study "Akhmatova and Kuzmin" by Roman Timenchik et al. is a case in point. Vladimir Toporov's *Akhmatova and Blok* has more analysis and is a step forward in Soviet literary criticism.[136] Thus the verse of Akhmatova requires explanation for the fullest literary comprehension and artistic appreciation.

The American scholar Anna Lisa Crone, on the other hand, not only finds literary sources for Akhmatova's poem, but she provides convincing explanations and examples for her observations in her article "Three Sources for Akhmatova's 'Do not frighten me with a terrible fate.' " Crone contends that several of Fedor Sologub's contiguous poems in the first volume of his collected works have a single antecedent from the nineteenth-century civic poet Nikolai Nekrasov. Sologub's lyrics "At a misty time" and "Wind in the Chimney" stem from Nekrasov's "Whether I am driving at night along a dark street." The converse occurs in Akhmatova's piece "Do not frighten me with a terrible fate": she compressed the potential connections of three consecutive poems of Sologub: "Closing my eyes, I kiss you," "Under the cold power of the fog" and "Do not frighten me with a threat." Akhmatova engineers a reverse, mirror image of Sologub's device of using Nekrasov. Crone perceives Akhmatova's poem as comment on the lyrics of Sologub as well as an attempt at broadening the range of interpretations in her own poem. The poet polemicizes with the negation of a positive value to this world. The pessimistic melancholy put forth by Sologub in the three poems is refuted in "Do not frighten

me with a terrible fate," where Akhmatova suggests the memory of the beautiful, an implicit beautiful sensual or romantic love, as an antidote to it. Thus the purpose behind allusions to poets and their works surfaces through careful reading.

PART FOUR

The Confluence of Parts into a Whole: Titles, Epigraphs and the Collections

The function of titles, to designate and to describe, has undergone considerable changes through the ages. The Romans, for example, would give a book of elegies the title of the principal poem which focused the essence of the collection. This first poem in the collection was actually the *last* poem written in chronological sequence. It was usually dedicated to the poet's patron or to a close friend, hence the dedication of the entire collection in his honor. Apart from being dedicatory, the first poem was often synoptical—that is, anticipatory of the elaboration to follow in other poems.[137] In the fourteenth century the Renaissance poet Petrarca entitled his love lyrics generally, *Canzoniere*, with subtitles in honor of his beloved Laura: *In Vita di Madonna Laura* and *La morte di Madonna Laura*. The sixteenth-century poet Pierre Ronsard chose generic titles (*Hymnes, Elégies, Poèmes, Odes*) as well as thematic titles for a collection of sonnets and songs (*Amours*). Shakespeare was diverse for his plays. He used sayings which were to become important as subtitles during Classicism (*As You Like It, Much Ado About Nothing*), names as during Romanticism (*Othello, Romeo and Juliet*), descriptive titles (*The Tempest, The Merchant of Venice*), or chronological titles showing the time of the play's performance (*Twelfth Night: What You Will*). In the last play the subtitle helps to explain the title.[138]

In more recent times titles were often followed by explanatory subtitles, as in Molière (*Sganarelle, ou le Cocu imaginaire*; *La Tartuffe, ou l'Imposteur*). With the Romantic interest in the individual and later the advent of naturalism and realism in the nineteenth century there was a bevy of titles naming the protagonists: Dickens, *Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, Nicholas Nickelby*; Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, *Ammalat-bek*; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*; Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin*; Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina*. On the other hand, titles to collec-

tions of poetry in the nineteenth century often continued the tradition of the generic title: Pushkin, *Poems (1826)*. The list could go on and into depth; however, the present objective is the titles to Akhmatova's seven collections of twentieth-century verse. Traditionally, collections of verse, unlike novels and plays, do not bear subtitles. Instead, the explanatory function is relegated to epigraphs, which are less frequent in prose. All of Akhmatova's collections have epigraphs, some of which were later additions: namely, for *Evening*, *Rosary*, *Anno Domini* and *Plantain*. They provide some clarification as well as concurrent mystification of the contents. Owing to the selection of epigraphs from other authors, these lines link a collection more firmly to the literary tradition, constituting an acknowledged literary continuum. Indeed, in her autobiographical presentation of the philosophy of time "Man and Time," the Soviet Russian writer Marietta Shaginian avers that an epigraph is as indispensable for a writer as a "key" is for a composer.[139]

CHAPTER TWELVE

Romanticism in *Evening*

The first collection, *Evening*, was published in 1912 when Akhmatova was twenty-two years old. It commences with a definition of tortuous love in the poem "Love" (#1) and ends with cruelty to a love "You came thrice to try me" (#46). For the premier collection of a youthful author one would expect titles like Morning, Spring, Love—the leitmotif—or Grief, rather than Evening.[140] This chapter will trace the factors that determined the poet's choice and will show the appropriateness of the choice for the thematics.

Originally Akhmatova had intended to entitle the collection "Pigweed," and then the opening poem would have been "Ditty" (#23) (I at sunrise). The poet had planned to conclude the collection with a poem on a sleepless night "The pillow is already hot" (Chukovskaia, I, 127). While the theme of weeds, connected with love, fire and creation remained with the poet throughout her creative years, no less significant was the switch in titles and in the opening poem. Most books of Akhmatova's poetry, other than the editions Poet's Library and Library of Soviet Poetry, which both begin with the poem "Love," open significantly with the piece "I pray to the window ray" (#47) with themes of sorrow and light imagery.[141] Owing to the recurrence in the seven collections of many leading themes, the poet kept rearranging the poems to accentuate the favored leitmotif of the moment as later she would regroup poems into new cycles.[142] The result is chaos for the scholar. At first the most authoritative book was considered to be *The Course of Time* due to supervision by the author; more recently, in many respects this volume has been superseded by the Poet's Library edition. However, the two open with different poems. For purposes of emphasis on Romanticism, the Poet's Library edition is suitable, although the editor Zhirmunskii's choice unhappily obfuscates the more pervasive fire theme, which underlies all of Akhmatova's verse and not primarily this one collection.

The epigraph in *Evening* from André Theuriet: "La fleur des vignes pousse, / Et j'ai vingt ans ce soir" (The flower of the grapevine grows, and I am twenty years old today), added in 1940, underscores the age

of the persona and of Akhmatova the poet at the time of writing the first poems in 1909—twenty years old. In connection with the persona's age and the year the observation of Zhirmunskii in the Poet's Library edition becomes particularly noteworthy, that the poet's intention was to single out the poems of 1909 in a section of the collection called Preeveningtide:

> In one of her working notebooks of the early sixties Akhmatova outlined a plan: "From 'Kievan Notebook' 1909 make 'Preeveningtide.' " In this section she proposed to include eight poems (no. 27, 487, 47–52). The collection "Evening" ("First Notebook of Tsarskoe Selo") should have opened with no. 17 and no. 55. The plan remained unrealized (452).

It is significant that the poems to be entered into the Kievan Notebook would be entitled Preeveningtide and not *Den'* (Afternoon, or Daytime), seeing that the former is closer to *Evening* and retains its connotations. Although *Evening* was published in the spring of 1912 when Akhmatova was twenty-two years old, still the addition of the epigraph stresses the fact of the persona just turning twenty on that evening which presents the poems in the collection. Indeed, just during the day she was a teenager and not an adult, hence the continuing importance of Preeveningtide. Moreover, an emphasis on the number twenty for that particular evening raises the possibility of zeroing in more closely on the time since in official time twenty hours equals eight o'clock in the evening, the height of evening. Importantly, the sole surviving picture of Akhmatova by the artist Modigliani depicts her symbolically as a takeoff on the allegorical figure of "Night" by Michelangelo, as discovered by a friend of the poet, N. Khardzhiev:

> . . . Akhmatova's image evokes the figure of one of the most famous architectural-sculptural structures of the ages. I mean the allegorical figure "Night" on the cover of the sarcophagus of Juliano Medici, probably the most significant and mysterious of female images by Michelangelo.
>
> The compositional structure of Modigliani's drawing can be traced to "Night." Like "Night," the figure of Akhmatova reposes in an inclined position.[143]

Additionally, the epigraph to *Evening* shows that the flower of the grapevine, the unfulfilled product, as it were, grows to become a grape, that is to bear fruit. In connection with the grape an interesting

parallel can be drawn with the definition of grape symbolism by Gertude Jobes in her *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols*:

> Exultation, fruitfulness, good cheer, good fellowship, intoxication, lust, pleasure, youth. . . . Attribute of Bacchus, Caleb, Christ, Dionysus, Joshua, Mithra, and other gods of fertility and wine. Word cognate with agapemone, Greek for love feast; Greek for grape is *rax*, equal to rex (king) (I, 684).

Thus exultation, lust, pleasure and youth interlace in the symbolism as in the poems of the collection. Kings and princes figure in the image of the male beloved in "The Gray-eyed King," "Believe me, not a sharp snake fang" (#28) and "She keeps grieving for the forgotten" (#30). Given the concurrent love emphasis in the epigraph's symbolism as well as in the opening poem, the question arises as to why the meaning of evening is so pivotal that in the 1960s Akhmatova planned to reorganize poems to form the "earlier" section Pre-eveningtide in order to bring to the foreground the meaning of *Evening*.

On the obvious level, evening is a favorite time for trysts, but there is also a deeper, literary level. The age of the persona, pretwenties, since the epigraph is a later addition, points to the poems having been written while she was still in her teens. Now the time is evening, dusk and night; the events in many of the poems take place in the evening, and the collection was to have concluded with a poem on sleepless night, that is predawn. Given the age and the time, the persona is assuredly making reference to the Romantic conception of evening and night as the time of premature love in the young.[144] Akhmatova's Romantic reasoning is best elucidated through the argument of Milada Součková in her book *The Czech Romantics*. In it Součková links the Romantic symbolism of night to the *Hymns* of Novalis, whereby the adolescent is initiated to the mysteries of love and the quickened agonies of the heart and mind, to the nineteenth-century Czech Romantic poet Karel Macha. Součková professes that in the work of Macha "Pictures from My Life" in the Picture "The Evening at Bezdež" the writer "symbolized the life cycle in terms of the day's progression; but in pure Romantic vein, he began with the evening as the symbol of childhood." Likening this interpretation of evening as the symbol of childhood and early youth with the Romantics, Součková proceeds on the symbolism of dusk:

> The child of the Romantics is born of the forces of nature; its parents

> are but a temporal cause in its appearance. This child is a premature Hyperion, symbol of the poet's creative forces. Objects near the child are visible through the evening dusk, while the far horizon is dim shade. As the evening fades into night, the child grows into adolescence.[145]

This time of day "accentuates the acuteness" of the "youth's sensual receptivity." Indeed, it is a biological fact that human senses grow keener at night. Further, Součková enlarges on her comparison: "Not unlike some flowers the human soul opens with the dusk and transports the adolescent dreams and the imagination toward the infinite. With night, the limited terrestrial view disappears." Accordingly, Akhmatova's persona is primarily preoccupied with the process of discovering life and love in *Evening*; night serves as a catalyst. In keeping with the Romantic conception of the isolated development in the hero, there is no mention in the collection of parents or siblings for the persona. True, in the long ballad *By the Very Sea*, which evolves the theme of *Evening* and the subsequent collection *Rosary*, there is an invalid twin sister, the other, pure half of the Gemini. Moreover, in other collections there is the legendary Akhmatova grandmother, there are siblings but rarely natural parents.[146]

Still more of Součková's observations on Macha's approach are applicable to *Evening* as well as to *Rosary* and in part to *White Flock*:

> This adolescent is never to attain maturity. Nor will he acquire wisdom through the long apprenticeship of learning. His wisdom will come to him partly through the premature experience of his passions, and partly through the spontaneous development of his Genius.

Curiously, the parallels drawn by Součková between Macha's heroine Marinka and Mignon of Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister*, both youthful erotic types marked by death, find a resonance in Akhmatova's enigmatic bipartite piece "Alisa" (#30–31). In the second poem there is a reference to Min'ona:

> "Как поздно! Устала, зеваю . . ."
> —"Миньона, спокойно лежи,
> Я рыжий парик завиваю
> Для стройной моей госпожи."
>
> "So late! I'm tired, yawning . . ."
> "Mignonne, lie still;
> I'm setting an auburn wig
> For my shapely lady."

The time of adolescent maturity for Akhmatova is earlier than night—it focuses on evening. By the same token, her personas do not attend school, the only mention of schooling in Akhmatova occurs later in the collection *Rosary,* in the poem "In straps were the book and the pencil box" (#94), which deals biographically with her meetings with Gumilev. This attitude is in contrast to Pushkin in whose *oeuvre* the Lyceum represents an important theme. Later in the *Seventh Book* Akhmatova will have a poem "Teacher" dedicated to the poetic inspiration her generation derived from Annenskii, but there is no direct teaching involved.

Although in most poems of Akhmatova the female persona is the one to suffer, in a sizable number of poems the speaker herself inflicts pain on the man and even causes his death inadvertently, as in the pieces "I clenched my hands under the dark veil" (#7), "Over the Water" (#45), "I both cried and repented" (#54) and *By the Very Sea.* In this connection the following definition by Součková concerning Macha's usage of imagery becomes partly applicable:

> And because of his atypical growth, his emotionality becomes a kind of perversion. Innocence and natural joys are corrupted and degenerate into cruelty or crime. As there is no middle way for this adolescent poet, so there is no middle age. The only path open to him is that of turbulent passion and premature death. There is no compromise leading to adjustment or to moderation. Thus, his brand of wisdom does not come as the fruit of experience, but is an *élan* grasped in an ecstasy of poetry. Death is not the physiological outcome of life, but a leap and a choice. The perfect last moment has to be sustained by youthful senses capable of unrestrained self-annihilation (54–55).

Granted Akhmatova's emotional, sensitive persona commits no legal crimes, still she is far from innocent as evidenced by her infidelity and her husband's crime in "The Gray-eyed King," her naive callousness toward the fisherman in *By the Very Sea* and in poems on the youth's suicide: "The boy said to me: 'How painful it is' " (#176), "The high vaults of the church" (#77). Pursuant to Součková's apt observation, Romantic life for Macha is a concentration on a few supreme moments. Memory itself is young, no older than twenty or thirty years, and the sharpness of sensibility lasts until the very end of life. Above all, the soul retains unimpaired its power to suffer and to inflict suffering. Later Akhmatova's persona will contemplate suicide as a solution to her pain; in the poem "The memory of the sun dims in my heart" (#8) barely discernible hints give way to overt depiction of a

watery death and the lover's ensuing remorse "I no longer have need for my legs" (#15). Furtive thoughts of suicide intertwine with the motif of grapes, hence past lust and pleasure, in the piece "Sweet is the smell of blue grapes" (#39). In "The Funeral" (#43) the male speaker seeks a suitable burial site for the dead woman. The double, that Romantic symbol of man's disharmony as well as the world's, makes a fleeting appearance in the poem "The Garden" (#144); subsequently, it will become very important for Akhmatova, particularly in *Poem without a Hero.*[147]

The numerous similarities with Romanticism notwithstanding, Akhmatova did not pattern her early verse solely on the Romantics in themes and motifs. The confluent moments are merely one of the treasurehouses of her verse along with tribute to her times and creativity tapped in many poems as indicated by her title and later in the epigraph. Thus in many pieces the personas convey the important concept of Romanticism, reechoed at the beginning of the century, namely: evening is a time of awakening, of keen perception and sensibility, of precocious maturity for the sensitive individual with susceptibility to love and suffering from its peripeties as in the poems "High in the sky a cloud was turning gray" (#9), "The door is ajar" (#10), "Song of the Last Meeting," "As through a straw you drink my soul" (#13) and "My husband whipped me with a patterned" (#21). Ostensibly, Akhmatova's choice of evening as a predominant theme likewise symbolizes her own early artistic maturity as well as her choice of love and grief as a Romantic leitmotif. Romantic heroes frequently experience sorrow and/or a premature demise, all of which finds reflection in several poems mentioned above. In some poems the heroine commits suicide, in others she dies of grief-induced illness. Sometimes the male falls prey to the situation. In order to enhance the qualities of evening, in many poems the time is explicitly evening: "Blue evening. The winds have tamely subsided" (#18), "The Gray-eyed King," "The Evening Room" (#33). In other poems the time could be evening or night "Song of the Last Meeting." In "Alisa" the popular Romantic motif of the masquerade figures, whereas in "Masquerade in the Park" (#32) the added theme of the Harlequin and Pierrot, beloved of the Romantics as well as the Symbolists, implies a nocturnal setting. Employing the characteristics of the ballad, that popular genre of the Romantics, Akhmatova heaps mystery, revealing sympathetic nature, grief and murder, strong passions and a spurious child in "The Gray-eyed King"—all of which abound in Romantic

literature.[148] Importantly, in this poem the time of the spouse's return and his announcement of the death is evening, as if he required the cover of dusk for courage to reveal the news. Furthermore, his work is nightwork, which is rather strange for the first decade of this century; indeed, it could be brigandry. Most probably, the husband killed the "king" out of jealousy and the persona is suspicious:

Слава тебе, безысходная боль!
Умер вчера сероглазый король.

Вечер осенний был душен и ал,
Муж мой, вернувшись, спокойно сказал:

"Знаешь, с охоты его принесли,
Тело у старого дуба нашли.

Жаль королеву. Такой молодой! . .
За ночь одну она стала седой."

Трубку свою на камине нашел
И на работу ночную ушел.

Дочку мою я сейчас разбужу,
В серые глазки ее погляжу.

А за окном шелестят тополя:
"Нет на земле твоего короля . . ."

All praise to you, inconsolable pain!
The gray-eyed king died yesterday.

The autumn evening was stifling and red;
When he came home, my husband said,

You know, they brought him in from the hunt,
Found his body beside an old oak.

I feel sorry for the queen. He was so young!
In the course of one night her hair turned gray."

He found his pipe by the fireplace
And went off to his nighttime work.

I'll wake my little daughter now
And look into her small gray eyes.

Outside the window the poplars whisper:
"Your king has gone to his long home."

Superbly interlaced with Romantic and Symbolist hints and reticence is the Romantic theme of unhappy marriages.[149] A concentration on accomplished facts for important areas points to loss of hope for the

future: the husband arrived, found his pipe, left for work; the king's body was brought from the hunt, it was found by the oak; the queen turned gray. The stifling present begins and ends the piece, showing the speaker's awareness of the death before her husband's announcement. The future holds only the daughter whom she will awaken.

Another poem "The Fisherman" (#35) makes evening the time of the adolescent girl's awakening to the disturbing fact of yearning for the virile young fisherman. Above all, evening through awakening represents a time of desire, of striving toward fulfillment and suffering when things go wrong. The collection begins with wary hope, as in the poems "Love" and "And the boy who plays the bagpipes" (#5) and ends with grief, as shown in the placement of poems as well as the unrealized plan involving the title "Pigweed." Even the introduction of the young Pushkin in the piece "A dusky lad wandered through the lanes" furthers the theme of juvenile love through the untold parallel with his own life and early poems as well as the mention of the French poet Evariste Parny, known for his erotic poetry. Moreover, the persistent folk elements, as in the poem "Bury, bury me, wind," constitute more tribute to Romanticism that elevated them to great literature.[150]

In sum, the first collection of Akhmatova's verse was titled *Evening,* because in Romantic literature evening is construed as the time of the life cycle and the day, when the sensitive precocious personality becomes active and aware of adult life, passion and grief, when he marshals his own intellectual resources. Akhmatova's introspective and subjective lyrics concentrate on the speaker's feelings, as in Romanticism. However, the Romantic aspect does not outweigh the Acmeist properties of the verse. Conversely, the Romantic elements serve to flesh out Akhmatova's Acmeist propensity for conciseness, clarity and reliance on objects as well as to add colorful nuances that make her work a continuation of world literature. For, as Sam Driver has pointed out in his book *Anna Akhmatova,* Acmeism was actually a kind of continuation and development of Symbolism (hence its Romantic basis), not a total rejection; instead, it was a new stage of development (42). And *Evening* was composed before the publication of the Acmeist manifestos. The result in the collection is that just as Romanticism mixed genres thereby breaking the rigid boundaries of Classicism, so too Akhmatova combined with her original ideas the

tenets, themes and motifs of several movements—Classicism, Romanticism, Symbolism—to which she added new elements that came to be known as Acmeist—to achieve her vaunted terse beautiful verse in a way all her own.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Semiramis and *Rosary*

Like Pushkin and Dostoevskii before her, Akhmatova is adept at reticence. She practices preterition by using the three dots beloved by Pushkin or by not saying enough and expecting her readers to work at completing and understanding her poetry.[151] The poet is equally at ease in not spelling out her message or image at all. As Sam Driver has shown in his book *Anna Akhmatova,* she can make the suggestion of black-on-white without enlisting the words; instead she says "a snowny night" (111). Conversely, Akhmatova can be excessively descriptive where a simple word would have sufficed to convey her thought, if not her device of obscuring through ornamentation. Driver has pointed this out in his examples of "to live" and others already quoted. More recently in Russian literature, the device of obscuring through ornamentation has been picked up by the poet Bella Akhmadulina. In her thematics it represents artistic dishonesty and writer's block.[152] Moreover, Akhmatova is at times descriptively taciturn, that is to say that she discourses without being specific on people who figure in her verse. Notably, in the early cycle "In Tsarskoe Selo," which is easily understood by all to refer to Pushkin, she never names him. All the same, since the locale figures in the title and one of his early favorite writers, Parny, is mentioned, and the entire mood of reverence for the great poet is spelled out, the clues suffice. Further, there are in Akhmatova less easily identifiable descriptions. A case in point is the first elegy from "Northern Elegies" with its stanza "And the woman . . . with a most rare name" referring to Akhmatova's mother Inna Erazmovna (507). The patronymic, deriving from the rare name Erazm, is indeed unusual in Russia.

Finally, E. Dobin has discovered in his book *The Poetry of Anna Akhmatova* "a description without a description" in *Poem without a Hero,* that of the Russian singer Shaliapin (216).

И опять тот голос знакомый,
Будто эхо горного грома,—
Наша слава и торжество!

Он сердца наполняет дрожью
И несется по бездорожью
Над страной, вскормившей его.

Once again that familiar voice,
Like a mountain-thunder echo,
Our glory and our pride!
It sets all hearts to trembling
And rushes even where roads don't run
Across the land that raised it.

Once more Akhmatova has been anticipated, it would appear, in this device by Pushkin. My article "Vehicles for Duality in Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman*: Similes and Period Lexicon" suggests the unspecified presence of Pugachev and his rebellion hidden in similes, apart from the more obvious references to the Decembrist Movement. Moreover, Andrej Kodjak in his book *Puškin's I. P. Belkin* also discerns implied presences.[153]

An earlier "description without a description," or rather, "a presence without a presence" in Akhmatova's second collection of verse, *Rosary*—that of the voluptuous Assyrian queen of the ninth century B.C., Semiramis—antedates Shaliapin. After uncovering her presence, I will draw parallels between Semiramis and certain of Akhmatova's personas.[154]

The collection bears an epigraph from Baratynskii:

Прости ж навек! Но знай,
Что двух виновных,
Не одного, найдутся имена
В стихах моих, в преданиях
любовных.

Farewell forever! But know
That two are to blame,
Not one, whose names
Will be found in my poems, these legends
of love.

Correspondingly, the opening triptych in the collection, "Confession" (#57–59), treats strong passion, namely parting and mutual guilt, love legends and poems of the persona that will reflect all aspects of their relationship. The speaker does not seek to derogate the lover alone or to exonerate only herself; on the contrary, she believes that they both share the guilt.

The second poem of the triptych—"You do not love, you do not want to look?"—features one of the strongest proclamations of passion ever enunciated by the persona: "How handsome you are, damned one," vividly illustrating her frequent love-hate relationship with the addressee. This triptych appears to conflict with the collection's beatific title, *Chetki,* translated into English as *Rosary* by all but Carl Proffer who chooses *Beads.*[155] Admittedly, the epigraph and the opening poems underscore love, not religion, which contrasts sharply with *Rosary.* Proffer's choice of *Beads,* on the other hand, focuses on a worldly aspect and continues the love thematics of *Evening.* In view of the absence of the word *chetki* from the collection, the entire contents must be considered in establishing the author's own definition of the title. The meaning of the word is crucial here. The seventeen volume dictionary of Russian defines *chetki* as "a cord strung with beads for counting off recited prayers and obeisances made by worshipers." Accordingly, the example from Pushkin there contrasts a string of beads to a rosary, or prayer beads, in figurative usage:

> В прохладе сладостной фонтанов:
> На нити праздного веселья
> Низал он хитрою рукой
> Прозрачной лести ожерелья
> И четки мудрости златой.
>
> In the fountains' sweet, cool shade
> His cunning hand strung on
> The threads of idle playfulness
> Necklaces of transparent flattery
> And beads of golden wisdom.

Neither do the other dictionaries diverge. In Pushkin's "Fountain of Bakhchisarai" *chetki* equals "worry beads." While all dictionaries advance the definition of prayer beads without mention of a necklace, still, an interpretation has been made in favor of a bead necklace in the Bannikov edition of Akhmatova's verse in picturing beads encircling a theater half mask. Predictably, elsewhere Pushkin uses *chetki* to connote a string of beads around the neck for purposes of repentance. Thus, unlike the Bannikov edition picture, a religious objective is still maintained:

> С той поры стальной решетки
> Он с лица не подымал.

И себе на шею четки
Вместо шарфа привязал.

Ever since then he hasn't taken
The steel grating off his face.
And he tied a string of beads
Instead of a scarf around his neck.

Possibly following Pushkin's example from "In the cool of delightful fountains" Akhmatova juxtaposes *chetki* and *ozherel'e* (necklace) in her ballad *By the Very Sea.* There the heroine relinquishes her religious belongings to her bed-ridden sister:

Из церкви придя, я сестре сказала:
"На тебе свечку мою и четки,
Библию нашу дома оставлю . . ." (343)

Home from church, I told my sister:
"Here are my candle and beads for you,
I'll leave our Bible home."

In return the invalid twin expects her sister the persona to receive worldly jewels from the long-awaited prince: "Will he bring you a necklace / And rings with blue stones?" Yet in Russian folklore "a light-blue stone" represents a dream and a chimera. Thus in relinquishing the rosary the persona seems actively to be inviting a necklace. In fact, in her *Dictionary of Symbols* Gertrude Jobes defines a bead chain as "memory, prayer, rosary. Also children, female principle, sexual intercourse" (I, 188).

Given Pushkin's usage of *chetki* worn around the neck, one can presumably find an old obscure meaning of the Russian word as a string of beads for the neck. Other than in *By the Very Sea* in the common meaning, the word *chetki* appears once in Akhmatova's collection *Plantain* in the poem "Around my neck is a row of small beads" (#232), where it definitely denotes a necklace of beads around the neck, if the usage is not metaphoric to connote, among other things, the tryst that did not take place and hence does not substitute passion with religion for solace.[156] In the context of this poem, as well as the collection *Rosary* there is a distinct image of sorrowful poems strung together to form a bead necklace. Akhmatova will become more explicit later in *Seventh Book* in her cycle "Verenitsa chetverostishii" ("A String of Quatrains"). Beads as words, strung to form a necklace in song, stem from a well-established tradition, with pearls

symbolizing tears, as in the historical novel *Sword of Islam* by Raphael Sabatini. The protagonist, Prospero Adorno, who authored *The Liguiad*, elaborates on this distinction in a scene where he sits in discussion with the lady of his heart:

> "Just words," she said, "The brightly coloured beads you string to make a necklace for the creature of a dream." He shook his head. . . . "Not brightly coloured. No. Nor beads. Pearls, Madonna. For pearls are the symbols of our tears, and there are tears in that; tears bright and pure and true as any that were ever shed."[157]

Sabatini develops the image to include the stringing of the pearl-poems in the hero's books or cycles: "Take thou these last few pearls mine art has strung" (110).[158]

In a similar vein Akhmatova juxtaposes motifs of love and grief with religion. The poem "The boy said to me: 'How painful it is!'" bespeaks the youth's hopeless love for the speaker, while in the poem "The high vaults of the church" the death of the youth as a result of unrequited love awakens in her belated grief. One of Akhmatova's personas, then, emerges as a *femme fatale* with regard to the fisherman and others. Another persona finds solace from unhappy love in religion and in being different as in the poem "You gave me a trying youth" (#88).

The motif of the beloved's face bearing similarity to "enigmatic, ancient countenances" in the poem "As common courtesy dictates" (#59) evokes ancient cultures, conceivably Assyria, a culture immensely popular in the second decade of the twentieth century and well known to Akhmatova.

Moreover, when the persona is away from home being unfaithful to her husband, she wears decorative necklaces in the poem "I both cried and repented" (#54). Their jingle—"jingling the necklaces"—sounds off an accusatory note in the imagination of the persona committing adultery, which has been aptly described by Sam Driver as "the tinkling necklace mocking her hypocrisy." The Russian words *ozherel'iami zvenia* are faintly evocative of bells ringing during a disaster. The gerundial form of "jingling" reserves for the speaker an active part in the sounds, as if she cannot easily contain her secret affair (60). These seductive images, coupled with the hints of Assyria in "ancient enigmatic countenances," as well as the necklace of a sensual woman, conjure up the lascivious Assyrian queen Semiramis (800 B.C.) and her enchanted necklace.[159] Semiramis's pearl necklace

receives fleeting mention in Moses of Khorene's *History of the Armenians* (fifth century), translated into English by Robert W. Thomson:

> Furthermore the fables of our own land confirm the learned Syrian in speaking of the death of Semiramis here, her flight on foot, her thirst and desire for water, and her drinking; and, when the armed men drew near, the [throwing of] the talisman into the sea, and the saying derived therefrom: "The pearls of Semiramis into the sea."[160]

The pearls of Semiramis hardly seem to fit into this history unless one compares the final lines above with a folksong quoted in the epic novel *Vardanank* by Denerik Demirjian, dealing with the battle of Avarair between the Armenians and the Persians in 451 A.D. It clarifies the pearls as a talisman and the voluptuousness of Semiramis:

> The myriad beads of Semiramis,
> The enchanted beads of Semiramis,
> In the bosom of the sea were undulating,
> In the sea's ripple were spreading.
>
> The necklace fires a passionate breast,
> The enchanted beads strung for love;
> Countless brave men are fired by
> The enchanted beads of Semiramis.
>
> REFRAIN: The myriad beads of Semiramis.
> The enchanted beads of Semiramis.
>
> The beauty of her face is luminous,
> Her breasts are enchanting moons,
> Neither weapon nor troops were able
> To withstand the enchantress.
>
> REFRAIN:
>
> Only the patriarch Arman [was able to]
> Seize from the sorceress the charm,
> Into the sea he cast that necklace,
> The enchanted beads of Semiramis.
>
> The myriad beads of Semiramis,
> The enchanted beads of Semiramis,
> In the bosom of the sea were undulating
> In the ripples of the sea were scattering.[161]

The return of the pearls to their original element, water, terminates evil sexual powers. It is, it would seem, a return to nature, away from

the complications of civilization. And only an elderly man, no longer susceptible to sexual charms, can snatch the magical beads from Semiramis without being fired with desire for her. It will be recalled that Aphrodite's necklace also made the wearer irresistibly beautiful. Akhmatova's persona is very attractive to the men in the poems, possibly, through the hovering presence of the beads in the collection. Conceivably, the reason for omitting mention of *chetki* within the collection is to observe taboo for the charm, thereby securing its powers.

Coincidentally, Akhmatova herself liked to wear beads. Several photographs picture her wearing different ones, including "the necklace of black agate" mentioned in *Poem without a Hero* (358). The strand of black beads was a gift to Akhmatova from her grandmother. It turns into a ring, a kind of talisman, in the tripartite poem "Tale of the Black Ring" (#266) (*Anno Domini*):

> Grandmother had a necklace of black and white stones. She gave me the strand with the black stone. And I used to wear it all the time. I gave it away, as it is written, under the tablecloth. And when I asked for it back, he said, "Your ring will be in friendly hands." "And was it a good ring?" "Very. Heavy but unusual" (PL, 473).[162]

Indeed, predatory nuances for the speaker surface in the third poem in the cycle through the simile "I moaned like a bird of prey." To be sure, several of Akhmatova's poems treat the luring of males. Overtly predatory is the speaker turned into a Gamaiun—a half-bird, half-female creature—in the poem "I am deadly for those who are tender and youthful" (#491). One poem confesses to incurring the beloved's death "I brought death to my beloved ones" (#284), reminiscent of the predatory goddesses of the Greeks as well as of the earlier Assyrian goddess Ishtar. Semiramis had many lovers, whom she buried alive. Moreover, in the ballad *By the Very Sea* the persona tries to identify herself through her own song to the awaited prince. Instead, the song appears to lure to his death her rejected young admirer who possibly mistook it for acceptance.

Further confirmation of Semiramis' shade hovering over the thematics of *Rosary* is found in her connection with doves. Abandoned at birth by her mother, she was protected by doves. Similarly, Akhmatova's early personas mention no parents. Semiramis departed from earth in the form of a dove. Akhmatova's persona is likewise connected with birds and with the white flock of birds, possibly white

doves, in the collections *White Flock* and *Plantain.* There is bird imagery for the persona in *By the Very Sea* in the simile of the seagull: "And the secret pain of separation / Moaned like a white seagull" as well as in the scene where the dying youth calls the persona *lastochka* (swallow). Although the word is used in Russian as an endearing term for women, still the speaker enforces the singularity of the bird image through seemingly naive estrangement: "Most likely, I seemed like a bird to him." The estrangement enhances other possibilities. Since the swallow is not a songbird, the gypsy fortuneteller's assurance that the persona will attract her prince with her song does not apply to the youth's vision of her. Rather, the seaside locale and the young girl's luring song suggest the traditional siren awaiting the prince, whom the girl fails to recognize in the youth. Only with his death in the gay boat, scudding toward her, does it become clear that the gypsy's words conceal the usual unexpected twist. Conceivably, the girl turns into a siren when she remits the gypsy, a non-Christian, with her baptismal gold cross, divesting herself unwittingly through this act of Christianity with its humility, charity and love. A second act of disavowing religion for her fairytale prince is in presenting all her religious articles to her sister.

All these arguments in favor of enticement and beads do not purport to prove inaccuracy in the accepted translation of *Chetki* as *Rosary.* Instead, it is now clear that no one English word conveys the wealth of meaning ascribed to the Russian word in the poet's artistic practice. The collection retains its poetic sound as a string of poems with religious overtones. Yet in composition all Akhmatova's poems originate as prayers to the Muse. Moreover, in the poem "I prayed so hard: 'Quench!'" (#121) (*White Flock*) the speaker turns from her pagan deity to the Christian God, while anticipating the quenching of her thirst from the "singing of songs," which in Akhmatova connotes poems. She hopes for the heavenly fire to touch her lips and to end her muteness through prayer. Thus there exists parallel usage of religious imagery, both pagan and Christian, with the Christian imagery gaining prominence in *White Flock* and *Anno Domini,* as if the personas were growing up and leaving behind their pagan communion with nature.

Curiously, just as a string of pearls served as a token of the real tsar's pleasure with the beautiful singing of Parasha Zhemchugova, so too the persona expects a necklace for her singing in *By the Very Sea* where in anticipation of the necklace she gives away her *chetki* to

her bedridden sister. The change in ownership for the rosary transmutes it from possible enchanted allurements to prayer beads as they leave the possession of the sensual sister. Thus the title *Chetki* connotes both the religious aspect of praying to God and the artistic aspect of intoning prayers that will become a string of poems with the help of the Muse *but* only after the persona has lived a passionate life and has behaved as a seductive, sexually destructive lure, a veritable modern Semiramis.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Intricacies in the Titles of *White Flock, Plantain, Anno Domini 1921–1922* and *Reed*

I. White Flock and Plantain

As indicated in the title, the collection *White Flock* contains considerable bird imagery.[163] It serves as a continuum with the intimated bird imagery in the presence of Semiramis from the preceding collection *Rosary* and the elaborated significance of its title within the poems. The imagery developed within it spills over into *Plantain*. Indeed, even in *Anno Domini* predatory nuances emerge through comparison of the persona with a bird of prey: "I moaned like a bird of prey." The aspect of a bird denoting song and an arranged number of poems constituting a flock was discussed in connection with fire imagery in Part One. In *Plantain* the persona addresses the dead person in heaven, expecting nature to send her news of him in the form of "the white sun of Paradise" and a "field bird" ("Oh no, it was not you I loved," #219). The biographical addressee in the piece remains unclear, despite the clue of his name: "what force there is / In your sad name." Were it not for other clues in the poem, it would have been easy to construe the sad name as the negative particle added to the man's name to denote various nuances of "not good": Nedobrovo. However, the Dnestr River and the dugup hill, intimating death, rule out reference to Nedobrovo, who died in 1919, whereas the given poem was written in 1917 and published in 1918.[164] The following poem, "I hear the oriole's constantly sad voice" (#220), invites the addressee to come to see Paradise where, in the speaker's words, the two were once innocent together: "Where together / Blissful and innocent were we." The piece opens with the persona hearing the doleful voice of the oriole, a songster of the sparrow family; the same bird figures in the piece from 1917, "Now farewell, capital" (#228). In it the speaker avers that she will leave city life in the capital and society for the Korelian land that misses her. She conceivably

lives on the outskirts of the northern city, since currently her neighbor is the marsh *rusalka* and her friend is the oriole. The sole proximity of nature results in sinless days. Nature beckons her to leave the city with its theaters before May and not to endure boredom on the islands of Petersburg. Yet her reason for remaining behind until the present has been the kisses of a man. Nonetheless, the speaker will now leave for what sounds like the seclusion of a convent: "The Lord's country. Receive me unto yourself!" Still, the opening stanzas belie the overall calmness in tone: "Farewell, my spring (symbolically youth?)." Rather, it suggests the possible lure of the *rusalka* and a water suicide.

In yet another poem from 1917, "Now no one will listen to songs" (#226), the persona has reached her last song, in her words, which she personified through appellation and a pleading address: "Do not break my heart, do not ring." This song, when formerly appreciated, soared animately like an unfettered or free swallow. The comparison is appropriate, since the swallow is known for its soaring flight: "Until recently like a free swallow / You performed your morning flight." Currently resembling a starving beggar, that is, requesting bread, the song demonstrates, aside from religious connotations, an important theme of *Plantain*, the dry bread taken on wanderings. In treating the beggar theme the poem "On the white threshold of paradise" (#283) (*Anno Domini*) once again shows a man deceased who has reached Paradise. Currently an angel, "he sees resounding with his wings." If the date on the poem—July 1921—is accurate, the contents cannot refer to Gumilev. His legacy to her is the poverty of a pauper: "dying he bequeathed to me / Graciousness (*blagostnost'*) and poverty (*nishchetu*, misery, destitution). In addition to the literal significance of the two words enacted throughout Akhmatova's materially abject, though spiritually often beatific life, the combination of the two abstract nouns is meaningful in the symbolism of this poet's creative ethos. For evident here is allusion to her two names. The word "misery" juxtaposed in the poetic line with "grace" corresponds not only to her names, as discussed in Part One, but also to the definition of her grandmother's maiden name, Anna Motovilova, in whose honor the future poet was named Anna. The root of the surname suggests *motovka*, *mot*, *motat'*—all denoting to become beggarly as a consequence of wastefulness. Truly, the persona squanders her love, feelings and her song on others. She never possessed many worldly goods, like Akhmatova herself.

Plantain is the smallest of the seven collections, as if to facilitate

taking it along on a distant journey, as if to make it compactly portable. As in the collection *Rosary,* the poems comprising the collection never mention the title word in any poem. This title has been rightly translated as *Plantain* by Sam Driver and others. In corroboration of such a rendition the Poet's Library edition (141) features the cover of the 1921 edition depicting a plant. The plantain is known for its healing, medicinal powers. Accordingly, in *Romeo and Juliet* it is referred to as a healing herb in the reply to Benvolio by Romeo, as an antidote to love and pain: "Your plantain leaf is excellent for that" (I.2).

Since this title was the poet's primal choice and no change has been made, its unwavering significance for the contents cannot be overrated. The healing that the persona must undergo following the exodus of her loved one and her friends as well as the ravaging of her country gives rise to seminal themes in the verse here. That the title also encompasses other themes appearing in the collection will be understood after the consultation of dictionaries for definitions of the word. Such a consultation affords additional avenues into the poems. In the seventeen volume dictionary of Russian the word *podorozhnik* which contains the root meaning "road" is defined as:

> 1. A perennial wild field grass with broad leaves and small flowers clustered in an ear. 2. A small bird of the sparrow family, a variety of the (yellow) bunting/yellow-hammer. 2. *coll.* A pie, a flat patty, etc. (X, 517)

The second definition connects the title through the bird image with *White Flock.* Akhmatova's poems eventuate as birds or songs dispatched after the addressee, or as a message in traditional understanding, as well as the dove of Semiramis for the poems on the unfaithful wife or the sensual persona. The third definition points to poems to be taken on a distant journey, as much a staple as pies and patties for the sustenance of the traveler and for maintaining a tie with home. Moreover, the bread patty could be remotely connected with an obscure definition of Akhmatova's first name, Anna—hyssop, a medicinal plant. Dal''s dictionary has additional definitions for *podorozhnik*: "Any written permit for leave. Absolution prayer for the deceased: in some places it is placed in the coffin." Thus the word signifies a plant, a bird, food for the road that keeps well, a written certificate of leave, absolution prayer for the dead—all of which are applicable to the spirit of the collection.[165]

The epigraph underscores remembrance for the addressee and the item taken on the trip. Because it is the dedication to Pushkin's narrative in verse, *Poltava*, it conveys the theme of a worldly high-placed man betraying politically an innocent maiden; indeed, in Pushkin's *poema* Mazepa kills the girl's father and betrays his country. Similarly, in Akhmatova the addressee Boris Anrep abandons their native land and his beloved woman: the year is 1921. The epigraph, added after the 1921 edition containing thirty-eight poems, reads: "Recognize, at least, sounds, / Formerly dear to you." So the persona sends poems that are birds or songs, as well as other things in the wake of the man once dear to her. Presumably, she sends prayers as for the dead and gives him a certificate of leave—all nuances of the word *podorozhnik* are possible. Lost sounds and events conjure up nostalgia for their mutual past. Not only does the epigraph underscore remembrance for the addressee, but it also points to imperishable items taken on the journey: the Russian language, memories, the love of the persona.

In keeping with its portable designation, the structure of the collection is compact. In the Poet's Library edition the collection *Plantain* comprises thirty-one poems plus one supplement, the only overt translation ever included by Akhmatova in her seven collections and hence its singular impact. In fact, the footnote to the poem "Everything promised him to me" (#142) states that, according to the poet's specifications, seventeen poems in *White Flock* and fourteen in *Plantain* were dedicated to Boris Anrep (463). The editor Zhirmunskii believes that the poems "A voice came to me. It called comfortingly" (#236) and "He was right in not taking me with him" (#583) were also dedicated to him and that Akhmatova posits an epigraph from Anrep's poem in her piece "At that time I was visiting on earth" (#629) from the cycle "Epic Motifs." Moreover, Wendy Rosslyn in her article "Boris Anrep and the Poems of Anna Akhmatova" makes conjectures concerning the poems, not treated in Zhirmunskii's footnotes.[166] At least eight poems from *Plantain* are songs, prayers, missives, even birds as songs sent along after Anrep as wayward songs, i.e., as songs for the road, travel prayers, even spiritual food, not quickly perishable on the journey. The theme of bread, which acquired momentum earlier in the poem "No one has sung of this meeting" (#223), is used in connection with grief in the line "Even without songs the sorrow subsided"—a rare occurrence seeing that the song usually enables the persona to bear the grief. It reads: "And more important than daily bread / For me is a single word of him." Here

there is a great earthly love, unlike passion or *zabava* (amusement). Perhaps that is why she needs no song to alleviate the pain.

The first several poems in the collection *Plantain* are addressed to Anrep, either in England or en route, and, correspondingly, the Poet's Library edition concludes the original poetry in the collection with the persona's refusal to leave Russia: "A voice came to me" (#236), that is, "parting words."

The sole supplementary poem, "Záre" (#237), a translation from the Portuguese, added in the 1921 edition for the first time, concludes the volume. While the last poem but one, that is immediately preceding the translation—"A voice came to me"—postulates the persona-poet's refusal to leave Russia, hence the literal meaning of road in the collection and the root in the title word, the translation treats the death of a teenage girl, hence the figurative meaning of road as death in the perorating contiguous poem. There could be evocation in Russian of a connection between the dead girl's name, Zára, and the Russian word *zariá* (dawn) for one who died in the dawn of her life as well as the time of death for the Romantic hero. In fact, the translated poem is an epitaph on the girl's gravestone; accordingly, some of these poems must fulfill singly or as a group in the collection a similar symbolic function. For Akhmatova—her poems serve as epitaphs, as it were, to Anrep, prematurely demised for her and for the country or as the *podorozhnik*, a written prayer for the dead. Here there is a mirror image, Akhmatova is the sister, Anrep is the brother—in the Portuguese poem the poet Anthero de Quental wrote the epitaph for the young sister of another poet. But he, de Quental, could be the "brother" of Zára poetically, if one recalls that in ancient Egyptian poetry the beloved woman is called a sister—probably as a result of the royal practice of sibling marriage.[167] Importantly, the translation "To Zára" is a postscriptum, that is, the reverse or mirror image of an epigraph, which constitutes lines from another author. In other words, the concluding translation emerges as a novel device of an epitaph in a collection of verse, in addition to its other functions enumerated above.

The theme of death in connection with *podorozhnik* reappears in the sonnet "Inscription on the Book 'Plantain' " (#331). In it the addressee, probably Boris Anrep, can be reached only by the road fated to all mankind:

> And my wild blood led me to you
> Along the only road fated to all.

The opening poem to the collection, "It at once became quiet in the house" shows the silent house, following the departure of the loved one, Anrep, and the song that died in her breast because love was not permitted to blossom first. Significantly, Anrep always insisted that his relations with Akhmatova had been platonic, just as Sir Isaiah Berlin's meeting with her must have been, according to persons well acquainted with him. Akhmatova seems to have fantasized through her poetic speaker about such people in a more concrete dedicatory manner because it fit well into her poetics. Again, poetry draws heavily on reality while veering greatly from it. Song is compared to a delicate, frail captive, presumably a caged bird: "Like a gentle captive, song / Died in my breast."

Possibly an early source for the image of *podorozhnik* derives from the poem "You cannot fall behind" by Tsvetaeva in her cycle on Akhmatova. Written in 1916, it concentrates on yet another aspect of the word's root: "And one travel order / Is given us in the empty vacuum." A relatively rare word, particularly in poetry, the coincidence of one form of it from a poem to Akhmatova turning into a title in Akhmatova is probably not a matter of chance and quite meaningful. For several years before producing her own collection Akhmatova was acquainted with the cycle of poems in her honor. Clearly, Tsvetaeva's usage and direction sparked an awareness in Akhmatova of the word with its numerous definitions. That it fitted easily into her own poetics was a bonus.

As a corollary, it can be affirmed that, while several definitions of *Plantain* interweave the collection with Akhmatova's other works, the strongest aspect developed in the collection is that of the plant. And plants are important in Akhmatova's *oeuvre* not only for their face value and for being receptacles of fire, especially the weeds, but also because gardens, those areas containing cultivated plants, are the domain of the muses. Indeed, she says: "And I am heading to take possession of a wondrous garden, / Where there is the rustle of grass and the exclamations of the muses." Evidently, Akhmatova associates the muses with growing, living plants and with the wind blowing mellifluously through them, a fact which further explains the percentage of plants for titles of collections—some actually given, others intended.

Finally, the word *podorozhnik* appears only once in the works of this poet, as part of a title referring to the collection of the same name and within the poem in the piece called "Inscription on the Book

'Plantain' ": "I imagine the humble plantain / It grew everywhere, the city was green with it." It stands in the collection *Reed*. The accent, then, is on the plant, just as for the title *Chetki* emphasis is similarly on a necklace in the sole referral to the word in her collections.

II. Anno Domini 1921–1922

The first edition of this collection (AD1) bore only the title *Anno Domini MCMXXI* (*In the Year of Our Lord 1921*). It contained poems mostly of that vintage. The current title extends the time by one year. The original edition consisted of three parts: part one under the general heading of the collection's title comprised fourteen poems; part two, subtitled "The Voice of Memory," comprised fifteen poems. Only six of these twenty-nine poems had been published previously. Most had been written in 1921, the year of Gumilev's execution. Part three was a reprinting of *Plantain* with one added poem. The second edition appeared in 1923 with two additional poems and excluding the *Plantain* poems at the end. The title shed the chronological part in favor of *Anno Domini* with complete focus on these two words. Appropriately enough, the epigraph to the first two editions came from the Latin: *Nec sine, nec tecum vivere possum* (Neither with you nor without you can I live). It has been superseded by an epigraph from Tiutchev: "In those legendary years," thereby obscuring the Latin element of the title. Both the thematics and the present epigraph stress bygone years. Currently, the collection is divided into three parts, the second being MCMXXI.[168] In the second edition of 1923 (AD2) the first part was named "New Poems" whereas currently it is appropriately called "After Everything," underscoring preceding experiences as well as new poems. The first poem, previously entitled "To My Compatriots" in AD2, advertises the locale and the year "Petrograd, 1919" (#238) in the title. The name of the city in itself is politically dated, owing to the suffix *-grad* adopted in 1915. The poem deals with remaining behind in Russia, appropriately enough in the wake of *Plantain*, and preserving its treasures, as in the piece "I am not with those who abandoned their land" (#245). Granted the opening poems were written in 1921–1922, the years of the title; however, subsequent poems belong to both temporal directions, that is, they are of an earlier period as well as of a later one—up to 1940. In this way, coupled with the current epigraph, the titles to the col-

lection as well as its sections and poems augment the notion of the year. In AD1–2 there was a different epigraph from Tiutchev's poem of unknown addressee "I already knew her then" quoted above. The title for the collection copies, according to Zhirmunskii, "the designation of the date in the old calendar" (470). Implicit in it is the Biblical motif, which surfaces in the poem "Do not weary your heart with earthly delight" (#244), advocating the abandonment of all worldly belongings and attachments in life for others.[169] The ultimate epigraph from Tiutchev, which reveals a distance in time measured in years, motivates earlier poems by presenting a condensation of contemporary ones. Beginning with the third edition, the author's emphasis broadened with a concurrent change in title, however slight, as well as her dimensional reading of it. Zhirmunskii notes, "The title of the collection lost its former chronological significance" (470). The omission probably favors a new direction.

It becomes apparent that Akhmatova toyed with a further aspect of the title. The verb "dominiti," which could have existed and certainly has not been recorded in any manuscript and hence dictionary of Old Church Slavonic, could be perceived as underlying the word *Domini* in a fresh view by the author. Akhmatova, then, in her mind could have coined the imperative from this nonexisting verb on the basis of analogy. Obviously, the verb's meaning is "to dominate." Akhmatova's first name provides a second nuance for Anno as a legitimate vocative form of Anna in Old Church Slavonic.[170] Whether "dominiti" was or was not ever attested in Russian manuscripts is almost irrelevant once Akhmatova takes off on the vocative of her name in the poem "A voice came to me" (#236), the last original poem in the preceding collection *Plantain,* where someone calls the persona by name, but never enunciating it in the poem:

Мне голос был. Он звал утешно,
Он говорил: "Иди сюда,
Оставь свой край глухой и грешный,
Оставь Россию навсегда.
Я кровь от рук твоих отмою,
Из сердца выну черный стыд,
Я новым именем покрою
Боль поражений и обид".

Но равнодушно и спокойно
Руками я замкнула слух,

Чтоб этой речью недостойной
Не осквернился скорбный дух.

A voice came to me in consolation,
Saying, "Here, come here.
Leave your sinful, god-forsaken land,
Leave Russia now forever.
I'll wash off the blood that's on your hands,
From your heart draw out black shame.
I'll cover up the pain of losses
And of insults with a new name."

But calmly and indifferently
I blocked my hearing with my two hands
So that such undignified speech
Wouldn't profane my mournful soul.

Indeed, the earlier Latin epigraph could have been a sort of answer illuminating the predicament of leaving in the hope of a better life or remaining and suffering. It is important that in the poem the message is in the first person to a second person addressee, namely the persona.

The "Russified" meaning of the title consists in calling upon Anna to dominate—whether over her fate or over people is left unspecified—and hence not to be dominated herself, unlike poems showing her obedience (#247, 249). The motif of not being dominated enters the poetry: "Obedient to you? You have lost your mind. / I am obedient only to the Lord's will" (#251). Here, obviously religious feeling intensifies in keeping with the patent religious interpretation of the title, "In the Year of Our Lord." Indeed, in the poems of this collection religious themes grow increasingly stronger. Yet even in the quoted excerpt the theme of personal domination coexists. Enlightening here is Sam Driver's quotation concerning Akhmatova's friend Nedobrovo who said that the speaker in Akhmatova is dominating rather than oppressed.[171] Further corroboration is found in Akhmatova's penname, the root of which from the Arabic "Ahmad" is connected to *hamida* meaning "to command." Indeed, the title of the collection eventuates as an address to Anna Akhmatova the poet, person and persona.

The literal meaning of the title finds reflection in certain poems. The year of the title, 1921, reverberates in the poem "The log bridge has blackened and bent." The second part of this polymetrical poem contains the twenty-one of the collection's title, "I rang in there / The

year twenty-one." The religious theme of the title to the collection is taken up in the cycle "Biblical Poems." Specifically, in the poem "Lot's Wife" (#261) this woman dared to defy domination in the name of a stronger love and nostalgia. Happy memories and her own sympathetic humaneness caused this woman to remain indomitable even in the face of God's command dictating that no one may look back at the place being penalized. Her death was inevitable. The situation was probably consonant with Akhmatova's own persona's reaction in ignoring the voice calling her to leave Russia. In real life it was probably her brother Victor Gorenko imploring her to leave. Domination is central to yet another poem in the cycle, "Melkhola" (#262). The heroine Mical, a proud young woman of high birth, desires the handsome foreigner David physically as a woman, but is unwilling to be dominated by a lowborn husband. Her feelings incorporate, to some degree, the eternal dilemma of subjugation versus domination in marriage.

As usual, the collection is carefully orchestrated. Section Two, "MCMXXI," contains the essence of the collection. All but its final poem were composed in 1921, and even the final piece was created on the boundary of the year 1921—January 1, 1921. The import of the year carries over into Section Three, "The Voice of Memory," in the poem mentioned above, "The log bridge has blackened and bent." Its second stanza opens with curious lines for a poem dated 1917: "I rang in there / The year twenty-one." Instead of the customary single persona of Akhmatova in a single poem, in the first poem of Section Two the opening poem resorts to the plural number, which could encompass the persona and the woman to whom it is dedicated, Nataliia Rykova, or to all the people in the land. An almost religious hope looms in the future, while reverberating with the first poem in the collection in terms of the destruction motif. The poem, "Dear traveler, you are far away" (#269) returns to the theme of the road and the distant beloved of the previous collection. The change is that the persona is living with a winged dragon who prevents her from singing. In this connection it will be recalled that Shileiko burned Akhmatova's poems. The message of the persona, sent by means of the wayfarer to the beloved, shows that she will no longer be totally dominated, if at all. The piece "And you thought—I am also like that" (#276) reflects independence from the lover in her vow never more to return to tolerate subjugation. The section culminates with

the poem "Slander," reminiscent of grief, indicating that slander—inherent in her name—will follow her to the grave.

III. Reed.

The epigraph "I play in all five of them" from Pasternak's poem "Improvisation" points to the reed as a musical instrument as well as to the wind blowing through plants or rushes, an approximation, as it were, of blowing on a pipe made of a reed.[172] The poem "The log bridge has blackened and bent" shows that the wind blowing through plants creates music: "And forests of dense nettle sing." Similarly, thickets of reeds retain voices and reverberate in the wind, hence serving as the voice of memory and as a retainer of sound. Once the reed has been fashioned into an instrument and played on, the sounds stored in it can be resurrected, as it were. A case in point is the opening poem to the collection "Inscription on a Book" (#300) in which "The revived reed resounded over the Lethe." The memory of it can return. The persona's verse resurrects the dead, at least temporarily, recalling the Orpheus myth as well as Akhmatova's use of the myth in "Oh, how heady is the fragrance of the carnation." Creative verse imitation and reviving old poetry furthers her cause. Thus, unlike in *Rosary* and *Plantain,* the sole word of the title *Reed* figures in the verse of the collection. No strange taboo is observed for it. In this sense *Reed* resembles *Evening* and *Seventh Book.*

The reed is closely connected with the Muse as seen in the poem "Muse." She plays on the simplest wind instrument, a pipe, obviously made of a reed in Akhmatova's poem.

This collection features poems to many poets in keeping with the musical, hence poetic title: Pasternak, Mandel'shtam, Maiakovskii, Dante. Naturally, they are themselves persons who heeded the Muse's playing on the reed and, in turn, metaphorically play on the instrument in creating their verse. Most central remains the ability of rushes to echo sound: "the rushes in the pond / Reply with a strange echo" ("All this you alone will unravel"; #315).

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Number Symbolism in *Seventh Book*

With this collection the building up of number symbolism in the verse of Akhmatova becomes patent. It begins with the title and the epigraph: "The seventh veil of mist fell— / That which is followed by spring."[173] On the one hand, her *Seventh Book* will remove the veil of mystification from the last and innermost sanctum to bare the truth about her verse, as in the Dance of the Seven Veils. She sets to her own version of elucidation with some reservation in the opening cycle "Secrets of the Craft." On the other hand, she develops her particular symbolism of spring and the intricate network of numbers. Indeed, the titles to sections, cycles and poems contain numerous numbers. One cycle is titled "Cinque," which is the Italian for five. Chukovskaia calls the poems "five miracles" (II, 20).[174] This cycle of five poems treats a distant love; accordingly, Leighton shows the connection of the number five to love. He explains, "Venus, one of the seven heavenly bodies known at the time, is linked with Friday and the number five."[175] The subtitle "Seven Poems" to the cycle "Midnight Poems" calls attention to the number of poems lest the reader should neglect counting them. This cycle is preceded by "Moscow Trefoil," with its obvious emphasis on the number three. A poem is entitled "Thirteen Lines" (#446).[176] Coincidentally, in the cycle following "Cinque," "The Sweetbrier Blooms" there are thirteen numbered poems. With such a concentration of numbers, Akhmatova is undubitably making a point. And given the exclusive use of odd numbers in title capacity, it is no wonder that the concluding large section is titled "Odd" (*Nechet*), a title originally intended for the entire collection, according to Zhirmunskii (480). Thus the number symbolism is quite eloquent in the collection, with singling out of odd numbers. Significantly, in numerology odd numbers are masculine as distinct from the even, feminine ones; the odd numbers are believed to represent strength (Hopper, 40). Akhmatova's poems in this collection bespeak a courageous persona who is particularly brave in the face of wartime atrocities and of personal persecution. The bravery is connected through manly courage—*muzhestvennost'* in Russian—with the meaning of

the poet's patronymic, Andreevna, deriving from Andrew—"manly, courageous." Such poems immediately follow poems on craft.

As expected, the preoccupation with numbers is a legacy from predecessors: Dante and Pushkin, in particular, resorted to number symbolism and numerology. Annenskii had a slew of trefoils—twenty-five of them—plus five groups of two (*skladni*) in his number-conscious *Cypress Chest.* To be sure, Akhmatova is underpinning the influence of Annenskii in her own poems; however, the roots of the trefoil stem in Annenskii's case from Greek mythology as shown in Robert Graves' novel *Hercules, My Shipmate*: "a pillow of trefoil, which because of its three leaves joined together in one is sacred to the Triple Goddess and induces true dreams."[177] Dreams are important in later Akhmatova. Clearly, Akhmatova was aware of certain numerological activity in the works of her favorite predecessors and refracted their experience to further her own poetics. As early as in 1940 with the publication of her book of poems *From Six Books. Poems,* Akhmatova underscores the number of her collections to date, preparing the ground in the body of her art and among the reading public, as it were, for *Seventh Book. 1936–1964,* then in progress. Like *Reed,* this collection was never to appear under a separate imprint. Previously, the plan for the collection underpinned both the number of collections and the odd numbers that were to figure in it. Zhirmunskii writes: "By 1946 the book was prepared for publication under the title "Odd. The Seventh Collection of Poems by Anna Akhmatova, 1936–1949" (480). Subsequently, however, Akhmatova opted for a predomination of the multiple symbolic nuances of seven, without attenuating totally the significance of "Odd." Instead, she installed it as a concluding section, possibly to mask its prominence while fortifying the function of odd, masculine numbers and of seven in particular, a number endowed with mystery and strong symbolism.[178]

The earliest plan of Akhmatova provided for the title of the present collection to have the form described by Zhirmunskii: "The Seventh Book of Anna Akhmatova, 1960." She prefers this older form of the title and author, possibly in imitation of Pushkin. It was to have been divided into two parts:

> I. "From Ten Notebooks" (39 pieces) is arranged in small groups (notebooks), containing most often three poems each, in particular instances from four to six in each, and entitled: I. "In the Thirties";

II. "Shades"; III. "Leningrad Elegies"; IV. "Secrets of the Craft" (6 items); V. Excerpt from the long poem "Way of All Earth"; VI. Cinque; VII. From a Burned Notebook (8 items); VIII. From a Moscow Notebook; IX. From the First Notebook (1909–10); X. From a Notebook of the War Years (480).

Still another plan features the present epigraph under the title "The Course of Time. The Seventh Book of Poems." But "The Course of Time" was later published as a book of selections from Akhmatova's seven collections. That left unused the concept of the seventh book. Thus the number is important for Akhmatova. Among a bevy of odd numbers in the collection, the number seven, understandably, possesses the main impact. The ordinal number in the title is immediately augmented by another ordinal in the epigraph taken from Tat'iana Kazanskaia. Published in full only in a footnote in Chukovskaia's *Notes* it is a poem singularly consonant with several of Akhmatova's themes:

Льдины трещали, звенели морозы,
С крыш ледяная текла бахрома.
Так опадают махровые розы:
Ризу за ризой роняет зима.

Словно яранга под бубен шамана
Рвется на части узка и тесна,
Пала седьмая завеса тумана,—
Та, за которой приходит Весна.

Фатаморгана и метаморфоза:
Мрамор холодный очнулся, дыша.
Так расцветает махровая роза:
Смертию смерть попирает душа. (II, 540)

Ice floes cracked, the frost re-echoed,
An icy fringe dripped off the eaves;
So double roses lose their petals:
Winter drops alb, then chasuble.

As a cramped, narrow tent flies to pieces
To the bounce of a shaman's tambourine,
So the seventh veil of mist came down,
The last one that hides the Spring.

Fata morgana and metamorphosis:
The cold marble awoke, breathing.
So a double rose puts forth its petals—
The soul defying death with death.

In her own poem in this collection Akhmatova connects spring with death. It is a poem on a period preceding the actual period, a notion that Akhmatova is fond of, as in preeveningtide. Titled "Prespring Elegy" (#443), it develops the notion of death: "He remained with me to the death." Spring as a time of death has migrated here from Annenskii, as evidenced by Setchkarev (92). In the poem "The Burned Notebook" (#421) following the burning of the notebook, the most sacred "springtimes" lead a chorus line over the grave: "And around the bonfire the most sacred springtimes / Were already leading a graveside chorus line."

In opening the collection, the poet temporarily ignores the theme of personal death to divulge instead the secrets of her immortality through verse in the cycle "Secrets of the Craft." According to Zhirmunskii, the cycle attains the role of a poetic declaration; it is brought to the fore as a poetic declaration (481). Obviously, only a mature person with achievements, possibly preparing for inevitable death, will assume a didactic and self-revealing role. In connection with disclosing secrets in the seventh book, it will be recalled that the Biblical Samson revealed the secret of his inordinate strength to his wife on the seventh day of their wedding feast. On the other hand, Akhmatova's persona volunteers to reveal her writing secrets in the *Seventh Book*. By contrast to Samson, the speaker remains sufficiently cryptic in order not to divulge all secrets, thereby ensuring her own poetic prowess. She discloses only limited aspects of the coded secrets in the ten poems of the cycle as well as in the four poems immediately following, which numerically constitute the double sum of seven, that is fourteen. It is noteworthy, that just as in the Judeo-Christian tradition the days of creation were seven—as well as in *Enuma Elish*—so too Akhmatova's seven collections underscore the steps or stages of her poetic creation and the fact that the main corpus of her lyrical *oeuvre* is contained in these collections. An additional remote possibility for the title of the collection could be the association between the name of God in the Middle Ages being "Seven" and this book being the seventh piece of major output under the aegis of the Muse. It is, so to speak, the deity's book seeing that according to the poem "Creation" (#333), the persona's poetic lines are dictated by the Muse: "simply dictated lines."

Since the symbolism of the number seven unrelentingly permeates the collection in its various aspects, it will be of interest to explore its important occurrences following an attempt to better define its

symbolism. Pursuant to Jobes, the number seven stands for adventure, balance, completedness, cosmos (the seven planets known in Antiquity), creation (compare the seven days of creation). Indeed, no matter how many poems Akhmatova wrote after commencing this collection, she merely included them in it, if they at all fitted into its framework—hence completedness—for she will produce no more collections. Interestingly, Akhmatova had planned seven elegies which she called "Leningrad Elegies." Six are published in the Poet's Library edition, the seventh remains in the archives. The title is now "Northern Elegies." Zhirmunskii published the quatrain that was to serve as their epigraph, which he presents in print for the first time:

Их будет семь—я так решила,
Пора испытать судьбу,
И первая уж совершила
Свой путь к позорному столбу . . . (506)

I've decided there'll be seven;
The time has come to test my fate,
And the first has already made its way
To the public whipping post.

The seven days of creation correspond to seven major stages in Akhmatova's verse that culminated in seven books of poetic creation, one for each stage. Similarly, the seven elegies trace seven stages in the life of Akhmatova and a segmentation of her times into seven. Just as the most sensitive and complex creation—man—was left for the seventh day, so too Akhmatova relegates her most sophisticated and intricate work to her last, seventh book. Corresponding to the concept of creation is the first poem in the collection—"Tvorchestvo"—meaning here the act of creation. Its message, combined with the ensuing poems, fosters appreciation of the poet's method. The remainder of Jobe's symbolic definitions is equally appropriate: "fate"—a frequent theme in Akhmatova—is particularly significant in this collection, whether named or implied through the life and art of her speaker:

И в ночи январской беззвездной,
Сам дивясь небывалой судьбе,
Возвращенный из смертной бездны,
Ленинград салютует себе. ("27 января 1944 года")

И стал он медленной отравой
В моей загадочной судьбе. ("В разбитом зеркале")

Холодное, чистое, легкое пламя
Победы моей над судьбой. ("Пусть кто-то еще отдыхает на юге")

On a starless January night,
Overwhelmed by its incredible fate,
Pulled back from the depths of death
Leningrad salutes itself. ("January 27, 1944")

And it became a slow poison
In my enigmatic fate. ("In the Broken Mirror")

The cold, pure, lambent flame
Of my victory over fate. ("Let someone still vacation in the South")

Obvious here is the theme of "everything turning into dust," other than art that is, which leads toward what Akhmatova terms the fifth season, the other spring, that is, of death.

Time, a definition of seven, is so pivotal to Akhmatova's poetics that Kees Verheul has dedicated an entire book to it. The meaning is somewhat muted through the omission of the intended title "The Course of Time. The Seventh Book of Poems." Yet personal time expands through metempsychosis, particularly, through extension toward the past and with a few references to the future in lines like: "I will come again" (in 700 years).

Quietness, inherent in seven, is a hallmark of the persona and an important component for poetic creation, an ideal environment for thoughts to take shape and even an element that induces creation. Examples are the lines: "Quiet is my lyre"; "And all from the nighttime quiet"; "Around it is so irreparably quiet." Owing to the tangibility of quietness (and the feminine gender of the Russian word), one could be metaphorically betrothed to it, as in: "sang / All night to us silence itself"; "And he who seemed to me / Was engaged to that quiet"; "being born in the midnight silence"; "And about you silence began to sing." The title of "Prespring Elegy" in conjunction with the collection's epigraph as well as the comparison with Shakespeare's Ophelia "like Ophelia / All night silence itself sang to us" point to a time preceding death. In the fifth poem of the same "Midnight Poems. Seven Poems" (#447), "death is only a sacrifice to silence" which could imply an end to creation in the given persona. Yet in death a creative person becomes part of this creative element of silence by contributing, as it were, his achievements to the whole and requiring no further assistance from silence. And the cycle's "In

Lieu of an Afterword" (#450) compares the force of a dream with the arrival of spring, which intertwines more fully these themes.

The strength and stability inherent in seven is construed by the persona—the creator of poetry—as a survivor of the war and distant love. Through all these trials and tribulations the experiences of the speaker accrue wisdom, a further attribute of seven.

The piece "The Last Poem" (#338) from the "Secrets of the Craft" eludes the persona-poet and metamorphoses instead back into the *bezmolvie* (silence) of its provenance. Its persistent elusiveness will probably incur the persona's death: "And I am dying without it." This seventh piece conceivably refers to the seventh, concluding poem of an unnamed cycle, if not to the ultimate key to art and divine poetry toward which a poet strives all his life, never to attain heavenly perfection. The collection develops the theme of parting and a musical finale, as it were, in several "farewell" or "final" poems: "Parting Song" (#461), "The Last (Song)" (#462), "The Last Rose" (#480), "And the Final" (#463), "In Lieu of an Afterword." Thus the perorating book prepares for a thematic and structural finale. In this context the *sed'maia* (seventh), interpreted by critics and Chukovskaia as Shostakovich's "Seventh Symphony" alone, seems simplistic.[179]

The endurance of seven is evident in the piece "A monstrous rumor wanders about the city" (#256) as early as in *Anno Domini*. It concerns a survivor like the legendary Bluebeard's seventh wife: "how the seventh mounted the stairs." Correspondingly, Akhmatova herself was a survivor among her poet friends who, like the wife of Bluebeard, were all weavers of tales. So Akhmatova the poet survives on entertainment and suspence.

Seven, standing for Antiquity, is found in Akhmatova's verse in a series on Antiquity. The cycle, "A Page from Antiquity," combines the poem "The Death of Sophocles" (#470) where Dionysus himself ensures a quiet funeral and "Alexander at Thebes" (#471) where Alexander the Great saves from destruction in Thebes only the house of the poet Pindar.

Further, seven is also a charm for good luck, and Akhmatova's collection is presented in precisely such a sense. Correspondingly, the theme of Thebes is associated with charms or magical prophesy, as in the seven riddles on the shields of the seven persons attacking Thebes in Aeschylus's *Seven against Thebes*, which Eteokles must untangle. The play's symbolism involves the forces of light that eventually over-

come those of darkness (Jobes, II, 1422). Curiously, of the eighty dramas composed by Aeschylus only seven have survived.[180]

Significantly, the number seven corresponds to the color violet (*sirenevyi*) and *sirenevaia mgla* (lilac mist) in Akhmatova's early poem "Imitation from Annenskii" serves, as in Annenskii, as a symbol of death and the Beyond. The lilac flower, *siren'*, also poses in Akhmatova as a funereal theme which was, however, omitted in the poem "Teacher," probably due to its overt treatment of Annenskii's death. Given Jobes' statement connecting seven with the auspicious signs of Buddha, several of Akhmatova's poems in the collection bearing metempsychosis acquire additional import and nuances.

Further, the number seven, according to Jobes, controls composers of music—an idea particularly fitting in this collection where several poems on music and its properties figure. "Music" (#452) is dedicated to the composer Shostakovich. In the poem "From the Cycle 'Tashkentian Pages' " (#463) an invisible hand beats the tambourine. The persona arranges her famous "nonmeetings" with the lover in music: "You and I will meet in Vivaldi's *Adagio* ("Night Visit"). In the poem "Dream" (#426) Bach's chaconne heralds the lover's arrival in a dream. In the poem "Poet" ("Secrets of the Craft") the persona-poet as creator derives poetic inspiration from music:

Подслушать у музыки что-то
И выдать шутя за свое.
И, чье-то веселое скерцо
В какие-то строки вложив,

To listen to something in music
And lightly give it out as one's own.
And, having inserted somebody's
Light-hearted scherzo into some lines.

Still, in nearing poetic creation the numerous inspirational sources converge into one fountainhead—silence: "And all from the silence of night."

The cycle "Wind of War" fits into the symbolism of seven in terms of the period—the 1940s—and its definition of impending victory. Indeed, poems number twelve through sixteen of this cycle are grouped under the heading "Victory," and number nine is titled "To the Victors." The fourth piece, "Birds of death are poised in zenith," on the plight of Leningrad under siege observes: "How from its depths the cries: 'Bread' / Reached the seventh heaven." Here Akhmatova

employs the meaning of seven as the ultimate, the extreme, but not in the positive definition of happy, unlike "seventh heaven" as the highest measure of happiness. Rather it is closer in usage to the Russian *sed'maia voda na kisele*, meaning "very distant relatives," as well as *za sem' verst kiselia khlebat'* (to quaff kisel from seven versts away), showing unwillingness to set out on a distant journey. Coincidentally, Marina Tsvetaeva explores the meaning of the ultimate in her autobiographical prose *Father and His Museum* as *do sed'mogo pota* (to the seventh degree of sweat, to extreme perspiration). She also comments in *My Pushkin* on *sed'moi son*—"the seventh sleep/dream" as a measure of the deepness of sleep through the number of dreams and the lateness of the night: "She is probably already seeing her seventh dream! . . . and here for the first time I find out that there is a seventh dream as a measure of the deepness of sleep and of the night."[181]

Thus in investigating the titles and epigraphs to the seven collections of Akhmatova's verse, it became clear that each one, while remaining a continuum with its predecessors and anticipating the following collection, explores its own stage in her overall seven-tiered artistic imagery and symbolism. True to her creative ethos, everything—titles, epigraphs, dedications and poems—constitutes an integral whole within the *oeuvre* of Akhmatova, while reverberating and intertwining in its polysemy. Indeed, the Soviet scholar Blagoi avers: "Any truly significant creation of imaginative literature—is always polysemantic." Put most simply, in Akhmatova's work the meaning of a given collection's title is not confined solely to its own contents. Conversely, it is frequently elaborated further in the succeeding collections or poems, as evidenced by the inclusion of the poem containing the single appearance of the word *chetki* in a lyric poem in a collection other than the titular one.

Conclusion

In exploring some of the most seminal areas of Anna Akhmatova's poetry, this study strove to illustrate her ever-present and even mounting concern with being in unity with Russian and world life, culture, art, history and, above all, with literature, while remaining true to herself and her personas. Still, creating poetry that is in tune with and a part of the present alone was not sufficient for either Akhmatova or her personas who seem to assume a life of their own. The solution was to overcome ordinary barriers and even certain laws of nature to which ordinary persons resign themselves. Having lived in the time of the momentous discovery of the theory of relativity by Albert Einstein, Akhmatova and her persona, both so sensitive to nature, demand far more from the life they create in poetry and from creative imagination than their most realistic-minded immediate predecessors. The two of them, with the Muse as a divine addition to form a trio, if not a trinity, overcome on occasion both time and space. Specifically, time is conquered, or turned in the needed direction, through the persona's participation in metempsychosis. As we have seen, it mainly involves a physical change in the persona or in form as well. Space, on the other hand, is overcome through dreams, music, fever and nonmeetings. For all these achievements the trio of Akhmatova, the persona and the Muse collaborate or else stand aside in various configurations as expedient.

While a complete demarcation for the trio is not realistic, there is for them a tendency toward division of labor of sorts. Indeed, the predominant fire imagery reflects Akhmatova the person and poet with rare observational qualities who lives, loves, grieves and thereafter reinterprets her personal experiences and those of others into the figure of her poetic speaker as a person. The speaker, in turn, through adoration of the Muse acquires solace and the strength to transfigure during her service the residue of the fire of life and love into prayers to the Muse. With the help, stimulation and consolation of the Muse the prayers become songs and, ultimately, transform into the most polished of finished poems—the fired notebook, which, con-

sequently, exists as an entity independent of the persona-poet as well as of Gorenko-Akhmatova, person and poet. So acute are the perceptions of Akhmatova's persona with respect to life and love that at times her tendency to observe the experience in progress in effect snuffs it out more swiftly than through its natural course. In fire thematics, which imbues the very fiber of a great number of poems, there is participation of the trio.

Metempsychosis, on the other hand, touches a select number of poems. It involves the participation of the speaker as a person in the lives of historical and literary persons, various lives in different times, experienced by the persona, as well as various forms of life and nature. While neither the Muse nor Akhmatova participate openly, the Muse, as an ageless divinity, hovers in the proximity of the human incarnations.

Finally, allusions, correspondences and subtexts are primarily the domain of Akhmatova the poet and her interaction with the legacy of other writers. It is a way of incorporating into her work the "lives" of other writers, a structural and thematic sort of metempsychosis within verse itself. Inspiration from the Muse is oblique, though strong, conceivably, in the selection and incorporation into her own original lines. To be sure, the original poetry is created only under the auspices of the Muse.

Thus the persona in Akhmatova in assuming a reincarnated identity and the capabilities enabling her to undergo metempsychosis, grows clearly independent of Akhmatova the person and enters other times, lives and forms of life and nature. Akhmatova the poet, the creator of this migrating persona, cannot accompany her in her transformations or transmigrations. Instead, she employs the unusual speaker to experience what is inaccessible to herself and with the help of the Muse, a witness to all bygone times and events as well as to those to come, she crafts the poem to reflect the experience and results of the persona's metempsychosis. Again, the role of the Muse is oblique, unlike in the fire thematics.

The perfect blending of three major principles of Akhmatova's art—fire, metempsychosis and subtexts—exemplifies the total harmony of single poems within her *oeuvre*. Even when creating individual, seemingly topical, poems Akhmatova more often than not bears in mind the larger picture for pieces included in one of the seven collections, that is the place and the function of a given poem within the framework of her verse. Sometimes cycles provide transparent

clues to interrelations; however, they in turn are interdependent, often singly, on other, currently unmarked cycles or topics, both major and minor. A case in point is the lyric "I have not been here in about seven hundred years," which stands sixth among eight poems in the cycle "The Moon in Zenith: Tashkent in 1942–1944." It clearly develops the themes, imagery and mood of its cycle. Still, within another context, the piece comprises an important part of the poems on metempsychosis.

Similarly, a given collection focuses on the themes of its title and epigraph while maintaining its relationship with the remainder of the poetry. For instance, a preceding collection prefigures the new major, often unmarked, theme of its successor in its perorating pieces. By unmarked themes is meant the definition not readily apparent in the title of the main collection. For most titles, specifically *Evening, Rosary, Plantain* and *Anno Domini*, harbor within themselves more than the one marked, or readily patent, meaning, a literary device of semantic and structural import, upon which the poet embroiders her development of the thematics within a collection.

Akhmatova, then, has made her own, unique contribution to poetry. She has, among other things, readapted and evolved universally accepted fire thematics to fit into an intricate pattern of successively, cyclically, as it were, experiencing ordinary feelings of living and loving and grieving but through talent and adoring the Muse uniquely transforming experiences into prayer and then the ensuing song into verse and immortalizing the creation through firing the notebooks. This poet has utilized in an intricate pattern personal moments, such as the definitions of her names as well as personal love and grief and even the actual burning of her own manuscripts. The symbolic burning of the notebooks, which renders them permanent, secures a space in future time and, by definition, will conquer boundaries open only to books and will ensure penetration simultaneously into numerous places. Through metempsychosis, on the other hand, the persona acquires direct experience and information on history and culture as well as on nature. Indeed, she merges with nature through transformation into various creatures and objects. Again, time is conquered and, to a degree, so too is space through easy access and movement for the persona in her other forms. Finally, allusions and subtexts within her own work fuse her verses structurally, physically, as it were, and thematically with great literature of any time, in preparation for the future, and supply Akhmatova's own verse with proximity to the

literature and culture of different ages as well as her own and other countries. Allusions and subtexts enable Akhmatova the poet to conquer time, present and future, and even past, as well as space. And her creations in themselves serve a similar purpose—to reach out with her art to people everywhere now and in the future. Like Aleksandr Pushkin, she "conquered both time and space" with her imagination and memory.[182]

Notes and References

Part One. Chapter One

1. Fire is a common theme in literature, particularly in poetry. A good example is the poetry of Viacheslav Ivanov. See Victor Terras, "The Aesthetic Categories of *Ascent* and *Descent* in the Poetry of Vjačeslav Ivanov," *Russian Poetics: Proceedings of the International Colloquium at UCLA, 1975*, eds. Thomas Eekman and Dean Worth (Cambridge: Slavica, 1983).

Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from Akhmatova's poetry are from the edition, Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, comp. and ed. Viktor Zhirmunskii, Biblioteka poeta, bol'shaia seriia (Leningrad: Sovet. pisatel', 1976), often referred to in the text as either the Zhirmunskii edition or the Poet's Library edition (PL). For the sake of convenience, at the first mention of a given poem its number from the Zhirmunskii edition will be provided in parentheses in the text. All literal translations into English are mine. The verse translations have been provided expressly for this study by F. D. Reeve. For the sake of consistency with poems only quoted within the text and hence translated literally by me I have within the text used literal translations of lines and titles even from the poems translated by F. D. Reeve.

2. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 189. When it is already clear what work is being cited, henceforth the pages will be noted at the end of a given text.

3. Cicero Nat. deor. II, 9:28, Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 198.

4. George Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, vol. 3 of *A History of Russia*, 4 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 13.

5. Sam Driver, "Directions in Axmatova's Poetry since the Early Period," *Russian Language Journal Supplement*, ed. D. Mickiewitz (Spring 1975), 87, 90.

6. Kees Verheul, *The Theme of Time in the Poetry of Anna Axmatova* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 21.

7. Gertrude Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols*, 3 vols. (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1961), II, 1490.

8. Lidiia Chukovskaia, *Zapiski ob Anne Akhmatovoi*, 3 vols. (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1976–), I, 63.

9. Maneckji Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 221, 225.

10. Manuk Abegian, *Istoriia drevnearmianskoi literatury* (Erevan: AN Arm. SSR, 1975), 27.

David Marshall Lang in his *Armenia: Cradle of Civilization*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1978) cites Professor S. K. Chatterje in interpreting the song on Vahakn's birth as his being a solar deity (150).

For a faithful translation of the birth of Vahakn see Moses Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, tr. and comm. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 123.

11. Anna Akhmatova, *Iz armianskoi poezii*, comp. K. N. Grigor'ian (Erevan: Sovetakan grokh, 1976). Also see Avetik Isaakian, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, comp. K. N. Grigor'ian. Biblioteka poeta, bol'shaia seriia (Leningrad: Sovet. pisatel', 1975).

12. Akhmatova probably used the word "feluka" to convey local Tashkentian color. The word must have reached the local languages, Uzbek in this case, although it is not listed in the Uzbek dictionary, through Arabic. Its origin is Italian denoting "sloop," "felucca." The boat image is also in keeping with the mythological belief that in metempsychosis the moon serves as a boat for transferring souls. See Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology*, I, 1121. It will be recalled that D'iakonov compares the visual image of the moon in the south with a boat. See I. M. D'iakonov, tr., *Epos o Gil'gameshe: o vse vidavshem* (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1961), 107.

13. *Filosofskaia entsiklopediia*, ed. F. Konstantinov, 5 vols. (Moscow: Sovet. entsiklopediia, 1960–1970), II, 185.

A most important source for a literary understanding of fire in literature, philosophy and religion was graciously pointed out to me in 1983 in Moscow by the Soviet scholar Mikhail L. Gasparov; it is a book by Mikhail Gershenzon, *Gol'fstrem* (Moscow: Shipovnik, 1922). Gershenzon's probing study treats Pushkin's usage of Heraclitus' philosophy concerning fire, which holds that man and his soul are one with nature and consist of fire and water and its logical changes through temperature (18).

14. Edward J. Brown, *Mayakovsky: A Poet in Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 178.

15. Boris Eikhenbaum, "Anna Akhmatova: opyt analiza," *O poezii* (Leningrad: Sovet. pisatel', 1969), 134–35.

Chapter Two

16. Indeed, the act of praying to the ray can in part be taken literally due to the word *khramina*, which is listed in the Ushakov and Dal' dictionaries only as obsolete for building and edifice, just like one definition for *khram*, most commonly known as a temple. However, because of similarity with the modern meaning of *khram* as temple, the modern reader would associate *khramina* with a temple, or religious building. *Khramina*, then, evokes wor-

ship imagery through association; and "In this empty edifice" conjures up through semantic proximity a temple for the worship of light, which equals fire. Hence elsewhere with the addition of Christian imagery the persona figures as a nun, which resulted in the ludicrous hackneyed label for the poet of a nun-harlot; it was first merely alluded to by Eikhenbaum. In effect, the image of the nun symbolizes a dedicated adherent, practicing a form of worship that, with the emotional growth of the persona, turns Christian in later volumes, and particularly in *Anno Domini.*

17. *The Erotic Elegies of Albius Tibullus with the poems of Sulpicia arranged as a sequence called No Harm to Lovers,* tr. Hubert Creekmore (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), 106.

18. Most quotations from Akhmatova's verse are from Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy,* ed. Viktor Zhirmunskii. The Struve edition is Anna Akhmatova, *Sochineniia,* eds. G. P. Struve and B. A. Filippov, 2nd rev. and enl. ed. Vols. 1, 2 (Munich: Inter-language Literary Associates, 1967, 1968); vol. 3 (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1983). *Requiem* is featured here in its entirety in volume 1, pp. 359–70.

19. The smoke is from the burning sacrifice if not from the sacrificial fire itself.

20. Life, according to some scientists, began when lightning reacted with amino acids. See A. I. Oparin, *The Origin of Life on Earth,* tr. Ann Synge, 3rd rev. & enl. ed. (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), 163–64. Also see Stanley L. Miller, "Production of Some Organic Compounds under Possible Primitive Earth Conditions," *Journal of the American Chemical Society,* vol. 77, no. 9 (May 12, 1955). Moreover, to compose a poem is to give it life, that is, creation. Conceivably, "muteness" in poetry for Bella Akhmadulina comes from here. See Ketchian, "Poetic Creation in B. Axmadulina," *SEEJ,* vol. 28, no. 1 (1984).

21. D. N. Ushakov, ed. *Tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka,* 4 vols. (Moscow: Sovet. entsiklopediia, 1934), III, 499–500.

22. Exceptionally, a love that has not taken place, but which is imminent, is discussed: "This one can tame me."

23. A biographical fact underlies the poem: Shileiko used to burn the poet's verses in a samovar: Amanda Haight, *Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 55–56.

24. Nikolai Otsup, *Literaturnye ocherki* (Paris: Coopérative Étoile, 1961), 24. See also his *Sovremenniki* (Paris: Coopérative Étoile, 1961), 9. In a note in the Poet's Library edition, Zhirmunskii states, "Nedobrovo belonged to the group of poets of Tsarskoe Selo," 461.

25. Drawing a separate picture through metaphor and simile is evocative of a device used by Pushkin in *The Bronze Horseman* where similes advance a recondite message. S. Ketchian, "Vehicles for Duality in Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman*: Similes and Period Lexicon," *Semiotica,* vol. 25, no. 1–2 (1979).

26. A notebook equals a book of verse, not one of the collections but a cycle or a section (PL, 452).

27. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, tr. Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), ix.

28. Anna Akhmatova, *O Pushkine: stat'i i zametki* (Leningrad: Sovet pisatel', 1977), 175. See Gershenzon, *Gol'fstrem* for fire in Pushkin (23–99).

29. Marcia Rose Satin, "Akhmatova's 'Shipovnik tsvetet': A Study of Creative Method," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1977), 170.

30. See also Lidiia Chukovskaia, *Pamiati Anny Akhmatovoi: stikhi, pis'ma, vospominaniia* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1974), 52.

31. Compare the Babylonian epic bearing the same title. See n. 60.

Chapter Three

32. Max Vasmer, *Etimologicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka*, eds. O. N. Trubacheva, B. A. Larin (Moscow: Progress, 1964–1973), I, 440. See also Gershenzon, *Gol'fstrem*, 107–109.

33. E. Dobin, *Poeziia Anny Akhmatovoi* (Leningrad: Sovet. pisatel', 1968), 216–17. In Chap. 13 another instance will be explored.

34. Marina Tsvetaeva, *Sochineniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980), I, 72.

35. T. V. Tsiv'ian, "Antichnye geroini—zerkala Akhmatovoi," *Russian Literature*, 7/8 (1974), 118. For the origin of the name Anna and other details see M. B. Meilakh, "Ob imenakh Akhmatovoi. I. Anna," *Russian Literature*, 10/11 (1975).

36. *Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka*, 17 vols. (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1950–1965), I, 479.

37. *Polnyi russko-angliiskii slovar'*, comp. A. Aleksandrov, 6th rev. & enl. ed. (London: Leopold B..Hill, n.d.), 23.

38. Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka*, 4 vols. (Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 1978), I, 92.

39. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, ed. Henry Bosley Woolf (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam, 1973), 565.

40. Plants, then, through their connection with the muses and Akhmatova's names form an integral part of her poetics. Her interest in plants and wild grasses could, furthermore, be enhanced by her mother's maiden name, Stogova. The word "stog" means a haystack, hence an accumulation of grass and weeds. According to the Ushakov dictionary, this word can denote not only stacked hay but also stalks of grain and possibly of other plants. According to Jobes, the hyssop has many symbolic qualities that appear in Akhmatova's verse. Particularly interesting is the connection she makes between the hyssop and the cedar.

Symbolic of cleanliness, holiness, humility, purification. In Christian

tradition typifies baptism, innocence regained, penitence, and purgation. Old Testament plant not clearly identified, used in ceremonial sprinklings in purificatory and sacrificial rites. It is contrasted with the lofty cedar, to which it apparently was related as the mistletoe is to the oak. The hyssop, the plant of the winter solstice, may have grown in the fissures of old cedars where leaf mould kept it alive, and, mythologically, the union of the cedar and the hyssop typifies the whole course of the sun from its birth at the winter solstice to its prime at the summer solstice and its decline back to the winter solstice (I, 814).

41. J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 111.

42. A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 3rd ed., 10 vols. (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1962–1966), II, 296.

43. This poem faintly echoes Pushkin's poem "For the shores of a distant fatherland."

44. See also Chukovskaia, *Zapiski*, I, 81.

45. Indeed, the adoption of the maiden surname of her maternal great-grandmother distanced the poet from her philandering father while making more actual the maternal line in her family. See Tsvetaeva, "A Captive Spirit: My Meeting with Andrei Belyi," *Sochineniia*, II, 306.

46. This line of thought is pursued in *The Bronze Horseman* where in order to warrant Evgenii's rebellion, the author provides a glimpse into Evgenii's psyche through his dreams for the future with his beloved Parasha. The bifurcation of his personality is latent in the introductory simile on him of fantasizing like a poet. Where the meek Evgenii is incapable of challenging the emperor, the poetic soul of noble ancestry fears nothing. See S. Ketchian, "Vehicles for Duality," 117.

47. Mika Waltari, *The Egyptian*, tr. Naomi Walford (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), 4.

48. Akhmatova was named Anna in honor of her maternal grandmother, Anna Motovilova, who was the daughter of Akhmatova (PL, 474).

49. Also relevant is the parallel between the *mat*—the broken-down "root" in Akh*mat*ova and the unstressed first syllable of grandmother *Mo*tovilova's surname. As corroboration of the facility in separating the parts in the root see Tsvetaeva using a concentration of *akh* (oh) and its unstressed phonetic equivalent in initial position in words: "*Okh*vatila golovu i stoiu."

50. Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), 204.

Chapter Four

51. V. S. Nalbandian et al., *Armianskaia literatura* (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 1976), 100.

52. Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhi, perepiska, vospominaniia, ikonografiia*, comp. E. Proffer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1978), 115–27.

53. The word "venom" is akin to Latin *venus*—"love," "charm." See Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1268.

54. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, corrected reissue (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), V, 12.

55. Viktor Zhirmunskii, *Tvorchestvo Anny Akhmatovoi* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1973), 85.

56. Simon Karlinsky, "Veshchestvennost' Annenskogo," *Novyi zhurnal*, vol. 85 (1966), 73.

57. S. I. Ozhegov, *Slovar' russkogo iazyka*, ed. N. Iu. Shvedova, 9th rev. and enl. ed. (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1972), 165.

58. A source, slightly in variance with this version, has been found in which the king is Alexander of Macedonia, *Armenia Today*, no. 5 (67), (1981), 31.

59. D'iakonov, *Epos o Gil'gameshe*, 97.

60. *Enuma Elish, The Seven Tablets of Creation*, 2 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1976). Reprint of *The Seven Tablets of Creation, or the Babylonian and Assyrian Legends Concerning the Creation of the World and of Mankind*, ed. L. W. King (London: Luzac & Co., 1902), vol. I, lxx, 63.

Part Two. Chapter Five

61. Eikhenbaum, "Anna Akhmatova," 134.

62. Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Against Hope*, tr. Max Hayward, intr. Clarence Brown (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 246.

63. Herbert Strainge Long, *A Study of the Doctrines of Reincarnation in Greece: From Pythagoras to Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 2.

64. Z. P. Sokolova, *Kul't zhivotnykh v religiiakh* (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), 28. Australian aborigines believed that during sleep the soul can leave the body or can assume another form. See also the *New Encyclopedia Britannica* in 30 vols., 15th ed. (Chicago: Helen Benton, 1978), VIII, 488. Coincidentally, Akhmatova's Tatar ancestors practiced shamanism, according to George Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, 14.

65. Amanda Haight, *Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 170.

66. Long, *A Study of the Doctrines of Reincarnation*, 21.

67. Eikhenbaum, "Anna Akhmatova," 144. Vinogradov superficially terms these occurrences of animal metamorphoses as "metaphorical transformations." He traces experiments in this area to her first collection *Evening* and unconvincingly equates the address "o my swans" to colloquial parlance alone: *golubchik, sokolik, sukin syn* in V. V. Vinogradov, *O poezii Anny Akhmatovoi: stilisticheskie nabroski* (Leningrad, 1925), 98–101.

68. George R. Preedy, *The Courtly Charlatan: The Enigmatic Comte de St. Germain* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1942), 82–84.

69. There is some resemblance to Nietzsche in everything returning exactly as the same. Compare in this connection Blok's lines: "All this happened, happened" and his "Third Venetian Poem." The writers Belyi, Sologub and Rozanov are interesting in this way as well. Other sources for the poet are Japanese and Korean poetry, which contain notions of metempsychosis; she has translated from both languages. Compare the poem by Son Sam Mun: "If you ask what I will become / After death—I will answer: / / Over the peak of the Pynlai / I will become a tall pine." See A. Akhmatova, *Perevody. Klassicheskaia poeziia Vostoka* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969), 178.

Chapter Six

70. F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972–), VIII, 51–52.

71. Henry David Thoreau, tr., *The Transmigration of the Seven Brahmans* (New York: W. E. Rudge, 1932), 4.

72. R. D. Timenchik et al., "Akhmatova i Kuzmin," *Russian Literature*, vol. VI, no. 3 (July 1978), 228–29.

73. Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, II, 158.

74. V. Vilenkin, *Vospominaniia s kommentariiami* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1982), 463.

Chapter Seven

75. Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology*, II, 1682.

76. Timenchik in his "Axmatova's *Macbeth*" correlates the last two lines of the poem with Macbeth's words:

> Two truths are told,
> As happy prologues to the swelling act
> Of the imperial theme (I.3)

Slavic and East European Journal, vol. 24, no. 4 (1980), 366.

77. The drone of the bells could signify the presence of the persona transformed into a ringing bell. Compare the poem to be treated below "But I warn you" in which the speaker asserts that she will not return as the ringing of bells. In favor of such an interpretation speaks the absence of the persona in the poem, otherwise so unusual in Akhmatova.

78. Dmitrij Čiževskij, *History of Russian Literature from the Eleventh Century to the End of the Baroque* (The Hague: Mouton, 1960), 116. Čiževskij points out that the *Tale of Igor's Campaign*

> uses equivocal metaphors, based on the dual function of the Slavonic

> instrumental case—the latter denoting both a real attitude and a comparison. For instance, we are told of Prince Vseslav: "skoči otai ljutym" zvěrem"," "sam" v" noč' vl"kom" ryskaše" ("he leaped secretly like a wild beast"; "at night he coursed like a wolf")—these sentences may be understood as an assertion that Vseslav was a werewolf and turned into various animals, but they may also be interpreted as a comparison of the rapid campaigns of Vseslav with the leaps of a "wild beast" or "wolf."

Eikhenbaum noted the prevalence of the instrumental of comparison in Akhmatova's first five collections (100–102).

79. *Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka*, 17 vols., VI, 90.

80. *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, eds. F. Brokgaus, I. Efron (St. Petersburg: Efron, 1898), XXIII, 260.

81. Regeneration is intimated through symbolism of eternity and immortality. These last two are mentioned in Steven Broyde, *Osip Mandel'stam and His Age: A Commentary on the Themes of War and Revolution in the Poetry, 1913–1923*, Harvard Slavic Monographs, no. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 95–96. Marcia Satin in her dissertation comments on the Phoenix symbolizing immortality for the Egyptians:

> In literature, the Heraclitean idea of fire is that it is the agent of destruction and regeneration. Fire symbolizes the warmth necessary for survival as well as death and annihilation. Fire represents the destruction of temporal limits by terminating things as well as bringing them to life. This is seen more clearly in the image of the mythical phoenix consumed in the flames. From this pyre miraculously springs a new phoenix, symbolizing immortality for the ancient Egyptians, undying Rome for the Latin poet Martial, resurrection and life after death in allegory, and the raising of the dead and eternal life in Christian doctrine. The idea of Heracles passing through the fire, then, symbolizes that he has transcended the human condition (167).

82. *Literatura i zhizn'*, April 5, 1959.

83. Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, I, 417.

84. D'iakonov, *Epos o Gil'gameshe*, 107, n. 4. Significantly, it is in the south that Akhmatova compares the moon with a sloop where its position is closest to this object, as pointed out by D'iakonov: "The moon in southern latitudes lies horizontally across the sky, like a boat or a bull's horns."

85. A less likely possibility is that the persona's youthful self could now be viewed as alien, therefore it is no longer she.

86. *Mifologicheskii slovar'*, comps. M. N. Botvinnik et al. 2nd ed. (Leningrad: Gos. uchebno-ped. izd., 1961), 7.

87. Ketchian, "Vehicles for Duality," 112.

Chapter Eight

88. Published in *Prostor*, no. 2 (1971), 101.

89. Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology*, II, 1119.

90. Compare Griboedov's *Woe from Wit* where Chatskii says, "If one is to drink grief, / Then it is better to do so at once" (IV.10).

91. Akhmatova intended to translate Shelley in 1936; see "Akhmatova i Kuzmin," 298, n. 164.

92. Chukovskaia, *Zapiski*, I, 62.

93. Apparently, in her verse Akhmatova reserves the word "double" (*dvoinik*) mainly for persons who were her contemporaries. Most are female as in human incarnations for her speaker and many were personal friends and acquaintances. Examples are "Shade" (#349), "And in the mirror a double hides a Bourbon profile" (#547). In the last poem the double is herself. Earlier Pushkin's statue was her double which she would emulate in time in the poem ". . . And there my marble double" (#3).

94. Ernst and Johanna Lehner, *Folklore and Symbolism of Flowers, Plants and Trees* (New York: Tudor, 1960), 77–79.

95. This usage by Leonid Andreev is discussed in S. Ketchian, "On the Semantic Structure of Andreev's *Tot, kto polučaet poščečiny*," *Russian Language Journal*, vol. 33, no. 114 (1979), 81.

96. *The Poems of Tibullus*, trans. Constance Carrier, intro., notes, glossary by Edward M. Michael (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), 11–12.

97. The youth in Akhmatova's *By the Very Sea* calls her persona "swallow."

98. George Foot Moore, *Metempsychosis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 11.

Part Three. Chapter Nine

99. Clarence Brown, *Mandelstam* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), 104. Lidiia Chukovskaia maintains that Mandel'shtam disliked Akhmatova's poetry which may be an overreaction on her part; however, the poet herself attached little significance to whether someone liked her work. See Chukovskaia, *Zapiski*, I, 91–92.

100. B. Eikhenbaum, "Anna Akhmatova," 138–39. On Akhmatova and Annenski see also Anna Lisa Crone, "Anna Akhmatova and the Imitation of Annenskij," *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, vol. 7 (1981).

101. N. V. Nedobrovo. "Anna Akhmatova," *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, 9 (1974), 235. According to Zhirmunskii, Nedobrovo wielded influence on the poet's artistic development in the period of the *White Flock*. She writes in her notes: "Three-fourths of me has been made by you" (PL, 461).

102. See also Chukovskaia. *Pamiati*, 57.

103. "Neizdannye zametki Anny Akhmatovoi o Pushkine," *Vosprosy literatury*, 1 (1970), 159. Akhmatova points out Pushkin's faith in his reader in employing his method of "laconism."

104. Vsevolod Setchkarev, *Studies in the Life and Works of Innokentij Annenskij* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963), 105.

105. For other poems in masculine ego form see Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, #146, 179, 241–42, 490, 494, 497, 502, 505, 528. All were written between 1910 and 1922, and few of them are included in her regular collections. Akhmatova supplies barely discernible hints at androgyny in her few poems with masculine personas. It will be recalled that the speaker of Zinaida Gippius wrote mainly in masculine gender. Tsvetaeva too resorted to androgynous traits in her male and female characters, notably in *The Tsar-Maiden*, which is a modification over Gippius. Akhmatova phases out the practice. On androgyny in Tsvetaeva see Anya M. Kroth, "Androgyny as an Exemplary Feature of Marina Tsvetaeva's Dichotomous Poetic Vision," *Slavic Review*, vol. 38, no. 4 (1979).

106. Chrysanthemums are not constricted to Annenskii and Akhmatova. They were a favorite of the poet Mikhail Kuzmin. See R. Timenchik, "Akhmatova i Kuzmin," 302 (n. 194), 258, where the authors find parallels with Kuzmin. further on p. 293 (n. 130) Georgii Ivanov connects Akhmatova with the flowers. Ivinskaia calls chrysanthemums "fellow-travelers of death" in Ol'ga Ivinskaia, *V plenu vremeni: gody s Borisom Pasternakom* (Paris: Fayard, 1978), 206.

107. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 284.

108. Max Vasmer, *Etimologicheskii slovar'*, II, 460. *Oxford English Dictionary*, II, 146.

109. *The Poems of Tibullus*, 16.

110. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Horace Howard Furness. A New Variorum Edition (New York: American Scholar Publications, 1965), 346–47. The symbolism of the flowers is footnoted: fennel—flattery, pansies—love's thoughts or troubles, rue—used during exorcism, daisy—warning against trusting love, violets—faithfulness.

111. In the poem "Beneath the frozen roof of an empty dwelling" (#134) (*White Flock*) a maple leaf served as a bookmark; it is a symbol of transitoriness. Other poets mark a page by digging their nail into the paper, as in Pasternak or Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin*.

112. Faintly corresponding in imagery is the book in Shakespeare as a person with a capacity for life and love. Romeo is the book of love, Juliet is its cover (I.4). Given also the sexual implications, they comprise together one life of love.

113. In some of her other poems using a masculine persona, Akhmatova likewise obscures the grammatical person.

114. Akhmatova has two other Imitations, which differ in being based on a non-Russian literary source—"Imitation from the Armenian" (1930s) and "Imitation from the Korean" (1950s). For a discussion of these poems as well as the genre of Imitation in Russian poetry see my article, "The Genre of *Podražanie* and Anna Axmatova," *Russian Literature*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1984).

Chapter Ten

115. *Tomlen'e* in Pushkin is erotic or languor when not denoting simple dreaminess. In Annenskii it is a creative languor, a semiconscious, semi-sleeping state where all but art is tuned out.

116. In *Quiver* Gumilev has as his opening poem "In Memory of Annenskii": "the last of the swans of Tsarskoe Selo," also "the last lone muse of Tsarskoe Selo." According to Vilenkin, Akhmatova's "Teacher" is "an excerpt from one of the burned narrative poems" (487).

117. Innokentii Annenskii, "O sovremennom lirizme," *Apollon* (October 1909), 17.

118. See Lauren G. Leighton, "Gematria in 'The Queen of Spades': A Decembrist Puzzle," *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 21, no. 4 (1977) and "Numbers and Numerology in 'The Queen of Spades,' " *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1977.

119. Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, #36, 49, 95, 112, 209, 371, 417, 453, 457, 520, 576, 604.

120. K. Verheul, *The Theme of Time*, 171; V. Setchkarev, *Studies in the Life and Works of Annenskii*, 106.

121. *Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, ed. A. A. Surkov, 9 vols. (Moscow: Sovet. entsiklopediia, 1962–1978), VII. 67–68; Setchkarev, *Studies in the Life and Works of Annenskii*, 108. The early form of the sonnet has been preserved in Armenian verse.

122. Viktor Zhirmunskii, *Teoriia stikha* (Leningrad: Sovet. pisatel', 1975), 362–71, 321–50.

123. Innokentii Annenskii, *Pushkin i Tsarskoe Selo* (St. Petersburg: Parfenon, 1921). Compare similar repetitions of words, roots and synonyms in Annenskii's "Torturous Sonnet," see I. Annenskii, *Stikhotvoreniia i tragedii*, 2nd ed. Biblioteka poeta, bol'shaia seriia (Leningrad: Sovet pisatel', 1959), 125.

124. F. Zelinskii, "I. F. Annenskii," *Apollon*, 3 (1910), 2.

125. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. On repetition in Akhmatova see Zhirmunskii, *Tvorchestvo Anny Akhmatovoi*, 86.

126. Charles E. Townsend, *Russian Word-Formation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica, 1975), 125.

Chapter Eleven

127. In 1952 Akhmatova still used the older notion of "a double bottomed chest" to express the existence of a ciphered level to Gogol''s "Overcoat," see Chukovskaia, *Zapiski*, II, 3.

128. Anna Lisa Crone, "Three Sources for Axmatova's 'Ne straščaj menja groznoj sud'boj,' " *Russian Language Journal*, 31 (1977), 109.

129. Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, 481–82.

130. This version is available in Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, I, 376 and Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, 407–408.

131. Osip Mandel'shtam, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2nd rev. and exp. ed., 3 vols. (Washington: Inter-language Literary Associates, 1967), I, 97.

132. In *Captain's Daughter*, chap. 2 there is an altered quotation. See also the changes for pp. 424, 485, 495, 518. The last two were made up by Pushkin. Also of interest are the footnotes in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, VI, 785.

133. For more on the myth of St. Petersburg see L. Dolgopolov, "Mif o Peterburge i ego preobrazovanie v nachale veka," *Na rubezhe vekov: o russkoi literature kontsa 19-ogo—nachala 20-ogo veka* (Leningrad: Sovet. pisatel', 1977. See Sharon Leiter's *Akhmatova's Petersburg* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1983).

134. Omry Ronen, "Mandel'shtam's *Kaščej*," *Studies Presented to Professor Roman Jakobson by His Students*, ed. C. E. Gribble (Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica, 1968), 256, 259.

135. Anna Lisa Crone, "Three Sources." S. Ketchian, "A Unique Device for Axmatova's Tribute to Mandel'štam," *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 20, no. 4 (1976). "Axmatova's 'Učitel'': Lessons Learned from Annenskij," ibid., vol. 22, no. 1 (1978). Omry Ronen, "Leksičeskij povtor, podtekst i smysl v poetike," *Slavic Poetics: Essays in Honor of Kiril Taranovsky*, ed. Roman Jakobson et al. (The Hague: Mouton, 1973). Kiril Taranovsky, *Essays on Mandel'štam*, 1–20. Taranovsky, "The Problem of Context and Subtext in the Poetry of Osip Mandel'štam," *Slavic Forum: Essays in Linguistics and Literature*, ed. Michael S. Flier (The Hague: Mouton, 1974).

136. Interestingly, when in the academic year 1972–1973 I disclosed the idea for my first article on Akhmatova, "A Unique Device," to R. Timenchik, he readily agreed with my innovative approach of double subtexts in Akhmatova. V. Toporov, however, acted dubious. It is gratifying to see that in his new book *Akhmatova i Blok* Toporov has accepted the notion of several layers of allusions from different writers in Akhmatova. However, he uses the cumbersome term of "subtext of subtext" in lieu of "double subtext" (see n. 142).

Part Four

137. *The Poems of Tibullus*, 11–12.

138. M. Mihăis and P. Teodorescu-Brînzeu, "The Onomatextual Denotations of the Title," *Revue roumaine de linguistique*, vol. 25, 1980; *Cahiers de linguistique théorique et appliquée*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1980), 88.

139. Marietta Shaginian, *Chelovek i vremia: istoriia chelovecheskogo stanovleniia* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980), 216.

Chapter Twelve

140. Interestingly, Blok's first collection was *Ante Lucem*, and Tsvetaeva's first was *Evening Album*. D. M. Thomas in his poem "Stone" comments on the first title of a poet:

> The first book of a poet should be called Stone
> Or Evening, expressing in a single word
> The modesty of being part of the earth,
> The goodness of evening and stone, beyond the poet.

141. Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia*, eds. V. M. Inber et al. Biblioteka sovetskoi poezii (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1961). The other principal editions are: Anna Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, eds. G. P. Struve and B. A. Filippov, 2nd rev. and enl. ed. 3 vols.; Anna Akhmatova, *Beg vremeni. Stikhotvoreniia, 1909–1965* (Leningrad: Sovet. pisatel', 1965); Anna Akhmatova, *Izbrannoe*, comp. N. Bannikov (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1974); and Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhi i proza*, comp. B. G. Druian (Leningrad: Leninzdat, 1977).

142. V. N. Toporov, *Akhmatova i Blok: k probleme postroeniia poeticheskogo dialoga: "blokovskii" tekst Akhmatovoi*. Modern Russian Literature and Culture. Studies and Texts, no. 5 (Berkeley: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1981), 13–14.

143. N. Khardzhiev, "O risunke A. Modil'iani," in Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhi i proza*, 573.

144. Indeed, on reading two of Akhmatova's early poems, V. Ivanov discerned Romantic elements: "What pure Romanticism." Amanda Haight, *Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 178.

145. In Greek mythology, Hyperion is one of the Titans, son of Uranus and Gaea and father of Helios, the sun-god. The name is often used as an epithet of Helios, who is himself sometimes called simply Hyperion. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 14, 200.

Milada Součková, *The Czech Romantics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1958), 54.

146. It must be borne in mind that the only reference to a mother is to the name of the poet's mother in a poem having a persona very close to Akhmatova the person. It refers to Inna Erazmovna: "And the woman . . . with a most rare name" ("Northern Elegies." "First"). Akhmatova's persona never mentions a father. Akhmatova was born on June 11, which makes her a Gemini (*bliznetsy*); this sign incorporates duality, both black and white. See J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 155.

147. The double as a Romantic theme is mentioned in N. L. Stepanov, "Romanticheskii mir Gogolia." *K istorii russkogo romantizma* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), 215.

148. Stepanov, "Romanticheskii mir," 193–94.

149. Loveless marriage is a Romantic theme treated by Nils Åke Nilsson,

" 'In Vain'—'Perhaps.' The Russian Romantic Poets and Fate," *Scando-Slavica*, vol. 25 (1979), 72.

150. On Herder's role in reviving folk poetry see Součková, *The Czech Romantics*, 13–14. On folk elements and *narodnost'* see Lauren G. Leighton, *Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky* (Boston: Twayne, 1975), 70.

Chapter Thirteen

151. S. Ketchian, "The Theme of Suggestion in Dostoevskij's 'Slaboe serdce,' " *Mnemozina. Studia litteraria russica in honorem Vsevolod Setchkarev*, eds. Joachim T. Baer and Norman W. Ingham (Munich: Fink, 1974), 239–40. On Pushkin's "tenevoi portret" see Akhmatova, *O Pushkine*, 216.

152. S. Ketchian, "Poetic Creation in Bella Axmadulina," *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 28, no. 1 (1984).

153. Andrej Kodjak, *Pushkin's "I. P Belkin"* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1979), 40.

154. Coincidentally, Gumilev in his *Pearls* has a poem "Semiramis."

155. Anna Akhmatova, *A Poem without a Hero*, tr. Carl Proffer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973), 50.

156. This poem was originally published under the title "Lady in Lilac" in *Rosary 3*, later in the volume *Poems 1961* the piece bore the title "In the Mirror" (PL, 470).

157. Raphael Sabatini, *Sword of Islam. Writings. Definitive Edition*, 34 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924–1937), vol. 24, 106. Curiously, Moslems believe that the pearl is the product of the "conjunction of fire and water. " Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 251. This corresponds well with Akhmatova's thematics.

158. Kiril Taranovsky traces "an uncomely, dry necklace of dead bees, which have transformed honey into sunshine," in Mandel'shtam's poem "Take for joy" to a subtext from V. Ivanov:

> I will sing, from dark fire
> And starry tears weaving a necklace—
> My gift to you on the wedding day.

In a footnote Taranovsky postulates the rarity of the metaphor necklace-poetry and queries whether the titles of Gumilev's and Akhmatova's early collections *Pearls* and *Rosary* respectively could not be derived from Pushkin thereby revealing a crucial link in the usage of *chetki* by both authors. Taranovsky, *Essays on Mandel'štam*. Harvard Slavic Studies, no. 6 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976), 165–66. To be sure, tears and pearls equal poems and *chetki* equals a necklace, which is beads for the neck. The sensual aspect of pearls is corroborated by the legend that the drops of water that fell from Aphrodite formed pearls (Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology*, I, 108.

159. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 24, 617.

160. Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, 102–103.

161. Denerik Demirjian, *Vardanank. An Historical Novel* (Cairo: Lusaber, 1956), vol. 2, 270–71.

162. Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, vol. 3, 437–48 elaborates on the topic.

Chapter Fourteen

163. The epigraph and the prevalent fire imagery of this collection was treated earlier in Part One.

164. Haight, *Anna Akhmatova*, 46. Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, 469.

165. According to Dal''s dictionary the word *podorozhnik*, which literally means "that which is at the wayside," has varied definitions:

> Rich patties that are willingly taken for the road without becoming stale. //The bird Emberiza nivalis, a snow-bunting.// *Southern*. a crested lark, Alauda crista.// a fat-bodied black beetle, Meloe chichorei. //Plant *diatlina*, see clover (general name) //Plantain, plant Taraxucum officin., dandelion. //Polygonum aviculare, see *brylena* (in the Viat dial. numerous plants including plantain)// Plant plantago media. //Highway robbers. robbers

166. *Modern Language Review*, vol. 74, no. 4 (October 1979). The additional poems to Anrep are, in the enumeration of PL: #206, 207, 211, 212, 218, 233, 235, 236. The poems singled out in PL by Zhirmunskii are: #142, 159, 179, 180, 183. 188. 191.

167 The reference to the poem "Three Wishes" (17) defines sister as a word used in Ancient Egypt in the meaning of "beloved." On the same page the reference to p. 21 adds a definition of "brother" as a word used in Ancient Egypt in the meaning of beloved. A. Akhmatova, tr., *Klassicheskaia poeziia Vostoka* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969), 188.

Additionally, sister could allude to Akhmatova's two sisters who died young, the oldest at age 27 at about this time.

168. PL, 474. Originally, the intended title for the collection was "The Year 1921."

169. Omry Ronen comments on a deleted stanza of Akhmatova's poem "When in the anguish of suicide," connecting it with the Book of Isaiah:

> The subtext of this stanza sheds light not only on the poem as a whole, but also on the meaning of the collection's title *Anno Domini*. Like the title, the stanza represents a quotation from "Isaiah's Book of Prophets" (chap. 1. 21).

See "K istorii akmeisticheskikh tekstov: Opushchennye strofy i podtekst," *Slavica Hierosolymitana*, vol. III (1978), 73–74.

170. Horace G. Lunt, *Old Church Slavonic Grammar*, 2nd rev. ed. (The Hague: Mouton, 1959), 45.

171. Driver, *Anna Akhmatova,* 85. He quotes from *Russkaia mysl'*, (July 1915), 63.

172. Vitalii Ia. Vilenkin, *Vospominaniia s kommentariiami* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1982), "The epigraph from "Improvisation" in her latest book *Course of Time* was substituted with another, a line from Pasternak—from the early version of the poem 'Hamlet.' " This is a certain means of confusing readers.

Chapter Fifteen

173. Compare the epigraph to *Seventh Book* with *Poem without a Hero* (354): "That you have already passed the Lethe / And you breathe a different spring." In effect, it is an antispring, as it were, evoking a spring of death and a new beginning in the land of the River Lethe. Furthermore, in reading the title to Part Two of *Poem without a Hero*—"Reshka" (Tails)—in conjunction with the epigraph from Pushkin—"I drink the waters of the Lethe / My doctor forbids me gloominess"—it can be argued that the coin in the title showing the other side of the coin, symbolically connotes the other side of life: death. Furthermore, it refers to the coin put in Antiquity into the mouth of the deceased to pay the boatman for transportation across the Lethe into Hades. Everything punctuates death and the netherworld. This represents another side of the section "Odd."

174. For the symbolism of "five" see Vincent Foster Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism. Its Sources, Meaning and Influence on Thought and Expression* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 58.

175. Leighton, "Numbers and Numerology, 432.

176. See the poem "Excerpt" from "Odd," originally an anticipated cycle "Closed Trefoil." Annenskii also has a poem "Thirteen Lines."

177. Robert Graves, *Hercules, My Shipmate,* 54.

178. Leighton's precise and ingenious investigation of the arcane role of numerology in the works of Pushkin has opened new avenues of exploration into the works of related poets. See "Numbers and Numerology" on the role of three, seven, and one, p. 432.

179. E. Dobin, *Poeziia Anny Akhmatovoi,* 234. The concluding poem in the collection "Although this land is not native" (#484) ends on philosophical and religious notes: "Is it the end of the day, or of the world, / Or is it the mystery of mysteries in me again."

180. Satin, "Akhmatova's 'Shipovnik Tsvetet,' " 178–82.

181. Marina Tsvetaeva, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980), vol. 2, 19; vol. 2, 342–43. As an example of how widespread idiomatic usage of seven is in this meaning compare also the Armenian idiom "yotn otar," which means "total strangers, unrelated persons, strangers to the seventh degree or generation or seven generations removed."

Conclusion

182. Vladimir Nabokov has been quoted as saying that "imagination is a form of memory. . . . In this sense, both memory and imagination are a negation of time." See William Woodin Rowe, *Nabokov's Deceptive World* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), ix. A further expansion of Akhmatova's notion of time and space occurs when she brings her conscience into this infinite category in her poem, "Some gaze into tender eyes" (#309):

> But for it time does not exist,
> And for it there is no space in the world.

Index of Names